

THE SMITHFIELD TOWNSHIP ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY COUNCIL  
REGULAR BUSINESS MEETING  
MARCH 24<sup>th</sup> 2024

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A Regular Business Meeting of the Smithfield Township Environmental Advisory Council was held on March 19<sup>th</sup> 2024 at the Smithfield Township Municipal Center at 1155 Red Fox Rd, East Stroudsburg, PA 18301, and via Zoom.

Present are Supervisor Michael Albert, Planning Commissioner James Munet, Eric White, Pat Owens, Mitch Bowyer, Brett Cartwright.

Also present are Ken LeSure, resident of Smithfield Township, and Dr. Alex Jackson Conservation and Recreation Director.

1. Alex Jackson calls the meeting to order at 7:04PM. A quorum is present.
2. The Pledge of Allegiance is recited.
3. Reorganization

Michael Albert asks for introductions; all council members state their name, and experience, professional background.

*Recording Secretary – Michael Albert motions to appoint Dr. Alex Jackson as recording secretary, 2nded by Pat Owens; motion carries.*

*Vice Chairperson - Pat Owens nominated Vice Chairperson, 2nded by James Munet; no discussion, motion carries unanimously.*

*Motion by James Munet to have no more than 2 absences per year; 2nded by Brett Cartwright.*

Discussion: Michael Albert states generally that as an advisory council one only gets what one puts in; Supervisors will be more receptive to an active committee. Engaged citizens and residents will result in better collaborative relationship with Supervisors.

Questions and comments by Ken and Brett; consensus that the zoom does provide opportunity to remote access should a council member be on a vacation or otherwise indisposed.

*Motion carries unanimously.*

Clarification and discussion between Ken and Dr. Alex Jackson; that Ken is also a member of the Rivers Edge Bike Park Committee; and is attending this evening as an interested resident for potentially joining to EAC.

*Pat Owens requests a history of the EAC and previous meeting minutes; Alex Jackson will email that material out to the council for review.*

4. Announcements

- a. Regularly Scheduled Meetings will be 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of the month at 7PM.
- b. Alex Jackson announces that the 2024 water quality study will take place in March of 2024. Alex shows the council the sampling site map from a previous year's water quality study; points out the sampling points in Smithfield Township, and some discussion on the IBI scores for Marshalls Creek; Sambo Creek, and lower Brodhead Creek. Discussion on what exactly an IBI score means; discussion on how often the water quality study takes place, it was clarified that it's annual and re-occurring at the same site each year. Discussion on Sambo Creek's impairment status; why the Sambo creek is impaired. Determined to be Sedimentation. Further discussion on water quality education for EAC members.

Suggestion that the EAC take a site visit to the creeks in the township to learn more about the waterways in question; Alex would happily arrange such an event.

5. New Business:

- a. **Name Placards for Council members:** All agree the names look good; James Munet and Michael Albert already have placards for their roles on the PC and BOS.
- b. **Powers of Council.**
  - Alex Jackson gives an overview of powers of council based on the Township's EAC ordinance.
  - Powers include identify environmental problems, such problems must have a solution. The EAC should focus on issues with clearcut solutions.
  - #1 was fairly complex, and broken down; example of Sambo creek impairment is a solvable problem; example of Cherry Creek IBI score increasing due to human intervention.
  - Pat Ownes states that the council needs to know what the open lands are; Alex Agrees, and also on who owns the land and other metrics as well.
  - James Munet asks if the township has flood maps; FEMA has 100 year flood maps. Discussion on the frequency of year floods; how the term is arbitrary.
  - Flood maps and floodplains would be part of the index identified in Powers of Council #4.
  - Alex points out that the township doesn't have an index; minutes/records, from the now defunct "Open Space Committee" meetings. Natural Lands provided with some information from a previous meeting.
  - James asks a question on the impairment of Sambo Creek. Alex Clarifies that waterbody is part of the MS4 permit in the Township; pathways to rectify the impairment through the MS4 permit; the EAC could make recommendations on helping the impairment situation in Sambo Creek.

- Pat asks Eric if he has access to the now defunct Open Space Committee meetings; Eric will search his emails to forward along with records and attachments if available.
- Mitch requests training to become more knowledgeable on the subjects.
- Mitch specifies interest in training and education on water quality Impairment, probably causes, solution to the causes; water quality training and education.
- Michael recommends against getting into the weeds on water quality; focus more heavily on quality in general and open space. Focus on the big balancing act of conservation and recreation. Asks if it was the intention of the BOS that there's no recreation in the EAC ordinance? Usually parks are for conservation and recreation; recreation being a possible use of open space/parks.
- Alex clarifies Smithfield Township used to have a recreation/parks committee in previous decades separate from the EAC.

#### Presentation Discussion.

- Ken comments that general education on water quality could be requested from ESU, after some discussion *Michael requests that for the next 6 meetings; 20 minutes will be a brief presentation. Alex to find someone to get a presentation together; identify the subjects of the presentations.*
- Pat suggests everyone provides input to Alex on topics they would like; in addition to the 6 meetings Michael requests.
- Alex points out WEConservePA is the educational organization for EACs

#### **c. Discuss Zoning Map, Resource Metrics, and Monroe County Plan for Clean Water**

James recommends tabling C and D; but first give an understanding of what exactly C and D pertain to; that is, clarification on what's involved with these agenda items first.

Pat Questions this and after some discussion, Alex will address the motion; gives an explanation to the EAC on the Zoning map handout; the map which guides the buildout of the township.

Alex presents Plan for Clean Water; shows the EAC watersheds in the Township; James asks if Little Sambo is off SR 209; Alex confirms its geographic location in the Municipality.

Alex clarifies what the Plan For Clean Water resource metrics are and points out to the EAC that the "little sambo" watershed has the majority of the Municipalities wetlands; Alex also points out the steep slopes in the Municipality: With help from the MCPC and mapping tools; The EAC can research if there's any conflicts between on site resources and the zoning map; pointed out that this hasn't been done; the Powers of Council guides the EAC to do these sorts of exercises.

Michael recalls that the Township Planning Commission and Supervisors drove around and considered adjusting the zoning; that the zoning map is already in place; but that doesn't mean there can't be changes, but the changes can't be spot zoning. In his recollection, they were looking at water features, but not at this technical level. It's helpful to look at this from a

Supervisor standpoint. In his recollection, roads were the biggest point in the zoning map. This new EAC can assist with technical input on the water/environmental side of zoning.

A question is asked about whether all wetlands are already mapped; Alex Clarifies that wetlands are not all mapped; they must be defined on a project by project basis. Every new project must delineate wetlands; and also worth noting over 50% of the wetlands have already been destroyed.

*All in favor of tabling the agenda items C & D.*

*James Munet makes a new motion for an appropriate amount of time for agenda items for meetings; there's no set time limit, the council can make bylaws to set time limits; it's important to allow for public comment; but you can stay a meeting and continue the meeting at another time.*

Pat would like to hear what the members have to say about the timing. Any preferences? Hour, hour and a half and try to keep to that? After some discussion, 2 hour limit, and end by 10PM at the latest; Mitch requests time facing the meeting for each agenda item on the agenda; that way you have a target in mind.

Pat says that council members need to understand and put breaks on themselves.

Discussion begins on setting the agenda, Michael states the intention of the agenda would be for Alex to set it; Alex says its up to the Council how to set the agenda. Michael says advisory councils aren't the Supervisors which is advantageous; Michael points out that Alex is heavily involved on conservation/parks on a daily basis.

*Mitch 2nds the original motion.*

Michael states it's the Chairs job to manage the group; unless the chair deems it appropriate; the Chair needs to recognize critical items that need to be addressed, and focus on those.

Pat says this is overall meeting management; it requires all of our cooperation to stay in timeframes and not to talk too much and stay on subject matter.

*Pat clarifies that the motion is to have time guidelines on the agenda. That Pat will enforce if need be and extend; Mitch confirms his 2<sup>nd</sup> to that motion.*

*All in favor, motion passes unanimously.*

Back to discussion on agenda, Alex suggests to review the 6 Powers of Council fist before suggesting an agenda item. Alex points out there's so many things that can fall into the category of environment that aren't appropriate for the EAC.

After some discussion, Michael argues that Chairperson and Alex will be the ones who decide the agenda; Other people will have input on the agenda; but if there's a pressing matter, its ultimately Alex and Chair's decision if addition items shall be added to the agenda.

Mitch wants to see us as a council set 3 priorities by the end of the year, asks for some discussion, and talk about what each one of us thinks are the priority; agree, and get concurrence from Supervisors, so they support these priorities.

Michael states that Power of Council #5 is the most important because there's currently no priorities or direction on how to invest grants and matches for land acquisition. The problem is that it takes a lot of information to make a recommendation on what to purchase; Right now however, the Township need criteria for prioritizations. This is the intent of the supervisors. The EAC was put together to deal with #5.

Alex points out that in the Powers of Council #4 drives most of the other powers; Pat says this is absolutely true; asks what the plan is to get #4 index done; Alex states we need to request technical assistance from County planning commission, and willing land trusts. Pat asks what motion we need.

*James makes the motion to request technical assistance from the MCPC, and any interested land trusts to help us carry out #4 in the Powers of Council. 2nded by Mitch Bowyer.*

Discussion on the motion: Michael asks what the dollar amount is for this; Alex understands that one of the MCPCs role is to help out townships; this motion would help begin the conversation and understand what exactly is required and if there's any cost to the Municipality.

Eric talks about what the open space committee did before; lots of discussion on acquisition of open land; 5 or 6 potential properties; the idea was that they were identified as properties with streams, lakes, wetlands that were potentially for sale by a willing seller.

Pat asks what happened with all this; Eric stated the biggest issue is that the properties that the offer on the land was substantially lower the market value.

Michael asks that someone from a land trust comes and explains the mechanism for acquiring land; Michael asks about the surveys, and appraisals; and the cost to the township. Suggests Supervisors could allocate a certain amount of funds to the council to conduct appraisals and surveys of land that way it doesn't have to go back and forth between the two boards.

Michael states that the motion is to help create the index as per power #4; find out if/what the cost is to make such an index.

*Vote, all in favor, motion passes.*

Brett asks what the lengths we are willing to go to protect the water going forward? The water resources are being eaten away; maybe it's our mission to protect the water resource, identifies water as a key issue. Michael clarifies that power of council #1 applies to this question; must identify a clear solution with a price tag to a problem.

Michael states the council needs to make a recommendation; put a price tag on them, and then come to the supervisors.

Pat clarifies research needs to be done with regards to Brett's question; if we all think that is an important question and issue; focus on that as an objective, and someone on the council willing to begin work on that. Mitch points out that this research is related to the agenda items C & D. Pat points out this is a bigger issue that we can think about compared to the work we're doing. Mitch states it will be a gradual buildup. Since the EAC hasn't met in so many years. So we're going to develop everything that will be recommended; and we will do our Due Diligence.

*Michael is asking for an index of all publicly owned lands as a first priority in the form of a map; state national county, township.*

*The other part of this is the index of the open space and sensitive areas, but also to get an understanding of proper use of such areas, and we need to understand the current state of the land.*

Michael wants to understand the priorities as it relates to the parks/recreation; Mitch agrees this is important.

Michael has concerns on #5, as it relates to acquisition; Do we have the resources to maintain it and support it once we acquire the property? What are we doing with the current parcels the township owns?

*A municipality has 3 ways to protect land, according to Alex:*

- 1. Direct acquisition of land*
- 2. Someone can place a conservation easement on the land*
- 3. The township can zone the land differently in a new district, so that the new zoning district is more protective of the resources and landscape*

Eric points out that the EAC can help with certain Land Development issues, uses lighting as an example; Michael points out that there's pre-existing lighting; that enforcement interpretation is complicated. Now there's a lighting ordinance being reviewed by the PC.

After some discussion, Alex states that procedurally the EAC's recommendation on Land Development matters could be in the form of a written statement to the PC; when that matter is up for vote; similarly with the Board of Supervisors.

Michael asks if this needs to be a resolution for the supervisors to send a copy of the land development plan for review; don't move until we know procedurally how that would work. Timeline and synching of land development; Alex suggests Michael talks to the township solicitor on this matter.

Alex states that he believes the intent of having a Supervisor and Planning Commission representative is for collaborative reasons.

*Michael states that Conditional Use would be an easier place for the EAC to come into play, because it's the supervisors prerogative to add conditions as may be necessary. After discussion, Waivers too; whether the boards accept or deny certain waivers. Pat agrees waivers are important for feedback to the Supervisors.*

*Michael makes motion to table E and F; 2nded by James Munet; no discussion, all in favor motion carries.*

Public Comment:

Ken asks about the stormwater in the Smithfield Gateway. Michael states there's a lot of stormwater management. The culverts are required to by law; by township code and PA DEP; Ken asks if we are supervising the development. Ken is wondering if anyone is supervising; if the work is being done property.

Alex responds that any earth disturbance over an acre requires a chapter 102 permit; stormwater erosion and sediment control/rate volume; we are in the Act 167 area. The PA DEP manages it collaboratively with the Monroe county conservation district to make sure the 102 permit conditions and regulations being followed.

Alex points out that Monroe County does stormwater management very well. That Smithfield Township Supervisors adopted a strong stormwater ordinance, and residents are fortunate in that sense. What you are seeing is actually a lot of due diligence.

Motion to adjourn by Eric, 2nded by Mitch, all in favor, meeting adjourned at 8:57PM.

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Minutes recorded by Dr. Alex Jackson

Respectfully submitted:

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