

Bethlehem Environmental Advisory Council
General Meeting
November 2, 2023

Attendees: EAC Members: Lynn Rothman (Chair), Ben Felzer (Vice Chair), Ben Guthrie (Secretary), Vibhor Kumar (Virtual), Mike Topping (Virtual), Mandy Tolino (Virtual)
Guests/Community Members: Jane Cook, Steve Olshevski, Lauren Fosbenner, Janice Schmidt, John Roper, Aiden McGuire, William Egbert, Declan Kamonkin, Audrey McSain (Virtual), Molly Bilinski (Virtual)

Call to Order – 7:00 PM

1. Welcome

2. Approval of minutes (October): Motion by Ben Felzer, seconded by Mike Topping. Approved unanimously.

3. Darlene Heller: City of Bethlehem’s Climate Action Plan Land Use and Green Space Committee update

- a. The Planning Department is working to ensure the subdivision and land development ordinance (SALDO) is aligned with the goals of the Climate Action Plan. The ordinance revisions will be discussed at an upcoming planning commission meeting.
- b. A new community fellow from Lehigh will be working with the city over the next 10 months. He may be available to support CAP and EV charging research and initiatives
- c. The city received a federal grant to extend the greenway trail to connect with the Saucon Rail Trail.

4. Chair’s comments and amendments to agenda

- a. **Public Engagement Committee** - The CAP Annual Meeting is planned for November 15th at 9:00 AM in town hall. Will be livestreamed for those unable to attend in person.
- b. **Trash Mapping** - Professor Kate Jackson at Lehigh and her students are doing a trash mapping project. She is looking to interview people about their feelings about trash.

5. Board comments and announcements

- a. **EAC Network Fall Gathering (Ben Felzer)** - Ben attended EAC Network Fall Gathering at West Chester University. The morning session was a series of lightning talks. Ben gave a talk on the work of the Green Committee in planting perennials in Madison Park and the City’s tree planting on the south side.

6. Committee reports

- a. **Bethlehem Backyards for Wildlife (Jane Cook)** – October 10 was the final weeding session for the 10 gardens up on the Hoover Mason Trestle. We still plan to do some sumac tree removal in November, depending on the weather. Many of

the sumac are dead or dying, and they are not really suited to that unique ecosystem. The Greenway Meadow on the Southside is almost finished with the aster and goldenrod blooming, and we will be doing some light removal of debris and leaves, but basically we leave most of the plants for wildlife and insect cover throughout the winter months and allow for the birds to harvest the seed pods.

- b. **Green Committee (Ben Felzer)** – Plantings at Madison Park are completed. The committee reviewed the CAP to assess potential projects. The committee is also waiting for an opportunity to review the urban forestry master plan.
- c. **Bird Town (Vibhor Kumar)** – The Bird Town Annual Summit was held last week. Other communities have had success with educational events, which may be a future opportunity in Bethlehem.
- d. **Waste Reduction Committee (Lynn Rothman on behalf of Katie Trembler)** – EAC members, Waste Reduction Committee members and City Council members had an opportunity to tour the recycling center on October 30.
- e. **Transportation Committee (Ben Guthrie)** - The EAC submitted a comment on the region’s Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) to support projects that are consistent with the Climate Action Plan (CAP). On October 18, Ben attended a meeting hosted by the LVPC. The purpose of the meeting was to introduce an EPA grant through the Climate Pollution Reduction Grant funding program. The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, November 15 at 11:00 AM.

7. External committee reports

- a. **Monocacy Creek Watershed Association (Jane Cook)** – This Saturday, November 4, from 9-11 AM, there’s a Monocacy Creek clean-up event in Bath Borough. Last week we planted 10 tulip poplars, which are native trees to this area, along the Monocacy Creek downstream of Illick’s Mill as a part of our ongoing riparian buffer plantings. Bath also ordered 8 tulip poplar trees and three sweet bay magnolias from the Penn State native tree sale, and we will be planting those in the next ten days or so. A subcommittee of the Board is working on a letter to present to the Hanover Township Board of Supervisors in mid-November regarding our concerns about the proposed warehouse/distribution center at Route 512 and the stormwater runoff’s negative impact on the creek.
- b. **Saucon Creek Watershed Association (Mike Topping)** – Wildlands Conservancy planted 700 native trees on Thursday, October 12. There has been continuing conversation among membership regarding the City’s stance on the potential landfill expansion.

8. Old Business

- a. **Climate Action Plan (Lynn Rothman) -**
 - i. **City CAP Committees**
 - 1. Transportation and Mobility - no report
 - 2. Local Food and Waste - no report
 - 3. Environmental Justice - The EJ Committee plans to incorporate information gathered from community meetings to help the City focus on priorities and be aware of unintended consequences. Priorities include tree planting, trash issues, engaging college

students as interns and promoting environmental education to younger students.

- ii. **Nurture Nature Center Grant** - The Nurture Nature Center has received a grant to work with Bethlehem and Easton to assist with implementation of the climate action plans. Upcoming initiatives over the next four years will include family programming at local libraries, campaigns with local businesses, partnerships with Community Bike Works and Community Action Lehigh Valley, and internship opportunities for college students.

9. New business

- a. **Heritage Tree Program** - The program was started by a previous EAC member. A community member recently submitted a heritage tree to the website. Lynn will forward the nomination to the Green Committee.

10. Citizen's comments

11. Next Meeting

- a. Meeting Date – December 7, 2023

12. Adjourn – Meeting adjourned at 8:26 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Ben Guthrie, Secretary