

**Bethlehem Environmental Advisory Council  
General Meeting  
February 1, 2024**

**Attendees:** EAC Members (red): Lynn Rothman (Chair), Ben Felzer (Vice Chair), Vibhor Kumar, Katie Trembler. Xuehua Zhang, Taryn Johnson (Lehigh student), Lisa Pammer (Green Pond composting)

Zoom: Mike Topping, Elke Rockwell, Miles Zakos, Anthony Bronico, Audrey McSain, Peg Church, Mandy Tolino, Ben Guthrie (Secretary), Colleen Laird

**Call to Order – 7:00 PM**

**1. Welcome**

**2. Approval of minutes (January):** Motion by Katie, seconded by Vibhor. Approved unanimously.

**3. Chair’s comments and amendments to agenda**

Ben Felzer reappointed to 3-year term

**4. Board comments and announcements:** None

**5. Committee reports**

**a. Bethlehem Backyards for Wildlife (Jane Cook) – None**

**b. Green Committee (Ben Felzer) –** Meeting second Thursday of March (Zoom, 7 pm); Lynn reports from a meeting of the Community Action Bethlehem Development Green Space Committee and the EJ Committee that a new mural planned along Greenway (near Hobard stair) – want to plant a mini meadow nearby along Greenway. Perhaps EAC could work with Community Action Bethlehem Development Green Space Committee; There is money left over from Madison Park project; new grant available for Greenway development; Urban Forestry Master Plan draft available for our review

**i. Bird Town PA (Vibhor Kumar) –** Submitted annual report yesterday. (Goal to move from Silver level to Gold); clutch meeting at Muhlenberg this Saturday (Vibhor to attend)

**c. Waste Reduction Committee (Katie Trembler) –** Restart meetings in March; Meeting with Xuehua for city-wide composting of food waste: two students (Taryn Johnson, Olympia Ransom) to work on summer fellowship under Xuehua; Xuehua spoke about getting zero food waste plan into Lehigh Valley plan (EPA grant to LV Planning Commission) – Comprehensive Climate Action Plan – get in touch with Ben’s former student (Christian Martinez who works for the LVPC – email with Lynn, Xuehua, Katie) – only few weeks left; Peg and Elke spoke to Director of Recycling for Bethlehem - food waste composting not on near-term list to do

**d. Transportation Committee (Ben Guthrie) –** Transportation emissions is focus but will broaden; meet week of Feb. 20 to discuss LVPC initiative and EV chargers

## 6. External committee reports

**Monocacy Creek Watershed Association (Lynn Rothman on behalf of Jane Cook) – none**

**Saucon Creek Watershed Association (Mike Topping) – none**

**City Council (Kiera Wilhelm + new EAC liaison Councilwoman Colleen Laird who is also on the City Council Parks and Recreation Committee):** passed along our recommendations for Walnut St. garage; student from William Penn working on biodegradable/compostable tray options for school; Kiera's report: written out – nice thank you for all our efforts; EV chargers on fire trucks; **First**, as I move into my new role as liaison to the BPA, I want to be sure to express my thanks and admiration to you, to all who serve on the EAC, and to those who attend meetings as involved citizens. Your hours and hours of volunteered time make a real impact on the health and safety of our community in so many ways. I've learned so much from each of you, and have been proud and grateful to serve as EAC liaison for the past two years. I'll continue to attend as I am able, and will be sure to continue to share out messaging through social media and other means. And I leave the role in very capable and caring hands with my new Council colleague, Colleen Laird! Thank you all, and please stay in touch.

**Second**, you may recall that there was some conversation about EV fire trucks at the last meeting. I mentioned that I would follow up, so I wanted to share the following information:

All of our Fire Department's purchases of smaller SUV vehicles are hybrid technology. For other smaller vehicles that stayed liquid fuel, there has been an effort to move from 8 cylinder down to more fuel-efficient 6 cylinder. Regarding large "pumper" trucks, EV technology for these large vehicles is new and continues to evolve. The department works with a large and reputable manufacturer called Pierce. At the time of my exchange with Chief Achey, Pierce had manufactured a total of three EV pumpers, with roughly 30 on order nationwide. The lead time is approximately 50 months, with a cost reaching close to \$2.5 million between the truck itself and the infrastructure needed to support it. The BPD continues to monitor this landscape as technology and manufacturing conspire to present a reasonable opportunity for potential purchase/acquisition.

I also thought you and the EAC would be interested to know about one of the Fire Department's other top priorities of the year. Following the discovery of PFAS chemicals in firefighting foams used to fight liquid fires, BFD is transitioning to a "green" version of this foam. (Chief Achey reports that fortunately in his 30-plus year career, BFD has used foam very infrequently.)

Here is some information about it:

<https://www.usfa.fema.gov/blog/firefighting-foams-pfas-vs-fluorine-free-foams/>

<https://www.nfpa.org/news-blogs-and-articles/nfpa-journal/2022/07/22/the-new-foam/foam-sidebar>

Other environmentally-aware efforts the BFD has made in the last few years include:

- Keeping current with the fire codes and a solid inspection program to ensure the reduction of fires
- Support for solar technology
- Enforcement of outside burning
- Direct runoff of chlorinated water away from storm sewers during trainings
- Ensuring that all hazardous materials incidents are properly mitigated under the advisement of the DEP

Peg questions why go from 8 to 6 cylinders, rather than EV or hybrid? How many vehicles are hybrid SUVs?

## 7. Old Business

### Climate Action Plan (Lynn Rothman):

- Community Action and EJ meeting report – mini meadow mentioned above. Would like to create a greenhouse at Broughal Middle School. Will restart monthly cleanups in April at city parks, dumpster day scheduled on South Side.
- EJ steering committee for CAP: Nurture Nature Create Connections project is a 4-year grant to educate people thru art and public engagement about climate and resilience – youth climate summit in April for Middle and High School students – we are invited to table (April 19/20 – 12 to 1 – Ben F possibly Saturday); Made possible by multiple grants the NNC– used census data to look at access to food, green space, economics, education, etc. in Bethlehem neighborhoods (livability) and came up with and equity score – about to release on GIS platform; Kate Jackson (Lehigh prof.) working on trash studies
- EES? *define* Lehigh University Climate Challenge April 3, 4:30-6:30, STEPs Concourse – EAC table (Katie).
- Bethlehem Climate Challenge – suggest should have things people can do to be more green on website; Other opportunities with Lehigh Earth Day?
- Xuehua inquires about getting zero waste onto radar of CAP Food and Waste Committee

## 8. New business

- Presentations at future EAC meetings rearranged to allow for students to report in May
- City looking to hire Sustainability Officer for long term. Currently WSP Environmental Consulting Company that wrote the CAP is retained by City to assist in implementation
- Lynn's daughter researching prevalence of mosquitos across different socio-economic neighborhoods and correlation with native and non-native vegetation – schedule for short presentation to EAC

**9. Citizen's comments**

- Peg: Foodware – how to reduce styrofoam usage? Waste Reduction Committee - will discussed at March meeting (also fix styrofoam recycling machine); ban on styrofoam.
- Elke: recycling plastic film – Trex company – is it feasible for City to consider? Discuss at next Waste Reduction Committee Meeting
- Lisa: several bans exist at municipal level but nothing state-wide

**10. Next Meeting**

**Meeting Date** – March 7, 2024

**11. Adjourn** – Meeting adjourned at 8:30 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Ben Guthrie, Secretary