

SMITHFIELD TOWNSHIP ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING – NOVEMBER 20, 2024, AT 7:00PM

A Regular Meeting of the Smithfield Township Environment Advisory Council was held on November 20, 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 Doug Shryver, Francis Shryver, Marguerite Vecchio, Vicky Ozgun, and Charlene Spezza.

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

2. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

3. Minutes:

a. October 15, 2024 Regular Meeting.

Michael Albert motioned to approve the minutes, with an edit to have Brett Cartwright call the meeting to order, Brett Cartwright seconded. Vote: Eric White, Brett Cartwright, Mitch Bowyer, Michael Albert, and James Munet in favor; Ken LeSure and Pat Owens abstained: motion carried.

4. Announcements:

a. River's Edge Park Online Survey and December 11, 2024 at 6p.m., River's Edge Park Master Site Plan Public Meeting.

Alex Jackson announced that the River's Edge survey remains active through January. A review identified some outdated road names; however, the survey appears functioning as intended. Pat Owens inquired about expanding outreach efforts, which led to a discussion. Mitch Bowyer asked about the survey's purpose and details and commented on written communication in Middle Smithfield Township. Pat Owens noted that this discussion ties into broader efforts to enhance resident engagement, and Michael Albert mentioned the December 11, 2024, River's Edge Bike Park meeting as an opportunity for residents to provide feedback.

Francis Shryver commented on descriptions of park features, such as trail mileage, to provide residents with more detailed information. Charlene Spezza commented on the disc golf baskets at River's Edge Park and Alex Jackson confirmed that nine baskets have been installed in 2024.

5. Old Business:

a. Discuss: Open Space Inventory Update.

Brett Cartwright provided an overview and referenced a list of properties identified as having environmental open space value. Alex Jackson commented that the subcommittee categorized properties into clusters and created an updated bubble map for presentation.

The Council noted that the subcommittee prioritized larger properties and those adjacent to existing protect land in their analysis. Also discussed were criteria on the existence of freshwater resources, recreational or conservation potential, and accessibility. Michael Albert highlighted the importance of the criteria used to identify these properties, suggesting that replicable criteria were as critical as the list itself. A discussion ensued regarding the need for a follow-up subcommittee meeting.

Pat Owens and Michael Albert recommended the subcommittee prepare a brief presentation for the Board of Supervisors (BOS) to provide an overview of the findings and recommendations. Brett Cartwright concurred, suggesting that the criteria and bubble map be consolidated into a straightforward 4-5 page document for BOS consideration. This document would include the updated bubble map and a text description and refinement of the criteria to guide future decision-making.

6. New Business:

a. Update: Data Center Criteria.

The Council discussed the current criteria regulating data centers and emphasized the need for updates. Pat Owens noted an increase in data center applications and stressed the importance of revisiting these standards. A discussion ensued on data center technology, historic location of data centers in the United States, the dependence on existing utilities, and economic development in the region.

Ken LeSure inquired about the resource demands of data centers, including their large physical footprint, significant electricity consumption, and cooling water requirements. Alex Jackson provided visual materials illustrating the infrastructure associated with data centers, including power lines, substations, and generators.

Pat Owens commended the Township Supervisors for proactively addressing the issue, and Brett Cartwright noted the economy-of-scale nature of data center operations, explaining that some facilities exceed 20 acres in size. He referenced a developer's recent public comment to Smithfield Township regarding plans to explore a 600,000 to 1-million-square-foot data center.

Brett Cartwright also raised concerns about the future use of such large buildings and a discussion ensued. The Council concluded with agreement on the importance of updating ordinances to address these emerging issues.

b. Discuss: Environmental/Community Impact Criteria.

The Council discussed the Township's SALDO general standards for natural features. Alex Jackson highlighted for the Council the existing flexibility in the criteria, citing examples from recent land development reviews. Pat Owens questioned whether the term minimization as written could be too flexible, and cited an example, which led to a discussion.

Michael Albert emphasized that the Supervisors and Planning Commission can request additional detail when specific waivers are sought. Pat Owens identified this as a significant issue and suggested that the EAC explore taking up recommending clarifications to vague SALDO elements.

The Council then discussed added evaluation of the existing criteria, referencing examples from other townships and a draft document by PennFuture. Michael Albert emphasized the possibility of thresholds for heightened scrutiny based on project size.

Vicky Ozgun commented on whether or not the existing criteria discussed apply to new houses. Brett Cartwright commented on his concerns about steep slopes and billboard placement on SR 209, advocating for restrictions to prevent billboards on mountains. Michael Albert motioned to table the discussion, Mitch Bowyer seconded. Vote: all in favor, motion carried.

7. Pending:

a. Feedback on EAC Recommendations.

Alex Jackson commented that the draft lighting ordinance is being reviewed by the County Planning Commission.

b. List of 'Environmental Problems' & Priorities for EAC.

Mitch Bowyer commented on how this action item is still pending.

c. S*mbro Creek Sediment Reduction Plan.

Alex Jackson commented on how the Township is exploring grants to help reduce sediment pollution in the Little S*mbro Creek watershed.

d. Wetland and Stream Buffers.

The Council discussed how other townships address similar wetland issues. Michael Albert noted that the ordinance had been recently updated to provide slightly more robust protection than before.

Mitch Bowyer expressed concerns that conducting extensive research could fall outside the EAC's scope of responsibilities. He suggested that a discussion on a review of the literature would be sufficient, and a discussion ensued.

8. Public Comments:

- a. Brett Cartwright inquired about sediment reduction in the S*mbro Creek watershed, which lead to a discussion on stormwater drainage issues, particularly as they relate to pre-existing land use changes, and how the township might assist. Brett Cartwright requested that this topic be included on future agendas.
- b. Marguerite Vecchio asked about the DCNR's presence at River's Edge Park, and Alex Jackson clarified that DCNR had conducted an on-site investigation to assess potential fire risks.
- c. Vicky Ozgun raised concerns about wetlands, prompting a discussion on dumping and filling issues in the Township. The Council further discussed the issue of dirty fill and agreed to include the topic as an agenda item for a future EAC agenda.

- 9. 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