



10 East Church Street
Bethlehem, Pa. 18018
eacbethlehempa@gmail.com

November 30, 2020

Dear Mayor Donchez and Honorable Members of City Council,

In accordance with the Bethlehem Environmental Advisory Council Bylaws, we submit the following report for the year 2020. In April we began holding our meetings virtually and will continue to do so until it is safe to meet in person. In accordance with the Sunshine Laws, our virtual meetings are open to the public via zoom.

Accomplishments for 2020 include:

Letters

- March: Recommendation to the Director of Planning and Zoning that the property at 2105 Creek Road retain its RR designation because it is located in the floodplain.
- March: Recommended that the City pass an ordinance banning single use plastic bags to take effect on July 2, 2020, in order to be grandfathered in before the State budget was passed.
- March: Letter in support of the Resolution coming before Council on April 7th, urging the United States Congress to enact the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act of 2019 (“EICD Act”).
- June: Letter supporting the City’s WalkWorks grant application to go towards creating an Active Transportation Plan focused on the Broad Street corridor to improve the walking, bicycling, wheeling and transit infrastructure.
- July: Recommendation to create of an Office of Sustainability to oversee and implement the programs, policies and ordinances that will result from the Climate Action Plan (CAP). Having this be a separate department would allow the Sustainability Office to direct public interactions and connect and build relationships among the City’s Departments, allowing for coordinated climate action.
- July: Comments to the Director of Planning and Zoning regarding proposed development at 1355 Easton Road Phase 2.

- August: Letter to the Zoning Hearing Board in opposition of a Use Variance to permit single-family semi-detached dwellings at 2105 Creek Road because the property is located in the 100-year floodplain.
- November: Letter in support of the Pedestrian Bridge Feasibility Study.

EAC Events and Activities

- The Bethlehem, Allentown and Easton EACs coordinated the first EAC Network Meeting (a meeting for all Lehigh Valley EACs) on March 11th at Illicks Mill. There was a strong turn out and each EAC spoke about their current projects in order to share ideas for possible collaboration. The next EAC Network Meeting is on hold until after the pandemic.
- At the May 2020 Pennsylvania EAC Network Conference, a member of our EAC participated in the EAC Best Practices Panel and co-led a breakout session for Communications Best Practices.
- In partnership with the Monocacy Creek Watershed Association, we held two successful Monocacy Creek clean-ups (August 15th and October 10th), which engaged additional volunteers from outside our two groups.
- On August 29th we tabled at the Rose Garden Farmers Market where we handed out flyers about the upcoming CAP public meeting and EAC promotional flyers with information on sustainability.
- Continuing our relationship with City Forester David Shaffer, in a group meeting we researched firms who conduct citywide tree inventories and provided our recommendation. The tree inventory will be completed in December. Several of our members also joined Mr. Shaffer in an online Tree Tenders Course given by Penn State Extension.
- In August the Nurture Nature Center wrote a blog about EACs featuring the Allentown, Bethlehem and Easton EACs.
- Two of our members mentored students that prepared environmental essays for the Touchstone Theatre's Festival Unbound.
- Spoke with Lehigh University students to assist with articles in the *Brown and White*
- Member of the external advisory group for Lehigh University's Climate Action Strategy
- Since the City was no longer able to host the EAC on their new website, in February we launched a separate Bethlehem EAC website (www.bethlehemeac.org). The City was fully supportive and paid the yearly hosting fee (\$144) and the fee for the domain name (\$16), for which we are appreciative.
- We have continued to maintain our Facebook page with increasing numbers of followers.

Speakers at EAC Meetings

- Katharine Targett Gross, Sustainability Officer, Lehigh University;
- Kathy Fox and Joe Klinkhoff, Bethlehem Food Co-Op.

Bethlehem Backyards for Wildlife is an active standing committee of the EAC with a dedicated group of volunteers. Please see pages 4 & 5 of this report for an overview of their mission and activities in 2020.

Our most important work this year has been supporting the City's CAP, which is being written by the consulting firm WSP. WSP has engaged numerous groups, institutions, the City and the public for input on the plan. EAC members are part of the Climate Action Plan Stakeholder Working Group and the mitigation subgroups for Land Use & Green Space, Food/Product Sourcing & Waste, Electricity Sourcing, and Education & Behavior Change. The EAC is proud of Bethlehem City's commitment to climate action and will continue to assist in the development of the CAP and its implementation, in every way possible.

Our great appreciation goes to Robert Vidoni, City Clerk, and Judy Kelechava, Assistant City Clerk, for their assistance. They respond immediately to all of our requests and questions, place meeting notices in the newspaper and facilitate communication between the EAC, City Council and the Mayor's office.

We recognize and appreciate our City Council liaison, J. William Reynolds, for his assistance, attendance at our meetings, initiative and continued efforts to bring a Climate Action Plan to fruition. We also acknowledge and thank Michael Alkhal, Director of Public Works, Matt Dorner, Deputy Director of Public Works, and Darlene Heller, Director Planning & Zoning, for their ongoing contributions to the CAP. Thanks also to Michael Halbfoerster, Director of Recycling, for his assistance to our Waste Reduction Committee. We commend City Council and the Administration for their support of the CAP and initiatives to make Bethlehem a greener, more pedestrian/bike friendly city.

Respectfully submitted,

Lynn Rothman

Lynn Rothman, Chair

Bethlehem, EAC

On behalf of the Bethlehem EAC:

Elizabeth Behrend	Ben Guthrie
Elisabeth Cichonski	Brian Nicas
Ben Felzer	Mike Topping

cc: Mayor Donchez

Department of Public Works

Department of Planning & Zoning

City Forester

Department of Recycling

Bethlehem Backyards for Wildlife (BBFW) - Overview 2020

Our mission: to work with the City of Bethlehem to support biodiversity and minimize negative environmental impacts by encouraging city residents, schools, businesses, and other organizations to implement wildlife friendly and sustainable garden practices.

Bethlehem is a National Wildlife Federation (NWF) Community Wildlife Habitat

Bethlehem registered in 2009 and became certified in 2012. BBFW has fulfilled the requirements to recertify every year, with the exception of 2020 due to the pandemic. Requirements for recertification: Maintain website (facebook page), conduct educational events, participate in community service, increase NWF certified spaces.

More than **250 Bethlehem residences** are registered as NWF wildlife habitats.

Schools: Calypso, Buchanan, East Hills, Freedom, Lehigh University

Public spaces certified by BBFW or in partnership with other organizations:

Sand Island Native Plant Preserve, Meadow on the Greenway, ArtsQuest Butterfly Garden, Millers House Garden, Illicks' Mill Native Garden

Parks certified by the City:

Friendship, Sand Island Children's Garden, Westside Community Garden (no longer a community garden), Bethlehem Sculpture Garden, Bethlehem Public Library Garden, Illick's Mill Nature Area and Trail, Saucon Park

NWF Wildlife Habitat Certification requires: Habitat providing food, water, shelter, place to raise young, sustainable gardening practices

Native Plant Demonstration Gardens maintained by BBFW committee volunteers:

Meadow on the Greenway, SINPP, Hoover-Mason Trestle, Rose Garden Pollinator Garden

2020 Highlights:

Arbor Day - assisted the City Forester with the planning of the Arbor Day tree plantings along the Southside Greenway

Rose Garden Pollinator Garden - maintained by irrigating and weeding the two new native perennial gardens on 8th Ave that BBFW designed and planted in 2019

Rose Garden Rose Beds Weeding – assisted with clearing out the overgrown weeds in the established rose-bush beds that had not been maintained for several years

DCNR Grant – continued to work with City and Mount Airy Neighborhood Association to develop the plans for using a \$210,000 matching grant for improvements to Rose Garden Park, originally begun in 2019

Southside Community Gardens – met with the Southside Initiative Garden developers to assist with their creating a community vegetable garden area along the Southside Greenway, adjacent to the BBFW/Lehigh University Green Meadow native perennial garden

On-going projects:

In 2020, with the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions that began in February, the City closed all access to the Hoover-Mason Trestle, which precluded us from doing any debris removal, weeding or pruning during the spring months. BBFW was granted permission to do these activities in late May, but on a limited basis—no public volunteers were allowed to participate, and all state-directed safety protocols as to physical distance and protective mask-wearing were required. This late start and limited number of people allowed to work on the spring maintenance created a setback for the 11 beds to be properly maintained, but we did the best possible work within the limitations set. BBFW continued the weeding, pruning, mulching, path maintenance, and litter removal in the above-listed city gardens within mandated restrictions.