

Bethlehem Environmental Advisory Council
General Meeting
March 7, 2024

Attendees: EAC Members: Lynn Rothman (Chair - Virtual), Ben Felzer (Vice Chair), Ben Guthrie (Secretary - Virtual), Vibhor Kumar, Katie Trembler, Mandy Tolino (Virtual), Mike Topping (Virtual)

Guests/Community Members: Sherri Penchishen, Bureau of Health (Virtual), Anthony Bronico (Virtual), London D (Virtual), Spencer Smith (Virtual), Kathy Fox (Virtual), Greg Zahm (Virtual), Al Wurth (Virtual), Xuehua Zhang (Virtual), Taryn Johnson (Virtual), Martha Bosworth (Virtual), Kathryn Semmens (Virtual), Peg Church (Virtual), Megan Lysowski (Virtual).

Call to Order – 7:00 PM

1. Welcome

2. Approval of minutes (February): Motion by Mike Topping, seconded by Vibhor Kumar. Approved unanimously.

3. Climate Action Plan Local Food and Waste Committee update – Sherri Penchishen, Bureau of Health

- a. Zero Waste at Large Events** - Met with festival organizers last year and asked them to consider ways to reduce waste and increase recycling.
- b. Community Gardens** - Three new community gardens have been installed: at Clearview Park, Rockland Park, and Yellis Tract. They also installed a community garden at the Boys and Girls Club at Pembroke.
- c. Food Recovery** - At the CSA farmstand, people can donate food from their farm share that they are not going to use. The committee is looking for opportunities to recover food from restaurants, but they are still researching the logistics and best practices for proper procedures.
- d. Reduction of Food Waste** - Working on a community composting program. A trial run is being considered for the installation of compost bins at the community garden sites.

4. Chair's comments and amendments to agenda

- a. Spring Stream Cleanup** - A Monocacy Creek clean-up event is planned to start at Burnside Plantation (proceeding north and south along the Creek) on Saturday, April 13, from 9:00-11:30 A.M.
- b. Lehigh Valley Planning Commission** - Recently released annual report.
- c. Youth Climate Summit (April 19/20)** - If anyone at the meeting knows youth that might be interested, more information and the link to register can be found here: <https://nurturenaturecenter.org/youth-climate-summit-of-the-lehigh-valley/>
- d. Volunteer opportunities at the Youth Climate Summit in April:** Looking for adults to help with setup, lunch, taking notes, spreading the word before the event, and more.

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0B4EA9AC2DA6FDC07-47951385-youth#/>.

- e. **Amendments to Agenda** - Two items have been added to the agenda under New Business.

5. Board comments and announcements - None

6. Committee reports

- a. **Bethlehem Backyards for Wildlife (Jane Cook)** – BFFW will be setting the Hoover Mason Trestle garden bed workdays for the spring and summer in the next month. There will be a workday at the Meadow on the Southside Greenway during late March or early April, still to be scheduled.
- b. **Green Committee (Ben Felzer)** – The committee is currently reviewing the Urban Forestry Master Plan and will provide comments to the City Forester by Monday, March 11. The PA Native Plant Society has grants available, and is considering a potential application due April 1. The committee is scheduled to meet on Thursday March 14 at 7:00.
- a. **Bird Town PA (Vibhor Kumar)** – There was a recent event at Muhlenberg College. Discussion was focused on reducing bird collisions with glass.
- c. **Waste Reduction Committee (Katie Trembler)** – The committee’s next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, March 27 at 7:00. The agenda will include citywide composting, a styrofoam ban, scheduling community cleanups, and revisiting a potential plastic bag ban.
- d. **Transportation Committee (Ben Guthrie)** - The committee met on Tuesday, February 27, 2024. Steve Olshevski is continuing to work to advance a pilot project for pole mounted EV chargers. He had a conversation with Councilwoman Kiera Wilhelm about facilitating a meeting with the Bethlehem Parking Authority. The committee also discussed mapping bicycle routes through Bethlehem, using Google Maps at first and then eventually GIS. Anthony Bronico brought up a program in Williamsburg, VA where the community subsidizes the cost of businesses installing bike racks.

7. External committee reports

- a. **Monocacy Creek Watershed Association (Lynn Rothman on behalf of Jane Cook)** – A Monocacy Creek clean-up event is planned to start at Burnside Plantation on Saturday, April 13, from 9:00-11:30 A.M. Last week the MCWA planted 40 red osier dogwood live stakes along the west bank of the Monocacy, downstream of Illick’s Mill. Two members gave a presentation to the monthly Trout Unlimited meeting in Bethlehem on February 29. Their talk included maps to show the proliferation of warehouses in the Lehigh Valley in recent years and as proposed for the future, with an emphasis on the possible negative impacts on the creek and other waterways. The MCWA is continuing to monitor the proposal for a warehouse/distribution center at Route 22 and Center Street in Bethlehem. As a result of letters that were sent to the PA DEP during the open comment period from December 9 to January 8, the DEP will be holding a public hearing on this proposal.

- b. **Saucon Creek Watershed Association (Mike Topping)** – No report.
- c. **City Council (Councilwoman Colleen Laird)** - No report.

8. Old Business

a. **Climate Action Plan (Lynn Rothman)**

- i. **Environmental Justice Implementation Committee** - Idea for Native Beautification Fund that would support the installation of native plants. Considering changes to the Farmers Market. Southside Cleanup is April 13.
- ii. **Public Engagement Implementation Committee** - Considering follow-up with people that participated in the Climate Challenge, per suggestions from previous EAC meetings.

9. New business

- a. **Student Projects (Ben Felzer)** - Ben provided a summary of two ongoing community projects. A proposed summer fellowship by students London Diiorio and Taryn Johnson is to work with Xuehua Zhang to explore composting of food waste in Bethlehem and Lehigh University. The second proposed summer fellowship by Olympia Ransom is continuation of ongoing project led by Lizzie Hayes to explore the role of traffic patterns and meteorology on air quality in Bethlehem, as a subset of the larger Lehigh Valley Breathes project with Breena Holland.
- b. **Lehigh University Climate Action Plan (Ben Felzer)** - Event on April 3 at STEPs building (4:30-6:00) - Climate Action: Create Your Future - event is open to university and community partners.
- c. **2024 State EAC Network Conference (Ben Felzer)** - The conference was held on February 24, 2024. Lynn Rothman, Ben Felzer, and Vibhor Kumar attended.

10. Citizen's comments

- a. **Environmental Club at Liberty High School (Greg Zahm)** - Students are preparing a petition to increase environmental education at the school, with a focus on climate change.
- b. **Air Quality (Peg Church)** - Last year the Lehigh Valley region was named the asthma capital of the United States by the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (AAFA).

11. Next Meeting

- a. **Meeting Date** – April 4, 2024

12. Adjourn – Meeting adjourned at 8:30 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Ben Guthrie, Secretary