

Meeting Agenda - Environmental Advisory Council
September 9, 2024 at 5:15pm
City Hall - Council Chambers + Virtually via Google Meet

Kyle Ropski, Peter Dent, Mary Tomlinson, Tinku Khanwalker, Julie Thomases, Maria Ocasio, Ruby

Old Business

1: Approval of August Minutes

Approved

2: EAC Member Update and Discussion

The EAC is considering amending and expanding it's own ordinance to the wording of the City Charter to include individuals who are not City residents. Kyle supports this. Pete also feels that it makes a lot of sense considering the flight of people out of the city. It allows for a more expansive net for us to cast on members such as developers. Tinku noted that previous conversations in the past raised concerns that if the majority of the members were from outside the City, they could negatively impact the City residents. There was a suggestion of stipulation to have a majority of members actual city residents. Maria suggested that number be around 70%. Also, the exact wording the City Charter uses does not include community organization/non-profit board members, so they may not qualify.

Next steps: Phrasing of recommendations to be drafted by Tinku who will circulate with the group via email.

3: Dumpster Ordinance Update and Next Steps?

The EAC's former intern Lauren gave a presentation to the City Council based on Reading, PA's legislation. Kyle, Tinku, and Lauren met with Councilwoman Natalie Santos who offered to sponsor it. Pete noted that we do not want to get too far ahead of ourselves and need to focus on more engagement with the community first, specific to the developers and contractors this will impact. Pete had conversations with Nat Hyman who was co-operative and talked to his guys and took several steps such as lids on permanent dumpsters, asking his property manager to monitor them, and had the operator install signage about closing the lids. He was helpful and is looking to collaborate. The community may be concerned over additional legislation. Ordinance should be a last resort. Tinku agrees on the collaboration aspect, but does not agree that it should be a

punitive measure. She noted that Reading has done it already, so they would be great to reach out to for more information and input. Due to the high cost of litter to the City from Allentown, we urgently need more effective solutions for this problem. There is a lot of involved individuals, and it would be extremely difficult to talk to all these people. We could hold stakeholder meetings. Pete indicated that other developers are frustrated as well by the dumpsters and litter (Especially plastic bags). The city struggles to enforce stuff already so we also should consider self enforcement initiatives. We need to figure out what kind of ordinance this would be as well.

Next Steps: Pete will check in with Matt and Vicky Kistler on getting contacts for developers and contractors. He will either reach out to them or a survey will be developed to gather input on what strategies/opinions/issues they have.

4: LV EAC Interactive Platform Event Update

We had our summer intern work to get the other EACs together to discuss improved collaboration, share ideas, thoughts, etc. Several different platforms were discussed such as WeConservePA and it was well received. Kyle developed a survey to send to the EACs for internal responses. These answers will be used to make a “one-pager” about the initiative to be sent out. The Northampton County Community College has been in conversations to host iron their network which is an option. The LV EAC network will have this platform as a parallel initiative to their main goal of facilitating conversations through speaker events twice a year.

Next Steps: Kyle will send the survey to AEAC members for completion. Tinku and Kyle will be in communication with Steering Committee members on the project and white paper development.

5: Youth Climate Action Fund Update x Discussion

The 2024 program selection process is over and eight projects have been allocated funding. These projects will include multiple opportunities for the Allentown EAC to get engaged with the youth and attend events to table spread the word about what we are and what we do. The project award list is included below.

Next steps: Kyle will reach out to those listed on the applications, including fellow EAC members, to make the connection and ensure we are involved. Further avenues for EAC involvement can grow from there, such as educational initiatives.

6: Updates from leads on goals

1. Energy Management Plan (Tinku)

We received the award for the first phase of the grant. Funding will be available for the purchase of approximately seven EVs. The next phase will potentially include funding for the charging infrastructure.

2. Birdtown Library Program (Tinku)

September library program is coming up with the Nurture Nature Center as the community group presenting. It will include a hex design activity for the kids. Number of kids has been low, but the presentations are amazing. Few come knowing about the program. Julie noted that flyers should be sent to the schools and we should engage with the teachers. Maria offered to share it out as well.

Next Steps: Kyle sends the flier to EAC members for further distribution.

3. ETAs (Kyle)

Kyle noted that he has not done significant work since the previous meeting. He proposed the potential for a living goal document in Google Sheets to act as a supplement to the EAC official year goals. The idea of either a bi-annual or quarterly goal document update was proposed. As we are a public entity for transparency sake, it should be open for the public to see and track our progress. Kyle indicated that the attached excel included every goal update, for each goal, for the whole year, in one place. Suggestion was made to indicate goals were completed successfully.

4. Community Programming on Air Quality? (Maria)

Maria indicated that she has been in conversations with Breena, and they just installed all the monitors over the summer and do not have the data yet. There was a lot of discussion over what the next steps should be and it was ultimately decided that we do not want to step on anyone's toes or push for something without data to support claims. We will pause this until the data is ready.

Julie wants to add that Breena is working with PNLV on an environmental justice survey. Maria's current employment is with the PA Office of Environmental Justice. The conversation diverged into water quality concerns and it's ties to environmental justice.

Next Steps: Kyle removes this goal from future agendas (until next year) and add water quality to October agenda.

5. Submit Annual Birdtown Report (Tinku)

The Birdtown banner is up at Muhlenberg in Fahy Commons and includes information about their organization, Green Building United, and the AEAC.

6. Safe streets for all Committee (Tinku)

N/A

7. Collaboration with ASD? Educational programming? (Peter)

Pete has had some general conversations with his wife who was an Allen HS teacher as well as conversations with a retired school board member. Communication at the school has been focused around litter. The administration needs to allocate some time for it in the curriculum, but we know it is limited.

Next Steps: Following Kyle's email connection to the YCAF applicants, the EAC / Peter will work with the schools and the environmental groups to get our foot in the door to raise awareness about the EAC and go from there.

New Business:

- 1: Parknership Board - What should the EAC's role be?

It is a new non-profit organization here in the city funded by the Trexler Trust. The board is a way for the City to protect and enhance our parks. This organization could be the avenue to share concerns and collect input with it's focus on all parks in the City. We need to stay involved to ensure it is all the parks, not just those in the West End. Potentially when things get more defined about the organization, we can reach out to engage with leadership.

- 2: SWEEP x EAC meeting request?

Mary notes that SWEEP should be involved in the conversation on the litter issue. For example, SWEEP noted issues associated with their limitations and a lot of "can'ts" to her inquiries. Mary communicates with Brett almost daily. It is important that they are in the loop as the enforcement entity. Peter noted that some developers do really care about the City and it is in their interest to mitigate litter and dumping too.

Next Steps: Kyle reaches out to Brett about potential attendance at the October meeting.

There was a lot of discussion towards the end regarding stormwater, pipes, inflow and infiltration, potential issues with Klines Island.

Next Steps: Kyle will send out links to materials and add to the October meeting agenda.