

Allentown

*435 Hamilton Street
Allentown, Pa. 18101*



Minutes

Monday, November 13, 2023

5:15 PM

Environmental Advisory Council

Old Business

1. Approval of September Minutes (no meeting in October)
2. Status updates on goals from leads
 - a. Plastic bags (Julie)
 - b. Status of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Initiatives (municipal and residential) (Tinku)
 - c. Working with LCA and US Water Alliance on water equity (Tinku)
 - d. Bird Town -- Allentown Public Library Children's education (Tinku)
 - e. Letter of Support to Master Gardeners (Maria)
3. Muhlenberg internship (Tinku)
4. Air Monitor Project (Maria)
5. Report on environmental notice letters (Jennifer)

Attachments: [Minutes of EAC meeting Monday 9-11-23](#)

1. Approval of September Minutes (no meeting in October)

The minutes were approved unanimously.

2. Status updates on goals from leads

a. Plastic bags (Julie)

After great deliberation among community members and firsthand experience at the recent Real Recognize Real cleanup event downtown, it has been decided that the contribution of plastic bags to the litter problem downtown is minimal. Many stores are removing bags on their own, and the EAC should not prioritize a plastic bag ordinance; however, the issue of litter in general is still a considerable problem. In an effort to appeal to the communities we cleanup and give neighborhoods a sense of agency, a new community based cleanup model is proposed.

This new model, based off the EAC's success at the recent trout creek cleanup, involved door to door communication and tabling in the neighborhoods where cleanups occur. The goal is to get the individuals involved and invested in keeping the community clean to prevent a return to normal when the cleanup is over. Potential issues such as language barriers need to be addressed. There were talks of this model already, and considerable progress was made with local non-profit Promise Neighborhoods, but due to a variety of undeclared reasons, the PromisCorps initiative is on hold. Despite this, their organization may still be able to assist with volunteers as well as Muhlenberg College's enACT club. This model should be prioritized in the 2024 EAC goals.

b. Status of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Initiatives (municipal and residential) (Tinku)

Tinku and Allentown community member Jon Zeller attended a PA sustainability conference last week. The individuals they spoke to from PA DEP indicated that Allentown is likely to get a shared energy manager, we will be notified in the coming weeks. Hopefully after we have them, we can address a few of the initiatives we have already cooked up. Tinku has confirmed that that city is proceeding with their application for the energy efficiency block grant valued at 170k. It's already been allocated to the city, but they need to formally apply declaring how the funds will be used.

c. Working with LCA and US Water Alliance on water equity (Tinku)

The focus of this is similar to last years energy equity project, except this time with water bills. This is complex issue so far due to the variety of stakeholders involved. An example of a difficult scenario would be an individual with a leaky plumbing appliance who has loose communication with their landlord. LCA has noted another complex aspect of this is associated with the massive difference between infrastructure necessary in the more suburban areas of the city versus the more densely populated downtown. Also, the major topic of discussion/focus for LCA right now is associated with the massive lead pipe replacement project. While the PH of the water in Allentown will not cause the lead pipes to be problematic, the EPA regulations will call for all lead pipes to be replaced - so we must do it anyways. LCA does not know where the lead pipes are and is utilizing a survey to assist.

d. Bird Town -- Allentown Public Library Children's education (Tinku)

The Allentown EAC has received a \$500 budget from the Bird town organization to fund a teaching program at the Allentown Public Library focused on environmental stewardship and birds. We will have a Muhlenberg Intern focused on the planning and organization of this but will ultimately need more volunteers to speak and coordinate. The kids that will be part taking in the program are from the community we are trying to help - this will be great for us down the line for future engagement. This initiative will be included in the 2024 goals.

e. Letter of Support to Master Gardeners (Maria)

The letters of support were sent twice. There is a program at Penn State that has the goal of bringing some native plants to the Allentown Public Library. The hope is to utilize it as an educational experience.

3. Muhlenberg internship (Tinku)

We got one ! They will be in contact with the EAC and starting work soon.

4. Air Monitor Project (Maria)

This project has been temporarily on hold, but progress will continue. Maria will resume conversations with involved parties at Lehigh University. The hope is to have an in-person event sometime in February, potentially a roundtable or panel discussion, where the data can be assessed properly. We will need a location to do this (Muhlenberg College).

5. Report on environmental notice letters (Jennifer)

No update

New Business

1. AEAC Comments on Sustainability Coordinator Position
2. LED Street Lights
 - Barbara Malt has put forth a concern about the effects of LED Lights in the area: it disrupts the birds, insects, and people. Should AEAC research this topic for a report and recommendations to the City?

Housekeeping

1. Select January date for executive session
2. Maintaining Mailing List
3. Filling AEAC vacancies

1. AEAC Comments on Sustainability Coordinator Position

Good job everyone who showed out on Saturday Nov 4th to speak on behalf of the position! Another avenue to explore that other municipalities used was to repurpose a current position in economic development to sustainability. It would be a much better location than Parks. The COA put it in the Parks budget due to the recent award of approximately 900k regarding tree equity.

2. LED Street Lights → Barbara Malt has put forth a concern about the effects of LED Lights in the area: it disrupts the birds, insects, and people. Should AEAC research this topic for a report and recommendations to the City?

Due to a variety of factors, the EAC decided to postpone the decision on this until the January meeting.

3. Capstone Project with PA DEP

Hoping to investigate this more to potentially update our Greenhouse Gas Emissions in the future. Might be a project with multiple universities involved/interns. This was voted on and approved.

Housekeeping

1. Select January date for executive session

The executive EAC member session will occur January 8th, and the regular public meeting will take place on January 15th.

2. Maintaining Mailing List

Maria will send Kyle an excel with names to be cleaned up and set up.

3. Filling AEAC vacancies

Maria will be in contact with the Mayor's office on the status of the vacant EAC position. Additionally, a motion was made by Tinku and seconded by Maria to suggest to council president Daryl Hendricks he appoint Ce-Ce Gerlach to be the council liaison for the EAC so they can be compliant with the city ordinance. She did not attend the meeting and did not share input with the group on any EAC initiatives.