

Bethlehem Environmental Advisory Council General Meeting Agenda

Attendance: Lynn Rothman, Benjamin Felzer, Anna Smith, Brynne Brown, Katie Trembler, Beth Behrend, Jane Cook, Vibhor Kumar, Councilwoman Kiera Wilhelm, Joe Zeller, Martha Christine, Doug Roysdon, Mike Topping, Anna Zaweirucha, Kathy Fox, Brian Nicas, Breena Holland, Audrey McSain, Councilwoman Rachel Leon

Location: virtual zoom meeting*

Date: March 3, 2022

Time: 7:00 pm

Call to order

1. Welcome
2. Approval of minutes (February) – Beth motion/Mike seconded: approved unanimously
3. Board comments and announcements
 - The Lanta bus service is taking public comments until next week about the proposed bus changes for the bus schedule. They meet on March 9th at 11AM virtually.

4. Anna Smith, southside resident and community activist: Southside Development and Environmental Justice. Power point of Anna's presentation may be found at:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1MURJZzpJwpIJr6mix9Z6HtKQnxh3iiv5/view>

Summary of presentation:

- South Side: 72% homes rent occupied; 52% houses old (before 1939); 42% Latino; 27% Spanish speakers, very dense (12,394 people/square mile discounting industrial areas and Lehigh University – just behind NYC, San Francisco, and Boston)

Developmental Pressures

- Residential/Mixed-Use Developments (3rd and 4th Sts) – 843 new apartments approved – mix of new construction and rehabilitation (12.5% increase)
- Industrial Park Development (eastern end): warehouses/distribution centers – 6,859 new commuters 2008-2018 (doubling)
- Student Housing Expansion: Previously rented to families or owner-occupied (can charge higher rents to college students)
- Lehigh Expansion: 3 of 4 recent projects on border with neighborhoods

Effects on communities

- Increased traffic: decreased walkability, poor air quality – childhood asthma increase, longer commutes, safety concerns, mental health/quality of life
- Speculative investment in existing housing for students/higher income residents: decreases affordable housing (increased evictions, pushing residents to poorer quality housing without leverage, persistent poverty, environmental effects – lead paint, mold, energy inefficiency, old wiring,

pests, asbestos, radon), lower income residents pushed into more affordable communities (fewer amenities and resources available, health consequences/persistent poverty)

- Construction alters physical environment: high rise development decreasing quality of life/walkability (wind tunnels, permanent shade over public spaces), light pollution, mature trees cut, backyards paved for parking, demolition releases asbestos and lead
- Building on sites not appropriate for development (the hill): flooding and runoff on steep slopes
- Displacements: older more affordable housing eliminated, businesses displaced (residents travel further, walkability reduced)
- 10 Principles for responsible southside development. See p.15 of power point

Discussion: 800/6500 student rentals; most new developments not displacing residents (student housing largest factor); EJ of building on vacant lots – impact of traffic and housing around it – issue of planting new trees to replace mature ones cut down; fair market rent – maximum amount to charge for rent of subsidized housing (30% or less of family's income – used to 20%); What role does EAC have amongst all these issues (i.e. environment vs development vs Lehigh)?

5. Citizens' comments

- Kathy: Food Coop on first floor of new building. Sustainability committee – energy efficiency, recycling food scraps and not send anything to landfill – let Kathy know if interested in attending their meetings; Councilwoman Wilhelm can connect with food subcommittee of CAP

6. Committee reports

- a. Bethlehem Backyards for Wildlife (Jane, Martha)
 - Hoover-Mason Trestle garden maintenance schedule being developed and will post on EAC site
 - Planning a day to get Greenway meadow into shape
- b. Waste Reduction Committee
 - Hope City Council will move along with plastic bag ordinance
- c. Solar Committee
 - Drafting updates with Planning and Zoning, Fire Chief and Bethlehem Parking Authority – update at April EAC meeting

7. External committee reports

- a. Monocacy Creek Watershed Assoc. (MCWA)
 - March 12/13 noon: live stakes, two plantings
 - April 30: Monocacy Creek cleanup with Trout unlimited. EAC will partner and be included on flyer. Ben G, Katie to attend.
- b. City Council
 - Councilwoman Wilhelm: Public comment period on Pollution Reduction Plan (Required for MS4 permit) – began on Feb. 22 – submit comments in writing within 30 days to Director of Public Works (Michael Alkhal), or public comments will be accepted at the March 15th City Council meeting.
Link to plan: <https://www.bethlehem->

pa.gov/CityOfBethlehem/media/PWMedia/Storm%20Water/City-of-Bethlehem-Pollutant-Reduction-Plan.pdf

- Councilwoman Wilhelm: Role to communicate to our goals to council and speak for us at Council

c. Planning & Zoning: Subdivision and Land use Ordinances (SALDO)

- EAC submitted comments on proposed revisions to SALDO Ordinance – not updated since 1970s – presented at last Planning Commission Meeting (on agenda at future meeting) – Revisions incorporate goals of CAP (green infrastructure, erosion control, bicycle/pedestrian friendly) – Includes a requirement to send proposed development plans to LANTA and EAC for review

8. Unfinished business

a. Climate Action Plan

- Lynn representing us on Mayor's Climate and Environmental Justice Council
- Angela DelGrosso, Director of Mayor's Initiatives, and Janine Santoro, Director of Equity and Inclusion, presenting on CAP implementation at next EAC meeting
- Councilwoman Wilhelm is on CAP Public Engagement Committee to get message out – EAC will be important for implementation
- Doug: Plans to educate youth on climate action through programs at the Ice House.

9. New business

a. EAC networking conference last Saturday (Lynn, Ben attended)

Highlights of Conference:

- Montgomery County: Started single use battery recycling program. Possible in Bethlehem?
- Air quality RAMP in Pittsburgh (Albert Presto, Michael DiMonte): RAMPs (Real Time Affordable MultiPollutant Sensor) to measure PM2.5, CO, NO, NO₂, O₃, SO₂
- Lawn Conversion and Green Infrastructure – converting lawns to meadows (conservation landscaping); plant perennial native wildflowers and grasses; requires long-term maintenance (some mowing and herbicide); 2 years of preparation with herbicide to create bare soil; require buffer around house in case of fire and pathways through it to walk; idea of local ordinances to encourage these landscapes and provide some rules as guidance – see National Wildlife Federation Guide to Passing Wildlife-Friendly Property Maintenance Ordinances
- Establish Associate EAC members – non-voting status for other interested citizens
- Bird Town (Bethlehem is a Bird Town City)
- Macungie Borough potential EAC formation - in touch with Lynn

b. Kathy: permaculture – fruit and nut planting (first Tuesday April

- presentation thru Food Coop in planning); Miakawee plots (Ben F.) - promote these kind of ideas; Councilwoman Wilhelm – permaculture park on Summit St. by Lehigh students
- c. Citizens Climate Lobby – Green Drinks fourth Thursday of the month

10. Next meeting April 7

Adjourn 8:18 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Ben Felzer