

SMITHFIELD TOWNSHIP ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING – SEPTEMBER 17, 2024 AT 7:00PM

A Regular Meeting of the Smithfield Township Environment Advisory Council was held on September 17, 2024, at the Smithfield Township Municipal Center at 1155 Red Fox Rd, East Stroudsburg, PA 18301, and via Zoom.

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

Also present were Jean Turn and Kristine Karol.

1. Chair Pat Owens called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

2. The Pledge of Allegiance is recited.

3. Minutes:

a. Regular Meeting – August 20, 2024.

Mitch Bowyer made a motion to approve the minutes, and Michael Albert seconded. Discussion: Pat Owens addressed the council on Robert's Rules, and further emphasizing the EAC's role in identifying environmental consequences on certain township matters and the importance of proactive communication. Pat Owens reminded the Council about some unfinished tasks and acknowledged the diverse contributions of committee members, stressing the need for collaboration, setting objectives, and defining outputs. Mitch Bowyer highlighted the importance of including feedback from Supervisors on EAC recommendations in the agendas. The Council engaged in a discussion on several subjects, including Sunshine Act clarifications, communication between council members, and EAC agenda items. Vote: Pat Owens, Eric White, Brett Cartwright, Mitch Bowyer, Ken LeSure, and Commissioner James Munet vote in favor, Supervisor Michael Albert abstains; motion carried.

4. Announcements:

- a.** The EAC November and December meeting dates have been changed to Wednesday, November 20, 2024, and Wednesday, December 18, 2024, at 7:00 p.m.
- b.** There will be an EAC presentation on eCode at the regularly scheduled EAC meeting on October 15, 2024.
- c.** The upcoming Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission joint meeting will discuss the Sign Ordinance on Thursday, October 17, 2024, at 7:00 p.m.
- d.** The Smithfield Township Trunk or Treat & Fall Fest will be held on October 26, 2024, from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., and the EAC is asked to volunteer for this event.

5. Old Business:

- a. Discuss: Subcommittee Report on Open Space Inventory.**

Council members clarified the process of identifying properties on the open space inventory, agreeing that the group, rather than individuals, should be involved in reaching out to property owners. It was confirmed that the current list of properties would be revisited, and any information on properties up for sale would be valuable.

The discussion then shifted to a specific property, where it was noted that the owners had recently submitted a sketch plan to the township. Alex Jackson explained the difference between a sketch plan and a land development plan.

The Council discussed the need for more detailed information about the properties in question. Buttermilk Falls was highlighted as being quite complex, and members agreed on gathering data before drawing any conclusions. It was reiterated that identifying the intentions and interests of property owners was essential for making informed decisions moving forward. The group reached a consensus on the importance of establishing clear evaluation criteria for protecting open space and continuing this discussion as a subcommittee.

Kristine Karol inquired about the document under discussion.

b. Discuss: Proposed List of 'Environmental Problems'.

Pat Owens instructed each council member to discuss their personal list of perceived environmental problems one at a time. Mitch Bowyer stated that his view of environmental problems emphasized the appearance of the township, such as blighted properties, ordinance violations, signage issues, light pollution, and concerns with so-called renewable energy, such as commercial solar arrays. Councilor Bowyer highlighted the township's outdated comprehensive plan from 2001, which originally aimed to maintain the rural character, and expressed concern about development not being guided by this plan.

James Munet discussed glyphosate as an environmental problem, noting that while its patent had expired, it remained a significant issue. Councilor Munet also addressed water quality concerns, specifically mentioning PFAS or "forever chemicals." The Council noted that wastewater treatment plants (WWTPs) were now required to test for PFAS.

Brett Cartwright highlighted the need for better transportation infrastructure, and amenities such as bike lanes and sidewalks, and further advocated for Township resistance on variance and waiver requests to not have to put in sidewalks. Councilor Cartwright also emphasized the importance of stormwater management and the need to consider downstream effects. Councilor Cartwright further discussed the potential negative impact of data centers, and the importance of demonstrating and educating visitors about the township's natural beauty. Councilor Cartwright concluded with the need to protect Buttermilk Falls, and establishing a river access point facility in the Shawnee-Minisink part of the river in an organized fashion. The Council Members discussed a proposed Kayak/Canoe Launch, noting that significant funding was available. Michael Albert mentioned that a plan was being discussed for River's Edge on this subject.

Eric White advocated for adopting sustainable practices and educating the public on these concepts, citing Ithaca as an example of a sustainable township model. Councilor White suggested limiting mowed lawns in the township and expressed concerns about sewage systems and stormwater management. He also agreed that lighting and signage were environmental problems in Smithfield Township and emphasized the need for educational programs such as how sewage treatment facilities handle flushed items.

Ken Lesure emphasized concerns about overdevelopment and various forms of pollution, such as light and noise, as well as water quality issues that threatened the Township's clean environment. Councilor LeSure emphasized that overdevelopment throughout Monroe County was threatening peace, quiet, clean air, clean water, and scenic viewsheds.

Michael Albert commented that the EAC should view issues through an environmental lens and that items that comes to the Supervisors should also be evaluated from this perspective by the EAC. Supervisor Albert used an example of the length of people's lawns, pointing out that a lawn consistently kept at a low height may not be ideal from an environmental standpoint. Michael also emphasized focusing on issues within the EAC's authority and encouraged EAC awareness of existing regulations and agencies, so as not to duplicate efforts on matters already strictly regulated.

Michael Albert made a motion to table the discussion until the next meeting, which was seconded by Mitch Bowyer. Discussion: Pat Owens commended the organization and the contributions of the group members, noting the valuable perspectives shared during the session and encouraged members to maintain this momentum moving forward. Vote: All in favor; motion carried.

c. Discuss: Possible Dates for a Proposed Tour of the Pen Argyl WM Facility.

The Council Members discussed a potential tour of the Waste Management Facility in Pen Argyl. Members were asked to indicate their availability for a tour. Council Members discussed how the Smithfield Sewer Authority wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) differed from the Pen Argyl Waste Management (WM) Facility. The Council clarified that the WM facility was used for trash processing, while the WWTP handled sewage. Alex Jackson agreed to send out a poll to Council Members for a possible tour date.

d. Discuss: Environmental or Water Quality Complaint Form.

The Council discussed the Environmental Quality Complaint Form and noted that it had already been implemented on the township's website. Council members agreed to send a letter thanking the Board for adopting this policy, which now includes an email address. The Council also discussed ways to promote this form to the community, suggesting that the EAC promote it at the October 26th Trunk or Treat event.

Michael Albert motioned that the edited letter, stating that the EAC approves of this action, be sent to the Township, Pat Owens seconded the motion. Vote: all in favor; motion carried.

Mitch Bowyer requested further township updates, and Alex Jackson explained that inquiries had been made with the County Planning Commission about integrating the environmentally sensitive areas index into the official map discussion. Alex Jackson further stated that another inquiry had been made regarding the 2001 Comprehensive Plan. The lighting ordinance recommendation had been sent to the Board of Supervisors and was under review by relevant township entities, indicating positive progress.

6. New Business:

a. Discuss: County Hazard Mitigation Community Outreach Survey.

The Council discussed the County Hazard Mitigation survey, encouraging members to complete it using either a QR code or a direct link. The survey was described as an important initiative. Council Members were asked to complete the Survey before their next meeting due to its time-sensitive nature.

b. Presentation: Tutorial on Developer Project Page on Township Website.

Alex Jackson provided Council Members with a quick tutorial on accessing the developer project page on the Smithfield Township website, a topic frequently mentioned in previous meetings. Alex Jackson shared their screen and walked members through the process of finding land development plans, subdivisions currently under consideration by the township. Starting from the township's homepage, he directed attention to the "Resources" tab, then selecting "Open Developer Projects". This page allows the public to access materials without filing a Right-to-Know request.

Alex Jackson also demonstrated how to access ordinances by returning to "Resources" and then selecting "Open Township Projects." Dr. Jackson noted that current initiatives included the light ordinance, noise ordinance, River's Edge Bike Park Master Site Plan, and a draft sign ordinance update. Council members were encouraged to use this resource to prepare for the upcoming sign ordinance meeting on October 17th. After the tutorial, Brett Cartwright inquired about collecting public comments on these projects. Alex Jackson clarified that public comments were typically gathered through meeting minutes.

c. Discussion: Riley Zoning Change Request.

Council Members discussed a request before the Township Planning Commission to re-zone 88 acres from Residential Conservation (R-C) to Economic Development (ED). The Council discussed environmental concerns and noted issues that were raised during the Township Planning Commission discussion. They questioned why the landowner was requesting this change, whether it complied with the Township Comprehensive Plan, and what risks it posed for the Township.

Jean Turn commented that the landowner had specific ideas for the property. Kristine Karol commented that the Planning Commission considered the zoning change a significant

request and suggested the applicant reconsider. Ms. Karol reiterated the discussion points from the Township Planning Commission meeting in September. James Munet pointed out that the proposed property bordered Mount Nebo Park. Jean Turn commented on her impression that the applicant might be misunderstanding certain aspects of the process. Council Members discussed how that further review by the Township Planning Commission was anticipated and no EAC action was needed at this time.

7. Public Comment

Kristine Karol asked for clarification about the Pickup the Poconos event, and Alex Jackson noted that the event had been taken off the Township calendar.

Brett Cartwright requested increased communication between various Township departments, emphasizing that the EAC profile needed to be raised so that the EAC could be consulted during reviews. Michael Albert suggested that the Environmental Advisory Council could be added as a standing item on the Board of Supervisors' agenda.

8. Meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Minutes recorded by Alex Jackson

Respectfully submitted,



Julia Heilakka, Township Secretary

