

SMITHFIELD TOWNSHIP ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY COUNCIL
MEETING – MAY 7, 2025

A Regular Meeting of the Smithfield Township Environment Advisory Council was held on May 7, 2025, at the Smithfield Township Municipal Center at 1155 Red Fox Rd, East Stroudsburg, PA 18301, and via Zoom.

Present were Chair Pat Owens, Vice Chair Brett Cartwright, Councilors Mitch Bowyer, Supervisor Robert Lovenheim and Conservation & Recreation Director Dr. Alex Jackson. Councilors James Munet and Eric White were absent.

Also present were Vicky Ozgun, Jean Turn, Charleen Spezza, and Lorinda Homer.

1. Chair Pat Owens called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

3. Minutes:

a. April 15, 2025 Regular Meeting.

Brett Cartwright motioned to approve the minutes, seconded by Mitch Bowyer. Vote: Pat Owens, Brett Cartwright, Mitch Bowyer, and Robert Lovenheim in favor; Ken LeSure abstained; motion carried.

4. EAC Chairperson's Report

Pat Owens noted she had taken on the task of the annual report and would report back at the next meeting. The EAC Handbook was also discussed; it had been printed out for all EAC members and distributed to the Council. Mitch Bowyer asked about plastic bag recycling, and Robert Lovenheim indicated he would discuss this with the waste authority later in May. A discussion ensued.

5. Old Business:

a. Discuss: Finalized List of 'Environmental Problems' and Priorities.

Pat Owens asked for a discussion on the finalized list. Council Members decided to bring this to the Supervisors as-is to explore feedback and comments, they further discussed how to get started on projects and noted how long of a process it had been to finalize the list. Brett Cartwright suggested discussing the list with the Supervisors so they could work in conjunction with one another.

b. Discuss: EAC outreach to share concerns & updates with residents.

Robert Lovenheim said there was no activist organization in the Township, he added that the environment included everything from peace, quiet, and natural beauty to things like the connection of Gap View Drive to Route 209. He expressed that no one was “cracking the whip,” and many questions needed to be asked of the Supervisors and that an organization is needed to help inform the public about what was going on.

Council discussed creating a process to make this happen and commented that they were only advisory. They suggested that the Board of Supervisors delegate action items to the EAC. A QR code for a complaint form was also discussed. A broader discussion ensued among Council members.

Council also discussed Middle Smithfield Township’s physical newsletter, which cost tens of thousands of dollars per year to print. They noted that MST had the funding to support that expense. Council also discussed the challenges of getting residents to sign up for newsletters via email and expressed that while sending physical letters was a great idea, it was not practical. A discussion ensued on this subject.

Vicky Ozgun commented that she felt Smithfield Township wasn’t organized, and Lorinda Homer commented that she came to see where her tax dollars were going. She also commented on Habitat for Humanity, and how the EAC is for bettering the community. She said she would love to see the organization of a physical newsletter and noted how residents have to go searching for information, which led to a discussion on recruiting volunteers and interns.

Brett Cartwright thanked Lorinda for her comment and suggested the EAC needs to simplify its mission as much as possible. He said it would be good to post a QR code around the entire Township asking for comments and priorities, and that one administrative person should compile all of this information. He added that he believed text or physical advertising is dead. A QR code could allow a survey to be conducted, information to be compiled, and the process to be kept very simple, which led to a conversation on how to publicize the concept.

Mitch Bowyer suggested the Supervisors delegate this to the EAC and said that volunteers should be willing to spend the time to make it happen. Brett Cartwright reiterated the importance of keeping the goal simple.

Lorinda Homer commented again on how to publicize the QR code concept in Smithfield Township and suggested using parks, grocery stores, and other places

where people gather, which led to a discussion on the feasibility of doing so. Pat Owens then called a point of order.

A lengthy discussion ensued on QR signs and survey strategy. Brett Cartwright and Vicky Ozgun asked if the parks already had bulletin boards, and Council members suggested something as large and ubiquitous as stop signs placed all over the Smithfield Township.

Brett Cartwright made a motion for the EAC to ask the Supervisors to consider conducting a 2025 online survey to gather feedback from residents on quality of life issues, with a link to the website. Mitch Bowyer seconded. Discussion: Council discussed how the survey results should be brought back to the EAC for periodic discussion. Ken LeSure asked whether Townships typically conduct such surveys, and Dr. Alex Jackson stated that yes, Townships do conduct citizen surveys and that those surveys are typically around 10 questions - not just one open-ended question. This led to a discussion on the River's Edge Bike Park Survey previously conducted from November 2024 through the end of February 2025.

Council also discussed the technical aspects of accomplishing the survey. Pat Owens then asked that Council clarify the motion to the effect of having the survey advertised with QR signs to drive traffic to the website. The proposal should also include installing a network of QR code signs throughout the Township and allocating a budget for the project. There was additional discussion on having the EAC periodically review the incoming results. Pat Owens asked for a vote: all in favor; motion carried.

Charleen Spezza said that when people come and comment or complain, she believes there is no follow-up. She said she believes residents feel let down and asked how they are going to assure residents that they will receive a response for this hypothetical survey. This led to a discussion on how to let residents know they are being heard.

Robert Lovenheim agreed with the importance of individualized responses and said he always responds when contacted directly. This led to a discussion among Council members on giving citizens an option to indicate whether they want an more individualized response.

Brett Cartwright thanked Charleen for her comment and remarked that PennDOT is slow; he does not expect much progress with that agency and noted that bureaucracies take time and patience.

Jean Turn commented on whether it would be possible for the EAC, when receiving specific complaints, to forward those complaints from residents to the Supervisors

during the agenda item at the BOS meeting. Robert Lovenheim suggested delegating one volunteer to bring these to the BOS.

Pat Owens said she wanted to discuss at the next meeting how to get volunteers for the EAC, whether they should do volunteer outreach, and have a full discussion on this. This led to a lengthy discussion. Brett Cartwright expressed frustration with hearing that things are too expensive, and Pat Owens and Dr. Alex Jackson discussed pursuing grant opportunities.

Lorinda Homer discussed how the person taking complaints also interfaces with the public. She commended the survey as a good idea but said it should not be open-ended. Instead, it should be representative of concerns and values, with structured questions-around ten-to make it easier to manage. She did not recommend including an open comment section, which led to a lengthy discussion.

Lorinda Homer also commented that she and others love living in the country setting and reiterated her concern about providing a forum for open-ended complaints. She emphasized keeping the survey structured, which led to another discussion.

6. New Business:

a. Buttermilk Falls Recommendation:

Mitch Bowyer moved that Alex send a letter to the Supervisors to get feedback and see if they can pursue it, seconded by Brett Cartwright.

Discussion: Brett Cartwright read the draft letter aloud to the Council, after which he pointed out that this is an advisory council. Council members noted that the Supervisors can choose to delegate responsibility to the EAC if they wish for something to happen.

Council members then debated a more detailed letter of recommendation, but after discussion, they suggested simply clarifying the motion to add one additional sentence asking for a specific response from the Supervisors related to a specific course of action for a “Buttermilk Falls development committee” delegation of power to the EAC. A lengthy discussion and some debate followed. Vote: All in favor, motion carried.

7. Council Member Comment:

- a. Brett Cartwright brought up the data center concept and discussed some concerns on this subject. Dr. Alex Jackson noted that he was asked by the Supervisors to update the Township ordinance and that it is in a mature form. Robert Lovenheim gave an update on his position on data centers, which lead to a lengthy discussion.

Vicky Ozgun commented that a group of people sent a letter regarding the data center ordinance. Dr. Alex Jackson clarified this began when he recommended the Township update the data center ordinance criteria in an effort to protect the community and the Supervisors were interested in doing this, and he also indicated that if the ordinance isn't updated and is out of date and something is submitted, the Township would have to go with the current language.

Vicky commented about a deadline for this ordinance, and Dr. Alex Jackson clarified that any deadlines discussed were internal to help get the draft ordinance finalized, not a deadline for the process itself. Brett Cartwright thanked Dr. Alex Jackson for this work on this ordinance, which lead to a discussion, where Vicky Ozgun commented that the Supervisors need to get this ordinance done. Further discussion ensued, and Pat Owens called a point of order and asked that the EAC see the ordinance for review as well.

8. Public Comment:

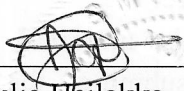
- a. Vicky Ozgun commented that the EAC should focus on a cell tower project near Airport Road and indicated that extensions were filed, which led to a discussion on the subject.
- b. Pat Owens thanked the public for their comments throughout the meeting.
- c. Charleen Spezza commented on how the dead trees on private property fall down across the road and knock the power out. She noted that she attends Board of Supervisors meetings and is concerned that parks are getting trees cut, but these dead trees are not being addressed. She asked how many times they have lost power. Council members responded with the challenges associated with addressing this concern, which led to a discussion.
- d. Brett Cartwright said he spoke with the power company and that they have a downed tree policy, but they cannot cut all potential trees. Private landowners can take care of these trees themselves, and the power company can only address them when it becomes an issue.
- e. Pat Owens thanked Alex Jackson for all he does for the EAC and then asked for a motion to adjourn.

Adjournment:

There being no other business before the Council, Ken LeSure motioned to adjourn. Brett Cartwright seconded. Meeting adjourned at 8:35 PM.

Minutes Recorded by Dr. Alex Jackson

Respectfully submitted,



Julia Heilakka
Township Secretary