

**LOWER GWYNEDD TOWNSHIP BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
JOINT MEETING WITH THE EAC
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 29, 2024**

SUPERVISORS:

Danielle A. Duckett, Chairman
Michael Twersky, Vice Chair
Janine Martin – via zoom
Tessie McNeely
Jimmy Chong

STAFF:

Mimi Gleason, Township Manager
Jamie Worman, Assistant Township Manager
Michelle Farzetta, Office Manager
Neil Stein, Esq., Solicitor
John Farrell – Project Manager/EMC – via zoom
Sandi Feight – Parks and Recreation Director

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

The Chair called the hybrid meeting to order at 7:03pm at the Lower Gwynedd Township Building and virtually on Zoom and led those in attendance in the pledge of allegiance.

INTRODUCTION OF ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS

The Environmental Advisory Council (EAC) members in attendance were Rich Valiga, Maureen Nunn, Lisa Brown, Marc Schafer, Rea Monaghan, Brenda Doll, and Maryann Grey. Each member introduced themselves to the Board of Supervisors (BOS) and stated their number of years as a Lower Gwynedd resident, number of years on EAC and their background as it relates their role on the EAC.

REVIEW OF FUNCTION OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

Ms. Duckett read the EAC mission statement stating that the EAC with the township staff and the BOS educate, facilitate, and promote sustainable practices within the township and the greater community through educational workshops and programs, articles, and community events.

2023 YEAR IN REVIEW

Ms. Duckett read through the list of accomplishments the EAC had in 2023. These accomplishments include the bird walks, storm drain marking, public educational activities such as the movie nights and clean up events. She also mentioned the tree giveaway, battery, holiday lights and techno trash recycling. The last accomplishment mentioned was recognizing residents and businesses that exemplified environmental stewardship with the “Going Green” awards.

2024 LONG RANGE PLANS

For 2024 and 2025 the EAC would like to continue educational programs for the residents and business owners, work with township entities and outside organizations to conduct volunteer operations to

maximize impact and build a stronger local environmental network and work with the township's existing plans to promote environmental practices and education.

Ms. McNeely stated that the EAC is asking for BOS support and resources moving forward. She would like decisions to be made regarding items staff and the BOS can support and for priorities to be set.

The first topic discussed was Land Stewardship and efforts to promote diverse habitats, healthy trees, soil and woodlands. The BOS suggested that the EAC continue the Native Tree Giveaway, public speakers, giveaways, workshops, and newsletter articles. The EAC should also continue to support Arbor Day, Tree City and Earth Day objectives. Lisa Brown mentioned a few events they have planned including a PECO energy assessment on March 6th, an attic stair cover giveaway and an event to discuss solar options. Conversation also revolved around providing strategies for taking care of native plants and gardens. There was also discussion on how to deter deer and the associated maintenance required for long term results. Deer damaging gardens is an ongoing problem; therefore, providing some education on deer management would be beneficial.

The EAC would like to provide recurring environmental education through demonstration gardens. The plan would be to partner with the Parks and Recreation Board and Township staff to identify locations where projects may be undertaken. Examples would be pollinator pathways, rain gardens, planting/cleanup projects along trails and educating residents on invasive plants. These would be small manageable volunteer projects accessible to residents. Ms. McNeely said that Ms. Feight is working on a volunteer handbook to help guide volunteers on these types of committees.

Mr. Farrell stated that he is working with Ms. Feight on a tree plan. The Township will have an arborist identify trees to be removed and planted on township properties. Staff will seek input and feedback from the EAC. The EAC would like to coordinate with other entities to coordinate reforestation in the township. They also asked if Mr. Farrell could attend future meetings and provide updates on the status of this project.

Water Stewardship, efforts to conserve water, reduce runoff and promote clean healthy waterways was discussed next. Mr. Schafer asked to discuss stormwater management education. Ms. McNeely asked if it would be possible to put together a forum to discuss this issue. Ms. Gleason stated that our Township Engineer is working on a Stormwater Master Plan to develop solutions to the most pressing problems. She asked if we could please wait until this is complete, so we are able to get ourselves more informed.

Mr. Schafer inquired about how the stream and streambank restoration at the Springhouse intersection would be handled in the construction. After looking at the intersection on a map it was decided that we would need to first find out who the owner is of the property and then we can figure out who would be responsible for the restoration and how it should be handled.

Ms. Duckett said that projects are being coordinated through the Wissahickon Clean Water Partnership. (WCWP) They are working to create a Watershed-wide Quality Improvement Plan (WQIP) for Wissahickon Creek.

Resource Conservation, efforts to reduce waste and promote a smaller carbon footprint was a topic important to many in attendance. The idea of a single use plastics ban was discussed, however, as Mr. Schafer stated there is not a consensus among the EAC members to make a recommendation to the BOS. Therefore, Mr. Schafer would prefer to watch and observe what others are doing before making a recommendation. Melinda Wolfe, 930 Ridgeview Lane, presented information regarding the 10 municipalities that have put a ban on single use plastics. She also shared data related to age groups and

their use of plastic bags. She stated that plastic bags are an environmental issue, they are made with chemicals that are dangerous to our health. Ms. Wolfe suggested the EAC form a sub-committee with residents who could come up with a plan.

Mary Cullum from Arpeggio said she has done research regarding container materials. The containers they use do not contain these chemicals. Ms. Cullum said education is very important. Encouraging people to bring their own containers would be one way to cut back on the use of these plastics. Judy Inskeep, from Foulkeways, stated she always brings containers to restaurants for leftovers, and she also brings her own reusable bags to the grocery stores.

Mr. Twersky stated that just because other townships have put a plastic ban in place does not mean others should too. A ban should be put in place only if it is the right thing to do. The BOS will wait for a recommendation from the EAC. Most grocery stores will recycle plastic bags, but do we know how many people take advantage of this? What happens to the bags that are dropped off for recycling? Ms. Nunn stated that she contacted Giant Food Store and spoke with someone regarding sustainability. She was informed that plastic bags dropped off are used for their "Bags to Benches" program. Ms. Duckett said steps should be taken to educate the public, as well as outreach to community partners.

Mr. Schafer thanked Ms. Wolfe for the information she presented and accepts the charge to explore educational opportunities on this subject. Ms. Nunn said sometimes plastics are okay. A life cycle analysis would be required to see if the product is safe. It is not a simple decision; it is a complex process. You need to know where the information comes from. Is it from the EPA or other government agencies? There is information out there on both sides of the topic.

Lower Gwynedd Township signed a pledge to take the township to 100% clean energy by 2035 for electricity and 2050 for heating, transportation, and public works equipment. This is an ambitious goal and will require upgrades to township operations. Ms. Duckett stated that PECO conducted an energy audit of Lower Gwynedd Townships facilities in March of 2021. The audit indicated that there were few areas remaining for improvement. Energy efficiency improvements already conducted include replacing all lighting in the interior of certain buildings, all parking lot lighting, and all streetlights with LED. Heat pumps, hot water heater, HVAC system, doors and windows in the township building have all been replaced with high efficiency products and the doors to the Public Works section of the Township building were replaced with garage doors that have robust insulation. Ms. Duckett also shared the data regarding usage of the ChargePoint EV charging stations on township properties in 2023. There was an estimated savings of 2,381 KG of greenhouse gas emissions and 416 gallons of gasoline using these stations.

A taskforce for energy transition is to be created to facilitate the townships energy transition. This task force would determine resources needed, timing and methods for the path forward. There appeared to be confusion regarding whose responsibility it would be to initiate forming this committee. The BOS expected the EAC to assemble this task force, while the EAC was under the impression that the BOS would handle this. Ms. Nunn thought we were holding off for the Comprehensive Plan to be completed. However, it would be another 18 months before that plan would be completed. After some additional conversation, Mr. Schafer said the EAC will accept charge of this task.

The last topic discussed was Communication and Outreach. The EAC would like to ensure accurate, timely communication with residents about EAC activities and environmental developments of interest. Staff have rolled out a new Instagram page and are working on producing more engaging content for social media and e-news. The staff is also working on developing a social media guide to give staff and

volunteers a clearer direction about content and sources for posts. The BOS encouraged the EAC to continue providing content for the printed newsletter, e-newsletter, and social media. Composting continues to be a high priority for the EAC, so they will continue to promote composting to residents and business with outreach campaigns and workshops. The EAC will also continue to promote and provide opportunities to recycle batteries, techno trash, electronics, and holiday lights. Last, they will recognize environmentally friendly practices with the Going Green Awards.

An ongoing concern for the EAC is how to get information out to residents. Ms. Gleason stated that we advertise events on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, as well as the township website. Information also goes out to residents through the e-newsletter, however, not everyone has signed up to receive the e-notifications. We can only send information out to those who have provided us with their emails.

Ms. Brown's concern is that not everyone is on social media or receives email notifications. There must be a better way to get the information regarding events and workshops out to the public. Would it be possible to send information to local businesses, churches and HOA's so they can post flyers? Ms. McNeely suggested advertising at other community events. Ms. Feight stated that information is posted on the signs at Veteran's Park. Events are also posted on the electronic sign in front of the township building, however there is limited space on the sign, therefore only one event or meeting can be advertised at a time.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Wolfe asked if the EAC was working on best practices with builders. Mr. Schafer said the EAC and Planning Commission have a partnership. Two of our members are on the Planning Commission, as well. We are not able to enforce changes to building plans, but we can make suggestions during the planning stages. It was then asked if the side effects of light pollution are ever addressed. Mr. Valiga replied that there is a lighting ordinance that dictates what can be used. If information is not included on a plan, then the applicant is reminded to include information related to the lighting.

Ms. Duckett thanked the EAC for all their work and engagement in the community.

SUPERVISOR COMMENTS

Ms. Mc Nelly thanked the EAC members for their work and dedication.

Ms. Martin echoed those comments. She also said they should not feel alone.

Mr. Chong said he is still learning all the info, but it is important what they are doing and to keep the BOS informed.

Mr. Twersky echoed all the comments.

Ms. Duckett thanked the staff for all their work in helping the EAC to get the projects done.

Adjournment

Ms. Duckett made a motion at 9:04pm, seconded by Mr. Twersky to adjourn the meeting. Motion passed 5-0.

Michelle Farzetta