

## Meeting Agenda - Environmental Advisory Council October 14th, 2024 at 5:15pm

Virtual Only via Google Meet

Attendance: Kyle Ropski, Peter Dent, Mary Tomlinson, Tinku Khanwalker, Julie Thomases, Maria Ocasio, Ruby Diaz, Brett Stout, Jessica Armbruster, Jason Addy

---

Special Guest: Ibrahim Buyukcelebi, Lehigh Valley Civic Engagement Coordinator, Conservation Voters of PA

Did not attend the meeting. Tinku noted that she connected with him over coffee.

### Old Business

#### 1: Approval of September Minutes

- Approved

#### 2: EAC Membership Eligibility - Expanding membership to allow non-residents

- Tinku drafted a proposed amendment for approval allowing nonresidents to serve on the EAC so long as the nonresident has a significant property or business interest in the City (see meeting materials included in notice of this meeting). Tinku explained that this expanded membership provision tracks the language in the City's charter which granted the City the authority to create the EAC. The proposed amendment also requires the majority of members to be residents. This notion received support from several EAC members. Julie Thomases, who recently moved out of Allentown and would like to serve on the EAC, asked whether her service on the board of Promise Neighborhoods would constitute a business interest in the City. Kyle indicated that ultimately the decision to appoint or not appoint will be up to the Mayor and City Council, but this amendment still needs to be approved by the EAC tonight, then approved by City Council before she could even apply.
- Tinku moved for approval of the proposed amendment for submission to City Council, seconded by Kyle and Approved by the EAC.
- **Kyle agreed to send the proposed ordinance revision to relevant City stakeholders.**

#### 3: Dumpster Ordinance / Litter Prevention Update

- Tinku inquired whether the City would be willing to adopt an ordinance similar to the one in Reading which requires for temporary dumpsters on streets to be covered when not in use. Brett from the City and new head of waste and recycling noted he is open to entertaining a proposed ordinance and working on the language. Brett explained that currently the dumpsters on the streets are permitted by the Engineering Department rather than the Bureau of Recycling and Solid Waste. Ultimately the ordinance needs to be one that they can enforce and one that combines collaboration in monitoring beyond just SWEEP. The idea of education is also an option as that can be delivered directly to those with dumpsters at the time of permitting.
- There are currently four categories: warning (1), SWEEP violation ticket (2), citation (3), combo of all of them (4). The language is already in place requiring covers on most dumpsters and enforcement of litter around private and public dumpsters, but just no requirement to cover street dumpsters.
- Pete reported on the discussions he had with developers so far and they expressed frustration and feeling powerless as they are relying on the companies they hire to handle the dumpsters. Additionally, wind is a big issue. In Ocean City he noticed several dumpsters with tarps and weights to prevent outflow.
- Brett noted the litter problem is not just from the dumpsters. The way the trash is being placed out by the residents is a huge contributing factor. Perhaps we make the wording more broad to just require covers? He is interested in collaboration with us to make something that will have actionable change. We do not want to write an ordinance just to write an ordinance.
- Councilman Napoli inquired on the requirements in place for permanent dumpsters. Brett indicated that they are required to have lids, and SWEEP will issue tickets for non-compliance.
- There are many contributors to litter in the City, what is important is our scope and how we target it.
- Kyle included the below link for individuals to check out as it has some great current research on litter prevention strategies.
  - <https://www.keeppabeautiful.org/research/#litter>
- **Kyle will reach out to Brett for attendance at the next meeting and include specific questions related to solutions and initiatives we are interested in. Also coordinate a**

**time for a drive along with Brett to visualize and better understand the day to day operations.**

#### 4: SWEEP Conversation and next questions

- Brett shared the importance of utilizing the official SWEEP complaint email linked below for transparency and operational efficiency among other things.
  - [sweep@allentownpa.gov](mailto:sweep@allentownpa.gov)
- The new SWEEP officer to replace Brett is Gizelle Alkhal.

#### 5: Youth Climate Action Fund Update + Community Connections

- Kyle indicated that the funding/contracts from several if not all of the projects have been officially awarded. The EAC formally reached out to all of the awardees and youth leaders offering support and collaboration and received multiple responses. As these projects progress, the EAC will be in the loop and will need to table/attend/engage where we can.
- **Kyle will add this item as an ongoing agenda item for updates.**
- **Kyle will respond to Shannon's invite to ribbon cutting at Building 21**

#### 6: LV EAC Update and One-Pager

- This document was included in the agenda as an FYI for the Allentown EAC and is not to be voted on officially. This EAC connectivity project was spearheaded by our summer intern Lauren House. Following a brainstorm session at the conclusion of her internship, we had a survey intended to gather more input. This one page document was created in coordination with that data.
- **Kyle will send this draft document to the LV EAC steering committee for review.**

#### 7: Water Quality and Lead Pipes Discussion

- [Biden-Harris Administration Issues Final Rule Requiring Replacement of Lead Pipes Within 10 Years, Announces Funding to Provide Clean Water to Schools and Homes | US EPA](#)
- LCA is moving forward with their lead replacement project. They have reached out to the EAC multiple times regarding this. Maria hosted an event a while ago in her previous role, and maybe Ibrahim would be interested. LCA's biggest issue is that they do not have data, they need people to take their survey which is on their website.

- Pete noted the way the recent ruling on lead replacement is going down is in two phases. First is to map out the country and where the lead pipes are. Next is the work to mediate those pipes. This is not a proposed plan, this is happening, and it's now a matter of compliance. The Romans used lead pipes in Great Britain. LCA should also consider how UGI can be involved in this discovery process. They are frequently mapping and digging up areas too. Additionally, what role do the previous owners of properties have in this? Could they be of assistance in locating or be liable for lead pipes?
- Tinku suggested that Community Action Lehigh Valley is a major organization that is going into people's homes under the Whole Homes Repairs program and could perhaps help with increasing survey responses on lead pipes.

- [Act 537 Plan | Lehigh County Authority](#)

- This information session on the Act 537 Plan that LCA is conducting is on a separate topic from lead pipes. The Act 537 Plan relates to wastewater management at Kline's Island which receives wastewater from multiple municipalities, all of which have to agree to the final plan. Mary is concerned that the 537 plan is overwhelming. The draft is out there so people can read and understand it as well as attend info sessions. Tinku explained that the Act 537 plan is reviewed by the City's Water and Sewer Compliance Review Board of which she is a member. She encouraged EAC members to attend the next meeting of that Board.
- Mary inquired on what we want to do to follow up on the presentation given by the city about the concerns of the sewage going into Jordan creek. There are many concerns from residents.
- **Kyle will connect Maria and Ibrahim with Liesel for a potential event to increase outreach and awareness about Act 537.**
- **Kyle will review stormwater situation near Jordan Creek and connect with Mike Schmidt/Angela.**

## 8: Updates from leads on goals

1. Energy Management Plan (Tinku)
  - a. News remains good. The City was approved for the \$120k EECEBG funding which will be applied towards the EV purchases under the pilot EV program. The EVs that will be purchased will replace 7 EVs that are slated for replacement

under the City's vehicle maintenance program. The total pilot program for 8 EVs (including the Mayor's) and 8 charging stations is projected to cost \$468,260 but with the expected tax incentives and alternative fuel incentive grant money, the City expects that its cost will only be \$132,190 which the City should be able to quickly recoup from cost savings generated by switching from fossil fuel to EVs.

- b. The alternative fuel incentive grant money application is submitted, we expect to hear back in October. Once the pilot program is underway, we will be able to collect data to support the savings generated by electric vehicles.

## 2. Birdtown Library Program (Tinku)

- a. Maria Ocasio, a member of the Allentown Environmental Advisory Council (EAC) and Austin Miller, Environmental Educator with the Wildlands Conservancy presented to about 8 students at the Allentown Public Library on October 12th. Maria spoke to the children about what an EAC is and the importance of having an EAC in your town. Additionally, Maria spoke about Bird Towns and what that means for Allentown. Austin engaged the students using an interactive set called the Enviroscope. Using the Enviroscope, he was able to demonstrate what riparian buffers do, how oil and dirt from cars and factories can impact the waterways, and what a wetland is. The children were able to play with this set and help build farmland, factories, and so on. Austin and Maria later helped the children design their own birds. Lastly, Austin brought a special guest, Carmelita, a Rock Pigeon. He again highlighted the significance of birds and shared Carmelita's story.

## 3. ETAs (Kyle)

- a. The google meet links have been beneficial. Online meetings seem to be the most efficient. The EAC documents and files are uploaded to the website, including the recent GHG report by Jess Rosen.

## 4. Submit Annual Birdtown Report (Tinku)

- a. At end of year

## 5. Safe streets for all Committee (Tinku)

- a. Tinku did not attend the last meeting but is planning to attend the next one in October.
- 6. Collaboration with ASD? Educational programming? (Peter)
  - a. Not much of an update now. Will have another chat with his contacts. First thought, is who within ASD will be our point person and what are the strategic goals. Suggested these updates be bi-monthly.
  - b. Kyle will send the Environmental Education Grant Manual and contacts to Sharon.**

### **New Business:**

#### 1: EAC Social Media Update - Ruby

- Ruby has access to the facebook, instagram is lost. Goals centered on raising awareness and engagement.
- Lehigh Valley Audubon wants pictures of birds on the artswalk and sustainability building practices in the City. They sent Tinku a bunch of ideas. Ruby will take things and get ready to start doing it.
- **Kyle will send Ruby list of items and tasks for EAC social media.**
- **Kyle + Ruby begin to collect information on how we can expand social media presence.**

#### 2: Grant Opportunity (Deadline October 23!)

- [Tree Equity Grant Funding Opportunity: Fall 2024 \(mailchi.mp\)](mailto:mailchi.mp)
- The problem is that the deadline is so soon. PNLV won't be able to do it. Just yesterday Tinku reached out to Cohesion. Veronika offered to help assist with community organizations. This speaks to our longer term goal to establish connections with the community organizations to get things going fast. Community intern to set up the excel with maybe like 8 solid connections/informal agreements of collaboration.
- **Kyle ensure that this is a goal for next year and clean up our community org excel**

#### 3: AEAC role in Sustainable Building Initiative?

Green buildings United Lehigh Valley has expressed interest in working more with the EAC considering all the development downtown. They are looking for ways to collaborate more and connect better. They are really hoping that Allentown could be the model to work with GBU to get contractors and property owners more aware and interested in sustainable building practices.

Tinku reported on a meeting with Lehigh University to connect their Mountaintop campus with such an initiative with GBU. Additionally, Lehigh Valley Audubon wants to see if the city wants to do or start an initiative on bird safe initiatives. Such as a lights out program where everyone turns off their light at 6pm during migration season. Another program could be focused on bird safe glass and decals.

4. Mary noted that a parking deck is planned to be built at the County Jail parking lot which is close to Jordan Creek. She is concerned about the impact this might have to the Creek.

- **Mary will send Kyle more information on the parking deck project**

4: Blue Zone Update - Kyle

- [Home - Blue Zones Project Lehigh Valley](#)
- This initiative is happening and will have a policy focus. Ruby and Kyle attended a meeting last week where food policy and built environment policy was discussed. They will be holding more meetings.
- **Kyle is connecting with Brooke and their policy guy formally.**

5: Allentown Climate Justice Leaders Program

- [The Environmental Justice Thriving Communities Grantmaking Program | US EPA](#)
- Tinku reported that a Professor at Lehigh is looking to work with Promise Neighborhoods and the EAC to train people in marginalized communities on collecting data from personal air monitors. This is intended to be a workforce development program as well as possibly getting data that can supplement the data being collected in the Lehigh Valley Breathe program. The professor is working on a grant proposal for this right now.
- They are requesting a letter of support similar to the one that the EAC did in the past in support of the Lehigh Valley Breathes program.
- Tinku sent some materials to Kyle about what our role may be in this as the primary contact and connector with the City. Kyle raised concerns and needs more information about it. Also, Veronika needs to be in the loop with this as well.
- **Kyle will review materials and get in contact with Veronika, letter of support needs to be provided by next week.**

6: Muhlenberg Community Internship Program

- We are looking for a spring intern from the Muhlenberg Community Engagement intern program. Focus will be a mix of community engagement and policy.
- **Kyle will draft up the intern request and review with Tinku**