

SMITHFIELD TOWNSHIP ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING – JULY 16, 2024 AT 7:00PM

A Regular Meeting of the Smithfield Township Environment Advisory Council was held on July 16, 2024, at the Smithfield Township Municipal Center at 1155 Red Fox Rd, East Stroudsburg, PA 18301, and via Zoom.

Present were Councilors Brett Cartwright, Mitch Bowyer, Ken LeSure, and Eric White, Commissioner James Munet, Supervisor Michael Albert, Conservation & Recreation Director Alex Jackson.

Also present were Jean Turn and Pauline Wesley.

1. **Vice Chair Brett Cartwright called the meeting to order at 7:03PM.**
2. **The Pledge of Allegiance is recited.**
3. **Minutes:**

- a. **Regular Meeting – June 18, 2024.**

The minutes from the previous meeting were reviewed by the Council. It was noted that there were some minor formatting and grammatical adjustments needed.

Michael Albert motioned to approve the minutes with the specified changes, Brett Cartwright seconded. Vote: All in favor; motion carried.

4. **Old Business:**

- a. **“A Community Guide to Local Land Use” Document.**

The Council reviewed the "Public Participation and Empowerment" document provided at the last meeting, noting it aligns with the Township's ordinance recommendations. Key points include tips for proposing ordinance amendments, understanding public meetings, making effective public comments, and the importance of early participation.

Council members found the document useful for understanding municipal operations, especially for those without prior civic experience. It was suggested that the document should be made available on the Township's website as a PDF for easy public access. Michael Albert will discuss with webmasters adding a link to the document on the Township's website.

A proposal was made to offer a tutorial on navigating the Township's website and using eCode, aiming to help members and residents find specific ordinance provisions and standards. Members were encouraged to explore the website and eCode independently before the next meeting. There was a further discussion on the importance of Council reviewing upcoming ordinance changes. The Council consensus is to have a standing agenda item for updates on upcoming ordinances.

b. Update on Open Space Future Directions.

Brett Cartwright reported that Gary Swartz might be willing to sell his property under certain conditions. The township can't exceed the face value for purchase without additional donors. Michael Albert reported that he and Pat Owens met with Louise Troutman and Jen Shukaitis from Pocono Heritage Land Trust, who provided historical documents in a Dropbox folder for EAC members to review.

Michael Albert emphasized identifying property owners willing to sell or place easements, managed by the Land Trust. The Land Trust is open to involvement if suitable properties and sellers are found. Groundwork is needed to identify and approach owners.

Michael Albert noted that a tax increase is unlikely next year, making the bond implementation process less urgent. The Council discussed realtors and how GIS mapping can help identify conservation-minded landowners. Brett Cartwright suggested considering Buttermilk Falls, a valuable property for conservation due to its location and protection potential.

The Council proposed a strategy to approach Buttermilk Falls' owners and other properties. Alex Jackson and Michael Albert will share historical documents. Members should review these for future discussions.

c. Smithfield Sewer Authority.

Alex Jackson drafted a letter requesting from the Sewer Authority a 15-minute overview of the operations of a wastewater treatment plant and a 15-minute presentation on the history of the Sewer Authority and its service areas, leaving it up to the Sewer Authority to decide how best to present these topics this year. After some discussion, Brett Cartwright made a motion to call Russ Albert II to ask if he could come in for two 15-minute presentations before sending the formal letter, Mitch Bowyer seconded. Vote: All in favor; motion carries.

Alex Jackson introduced the topic of discussions between the PA Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP) and Gilmore Associates, representing the Smithfield Sewer Authority, regarding the expansion of the central sewer line along Route 209. After some discussion, concerns were raised about the increased sewage volume, the wastewater plant's use of chlorine for effluent disinfection, the impact of effluent water temperature, and the out-of-basin transfer of groundwater from the Marshalls Creek Watershed to the East Stroudsburg Wastewater Treatment Plant.

Alex Jackson asked to have the EAC send a letter to request the PA DEP include the Township engineer, Township Manager, and Brodhead Creek Regional Authority in future scoping meetings. After further discussion, Brett Cartwright made a motion to draft the letter of invitation; this motion was seconded by James Munet. Vote: All in favor; motion carried.

The Council agreed that more research on the current Smithfield Sewer Authority sewer expansion plan is needed to understand the broader water quality implications. The Council

consensus was to have this topic on the agenda. After further discussion, Michael Albert stated that the Sewer Authority is technically a separate entity from the Township. More discussion ensued, and Brett Cartwright asked if the Smithfield Sewer Authority might be willing to consider changing their meeting time so that more members of the public could attend.

d. Water Resource Buffers.

Mitch Bowyer had previously sent out an article about resource buffers, which was well-received by the Council. This article surveyed 1,550 ordinances and nine model ordinances. The authors are experts in the field, making it a logical reference. Mitch Bowyer pointed out that there was a motion to conduct our own survey to develop recommendations, which he believed was unnecessary, but the motion passed. Therefore, the EAC needs to decide on the next steps.

Mitch Bowyer emphasized that extensive research might not be necessary and understanding the complexity of the issue could guide the discussions. Knowing there is no standard answer can help in decision-making. The authors advocate for using good science in decision-making, and it is crucial for local government to rely on scientific expertise to achieve effective results and meet legal challenges.

Michael Albert stated that the current wetland ordinance, already passed by the supervisors, increased protection compared to previous regulations. Michael Albert noted that if the EAC feels strongly about improving the ordinance, it is still possible, as ordinances can change over time.

Mitch Bowyer suggested that the EAC should not work on issues not requested by the governing body, as it might be ineffective. He recommended that the group continue to advocate for buffers and possibly revisit the topic in six months. Michael Albert suggests the discussion on wetland buffering would be an ongoing topic in future meetings under "Old Business," titled "Discussion on Wetlands Buffering in the Township."

Mitch Bowyer made a motion to add this ongoing topic as an agenda item, James Munet Seconded. Vote: All in favor; motion carried.

5. New Business:

a. November & December Meeting Change of Date.

Alex Jackson will review the calendar for potential conflicts and adjust meeting dates if necessary. Michael Albert stated that the only potential conflict would arise if the supervisors move their meetings, which has not yet been decided. Follow-up is needed to clarify the issue.

6. Public Comments:

Mitch Bowyer and Brett Cartwright addressed the need for formal feedback on EAC recommendations. They emphasized that knowing whether recommendations were accepted or

rejected, and the reasons behind these decisions, is crucial. A discussion ensued on how the Township makes decisions as a body, including a detailed discussion on recent zoning decisions at public meetings.

Jean Turn commented that the website specifically outlines the power of the Council. Discussions ensued on the EAC focusing on top priority issues.

Pauline Wesley expressed concerns about zoning changes and potential impacts on their property, with concerns of a factory that might be built nearby. They were advised to attend relevant meetings and contact the Township office for more information.

Adjournment: There being no other business before the Council, Michael Albert motioned to adjourn, Ken LeSure seconded. Vote: All in favor; meeting adjourned at 8:35PM.

Minutes recorded by Alex Jackson

Respectfully submitted,



Julia Heilakka, Township Secretary