

WESTTOWN TOWNSHIP ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY COUNCIL (EAC)
Westtown Municipal Building, 1039 Wilmington Pike, West Chester, PA
Tuesday, September 24, 2024 7:00 PM

Present: EAC members Bob Yeats (Chair), Ray Dandrea (Vice Chair), Joe Debes, and Russ Hatton. Adam Kapp, Mike Gioia and Meghan Hanney were absent. Also present was Mila Carter, Township manager.

I. Call to Order

Bob called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

II. Approval of Minutes, August 27, 2024

Minutes have been tabled due to lack of quorum to vote.

III. Public Comment (non-agenda items)

None.

IV. Old Business

A. Riparian Buffer Restoration Project in Plumly Open Space

Joe Debes summarized that he provided a long-term maintenance plan to the EAC and the Township for review and comments and haven't received any feedback. He asked whether the Board received the requested budget from the EAC and what was the approval status. Mila explained that the Board will be discussing budget requests at a later date as they are working through capital and other high priority items at this time. She noted that it was up to the EAC to present the request and reasoning behind it to the Board. She suggested the first meeting in November. Bob Yeats asked whether Joe was happy with the work being done by Red Trail, contractor hired by the Township to assist with invasive removal related work. Joe responded that he was but he observed a lot of new growth that needed to be addressed.

B. Westtown Day Participation

Bob asked whether there was a list of items with roles and responsibilities for the event. He also asked about materials and handouts. Ray provided that he would bring a composting bin and posters on the subject matter and a pop up canopy and expected to be there by 9:30am to set up. He noted that Mike was not available until 12pm. Mila asked to confirm who was attending from the EAC. Bob believed it was Joe, Ray and Mike. Mila asked whether there was an appetite to organize a bird walk to the pond. She explained that it could be included in the program that each participant will receive at the welcoming table. Ray did not think there was enough volunteers for that. Bob provided that he would borrow some items from the former EAC member, including banners, easels and other items. Ray suggested a sign up sheet. There was a discussion about the extent of handouts. Mila asked about organizing a kid related activity that the EAC discussed previously. Bob suggested to reach out to Mike to see what he had in mind.

C. Resident Survey Recap (2022)

Bob provided a summary of resident survey that was collected in 2022. He provided that the EAC has been focusing on priorities identified in the survey. He expressed that it takes time to address every item and there was a need to develop a plan. Ray felt that the issue of single use plastics is important and advocated to bring it back to the discussion in the future. He shared that other municipalities have been successful at banning such use and that Westtown shall not be giving up. He wondered whether advocating for support at the shopping centers to raise awareness was beneficial. Bob agreed that the subject matter shall be reintroduced to the Board. Ray felt it was important to get clubs like Rustin High School Environmental club involved in community outreach efforts. There was a discussion of various ways to increase public participation in these efforts.

V. New Business

A. Litter Lifters of West Vincent

Bob Yeats recapped that the Board requested the Council to evaluate areas in Westtown, particularly roadways that might be in a need of cleanup efforts, and introduced Beth Intoccia, Chairperson of Litter Lifters of West Vincent. Beth described how she got involved with the group by picking up litter in her neighborhood during the pandemic and eventually ended up forming a subcommittee of West Vincent EAC with the focus on roadway trash cleanup. She shared her experience with the Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful initiative and collaboration with PennDOT and local police departments. Beth noted that adopting a state highway was a great start with PennDOT providing a great deal of support. She pointed out that the first event took about 3 months of planning and now she is involved into more than 40 events per year with various organizations and municipalities.

Joe Debes asked whether her group was involved with stream cleanup as well. Beth clarified that the group's primary focus is roadways, but felt that contributing to stream cleanup efforts was important. Ray asked about safety signage. Beth explained that she was able to borrow roadway safety signs from police departments and eventually was able to purchase eight for the group's use. She noted that it was crucial to think about safety when initiating roadway cleanups and to create a plan. Beth also explained that their events start at 7:30am on Saturdays to avoid traffic and include police officers following behind with flashers on for roadway safety. She provided that she created various documents that can be used by others to organize events and noted that she does a safety related talk and asks for liability waivers to be signed by volunteers prior to participation. Joe noted that it seemed similar to what the Chester Ridley Crum (CRC) Watersheds Association was doing. Beth described her group's involvement with local businesses that contribute gift cards and food related items for volunteers. Joe asked about funding sources. Beth responded that the group's budget was \$1,800 last year and is currently \$800 per year, and the rest comes from businesses and other sources. She also noted that volunteers do not have expectations for food or gift cards and when she can, she tries to provide that if possible.

Beth also provided that she uses social media to connect with various groups that might be interested in volunteering. Mila asked about police involvement. Beth explained that police does not get paid overtime, and are very supportive of the cleanup efforts.

She recommended getting the State Police involved as a start and also to reach out to local police department for additional support. She also noted that she limits the number of volunteers per event to make it safe and manageable. Beth also suggested to reach out to local high schools and their clubs, and organizations that provide community services for those with minor offences. Bob asked about their approach to roadway clean up. Beth responded that it does depend on a specific section, but most cases the group cleans both sides and always have a safety checklist and a strategy beforehand. She also suggested to have a separate email list for volunteers. Ray asked whether she thought the plastic bag ban made any difference in the amount of trash along the roadways. Beth provided that most trash is alcohol related but they do see plastic bags here and there stuck on trees. She thought that eventually it would make a difference. Ray wondered whether businesses were at fault for littering. Beth disagreed that it was people and not businesses. Joe felt that businesses shall be hold accountable and bare responsibility for generating litter. Beth thought that businesses are doing that by providing support for trash cleanup efforts. She encouraged the EAC not to give up and dip into resources that are available already.

B. Rustin High School Environmental Club

Bob suggested to meet with the Rustin High School students to initiate some activities and to connect with potential volunteers. The Council discussed potential topics to bring up with the students and opportunities for activities. Joe volunteered to work on the outline and presentation to frame the discussion with the students. Bob will finalize the date but believed it will take place sometime between November and December.

C. Recap of webinar on Engaging in Policymaking for Food Systems, Waste and Climate: Tips, Strategies, and Best Practices

Ray summarize his takeaways from the webinar which was primarily focused on strategy to approach politicians on the subject matter. He recapped that relationship building and collaboration and engagement with school age children were found to be beneficial to move forward environmentally focused initiatives.

VI. Bird Town Committee Report

Ray summarized that the Board agreed with the placement of Bird Town markers, except that one was proposed on the privately owned property, which needed the property owner's permission. He also added that webpage content needed to be developed and believed that Allyson Debes was taking a lead on that.

VII. Planning Commission Report

Russ provided the Planning Commission's report from the September 18th meeting. Joe asked whether there were opportunities for the EAC to get involved in ordinance amendments.

VIII. BOS Report

Mike was absent to provide a report of the Board's September 16th meeting.

IX. Public Comment (All Topics)

None.

X. Announcements

A. Mila announced that the applicant will present a revised settlement proposal for the Stokes Estate residential development at the next Board's meeting.

XI. Adjournment

There being no further business, Bob adjourned the meeting at 9:08 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Liudmila Carter
Township Manager

DRAFT