

Swarthmore Environmental Advisory Council
Minutes
Tuesday, September 28, 2021

Approved 10/26/21

Present: Margaret Betz, Elizabeth Drake, Sue Edwards, Nancy English, Elizabeth Jenkins, Susan Kelly, Lauren McKinney, John McKinstry, Susie O'Donnell, Allen Prindle, Robin Schafler,

The September 28, 2021 meeting of the Swarthmore EAC began promptly at 7:30 pm both in person in Swarthmore Borough Hall and on Zoom. (John McKinstry was in Borough Hall).

1. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

2. Minutes of the August 24, 2021 Meeting

The minutes of the August 24, 2021 meeting of the EAC were **APPROVED**.

3. EAC Document Repository

Elizabeth had sent before the meeting an email enabling everyone to view and add documents to a google folder for the EAC. This folder is designed to provide a digital repository for EAC documents related to the EAC's actions and initiatives. The EAC will try to flesh it out by the end of the year. It should include all resolutions, reports etc. It could also include minutes of meetings. Robin offered to do tech support for this repository. The repository could also include articles the EAC and its members have sent to *The Swarthmorean*. Everyone with any such documents should forward them to Elizabeth Jenkins, who will organize them.

4. Email/Google group Discussion Guidelines

The clerks put forth draft Email/Google Discussion Guidelines. These were modeled after a similar set of guidelines used by Swarthmore Borough Council.

EAC Google Group Email Policies

Primary Purpose: To communicate information relevant to the monthly EAC meeting, e.g. logistics, agenda, minutes, etc.

Secondary Purpose: To share pertinent information related to current EAC projects.

-->Discussion is discouraged, due to sunshine laws.

-->Take a "weekly" digest approach if you have a lot of information to share.

To ensure that all deliberations happen at the scheduled EAC meetings, thereby allowing all members to participate.

Best practices (Borrowed from Borough Council):

No emotional content — keep it informational and neutral

No ad hominem attacks, or shaming others even subtly

No speaking for others

Don't include names of people or information about their lives unless you have their permission and it's relevant

Don't discuss specific nomination names on email—save that for one on one meetings. Or if it happens in a group meeting, don't name the potential nominees in the minutes. "We discussed a few names," etc. Because it's weird to see your own name in public minutes, especially if you declined a nomination or if they eventually decided not to ask you after all.

Don't send anything that would ever embarrass you or anyone else. This is in the public record. Your email could be forwarded to ANYONE, or requested by ANYONE.

No domination by any one person.

Annie suggested that we should just send information regarding events.

The members of the EAC affirmed that this was a good set of policy guidelines and that they will follow them.

5. Borough Council Update: Tree Committee & Proposed Condominium

Tree Committee

Lauren McKinney reported as the Borough Council liaison to the Swarthmore Tree Committee. They are asking for an extension of a year in doing the tree survey. The Committee would welcome help from the EAC and Lauren encouraged all of us to provide that help. The areas the Tree Committee could use assistance in includes:

- Logging trees into their software
- Writing articles for *The Swarthmorean*
- Managing the Tree Committee website
- Encouraging people to review the Tree Survey and think about planting trees.

Lauren encouraged all of us to review the survey. The survey is found at:
<https://swarthmorepa.treekeepersoftware.com/index.cfm?deviceWidth=1440>

Lauren encouraged us to explore this survey, noting that at higher levels of access more information is visible, like condition of trees. It also includes information on the energy saved by having so many trees. She suggested that members of the Tree Committee would be available to view the Survey, in case one is curious about your own street trees.

TO DO: Those interested in helping the Tree Committee should contact Lauren McKinney.

Condominium Proposal

Lauren also noted that there is anew condominium coming to town. The plans will go to the Planning Commission and then to Borough Council. The big question is about the demolition of the buildings containing the HOM store and the gallery. In order to demolish an historical building, one needs to show it is in bad condition. The questions regarding this project therefore are whether the building slated for demolition is historic, and if so, whether its condition is sufficiently poor as to justify demolition. She reminded the EAC to take a good look at the plans for this project.

Susie wondered if we could ask that the new building be built in a sustainable way. She also suggested that the condominiums have a number of electric cars or zip available for use by residents, similar to the Zip Car model. This was suggested to reduce the number of private cars and reduce the need for extra parking.

Allen wondered what the timeline is for this project. The present tenants are to be out by the end of December. Lauren was not sure what stage the project is in. Elizabeth said that the Planning Commission has not received any plans yet. She noted that this project is governed by special provisions regarding the town center, which are different from other parts of the Borough. She said that she would make sure we would know when the Planning Commission is looking at these plans. Lauren noted that the Town Center rules for aesthetics are very strict.

TO DO: EAC members should review the building code so to offer possible recommendations regarding sustainability, including but not limited to tree & planting requirements.

The provisions of the Borough Code regarding the Town Center can be found at:

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#inbox/FMfcgzGlkFnGpPgtSwgbGcxnGxtGwQzj?projector=1&messagePartId=0.1>

6. Doug Tallamy Book Club Update

At the last meeting, John was charged with contacting Jenifer Philips of the Swarthmore Public Library to determine whether the library would want to be a partner in a book discussion project. He was also charged with soliciting other possible groups to sponsor the book discussion and possible talk by Doug Tallamy.

John reported that several groups have expressed interest in sponsoring the book discussion of Doug Tallamy's new book. Those groups include the Library, Friends of Little Crum Creek Park, the Swarthmore Horticultural Society, the Swarthmore Senior Citizens Association and Redbud Nurseries.

John also spoke directly with Doug Tallamy who said he could give an hour talk and a half-hour Q&A for \$500, or a shorter discussion for \$250.

Jenifer Philips says that the money would not be in the Library budget for this year, but perhaps next year. John has not had a chance to see if the other groups might chip in some money.

Do we want to put this off until the new year?

Elizabeth suggested in early spring next year, making it close enough to spring for people to plant. Robin hoped that we can create a lot of publicity, and shift the fashion sense of how people view their lawns. The many lawns are not consistent with Doug Tallamy's vision of conservation. On the other hand, an English garden is consistent with Tallamy and planting for habitat. (An English garden is one that tries to emulate Nature, in contrast to expanses of lawn, which was popular with the French aristocracy, and the French-influenced English and Scottish aristocracy.)

Members of the EAC shared other ideas relating to native plants:

- Use the library to publicize this book discussion.
- Swarthmore Yard Fashion Week
- Draw that Yard (similar to the house drawing in *The Swarthmorean*.)
- Coordinate the book discussion with another round of home yard audits.
- Highlight yards that already are designed with native plants.
- Organize yard tours similar to the Historical Society's Home tours, lifting up not only yards with native plants, but houses with solar panels and other sustainable features.
- Having a regular schedule of Eco audits.
- Form focus groups of those interested in Eco Audits (The Tallamy book club could help with their formation. In addition, we might contact people who have had eco audits to see if they would like to meet with others who also had them. Small focus groups such as these could help each other problem solve. This would be a way of build community while simultaneously building better yards.
- Sharing information and yard tips among those who have had an audit. Elizabeth says she has the emails of those who took part in the eco audits. Social connections can help move attitudes.
- Asking homeowners who are far along in getting natives to serve as places for others to visit and emulate.
- Amending the Borough Ordinance regarding plant replacement to encourage natives.

TO DO: John will talk to the library and other partners and plan activities for the year.

7. Discussion of recommended Budget Items (including but not limited to solar, energy efficiency, internal price of carbon)

Elizabeth summarized the several items for budget requests so far:

Paul Spiegel of Practical Energy Solutions has done an energy audit of Borough Hall. Robin wondered if there could be a blower test. Robin asked Paul about a blower test, but he countered with an infrared scan for \$1200-\$1500. These would help us understand where there is energy leakage in Borough Hall. Practical Energy Solutions would not do the insulation and sealing for thermal leaks found by the scan. Paul could not only make recommendations, but also give us guidelines on what it should cost to have the work done by an insulation company.

Another possible project is more solar panels on the roof of the Borough Hall. That would be expensive. Another could be a small project, to which we could add more panels over the years. New panels would require more infrastructure from PECO. Having this infrastructure in place would allow for adding more panels over the years.

Another option is an electricity load analysis, (apart from the infrared scan and the thermal leaks analysis) and would cost \$2500-\$3500. Such an analysis would reveal how electricity is being used, hopefully with opportunities for conservation and/or efficiency.

There is an internal carbon pricing piece. This would be a kind of internal carbon tax on equipment you buy. Elizabeth said Bob Scott says the Borough lacks the authority to impose internal carbon pricing on entities other than itself. Even that would be complicated according to Bob Scott. Robin offered to continue learning about internal carbon pricing. Elizabeth Drake said that Delaware County is looking at carbon pricing and she would find out more about it.

Sue wondered if PECO could provide information regarding energy leakage, if that information could be more economical than from Paul Spiegel. Elizabeth recalled that PECO said it could do such assessment for commercial enterprises, but not municipal. Steve Clark, who used to be a contractor with PECO, might be able to provide clarity on this issue.

It looks like bundled energy credits might be effective. We will want the new Borough manager is on top of this. We should recommend energy efficiency for this year. Allen thought that a new manager and new borough council members could provide more leadership.

Allen noted that our language can change the conversation. If we say “Solar panels will only produce 20%” it sounds like little. But if we say that “Solar will reduce our demand for other electricity” it gives a different outcome.

There was not strong interest in pursuing new solar panels at the moment.

TO DO: Elizabeth Drake and Sue Edwards will reach out to Steve Clark, and Sue and Robin will talk to Paul Spiegel on energy efficiency. They will also provide updates to John and Elizabeth. Lauren will need some information from us for the October Borough Council meeting.

8. Public Education: “What Can You Do” program for social media

As part of our role in doing public education, one person suggested that the EAC post to the EAC website what individuals could do in the form of advocacy. Robin has offered to post what people could do regarding advocacy on such things such as RGGI. Robin said she could also write it in a way to show how it would be directly relevant to Swarthmore, not just at the state and federal level.

Margaret said that the Swarthmore Town Center Facebook page might be a good place to reach the public. Susie offered to Margaret to post on NextDoor using the aFewSteps account. She offered to post on the aFewSteps website also.

John raised the idea of how individuals can curb their carbon footprint. Margaret noted that this needs to be both personal actions but also focusing on the large actors such as BP and Exxon. Carbon footprint quizzes, such as one devised by British Petroleum or one that Sue Edwards knows about., could help people in changing their energy usage. Beth said she would share the carbon footprint test she gives her students that BP actually designed. Footprintnetwork.org Robin noted that Eco audit focus groups could form a test case for how to leverage social networks to spread other desirable lifestyle changes. Susie noted that A Few Steps is trying to show how people can help do something and also serve their own pocketbooks. She was also willing to post things on A Few Steps and Next Door.

9. National Energy Efficiency Day (October 6)

Energy Efficiency Day is coming up. We will post this on social media to highlight this day. We also might want to post some of the programs the Chester County is putting on. More information can be found at <https://energyefficiencyday.org/>

10. Discussion of Tree requirements in Subdivision and Land Development Code - See current language below the draft email policy.

Elizabeth shared in advance of the meeting with the minutes and agenda, the following provisions of the Swarthmore Borough Code regarding replacement of vegetation. They appear below.

She wondered whether the requirements of replacing trees could include native plants, rather than any tree of a similar size.

TO DO: She urged us to review this borough ordinance and think about how we might recommend amend it for requiring native plants. That could be a part of our public education program regarding native plants.

11. New Business:

Robin raised a concern about the lack of diversity on the EAC. Elizabeth suggested that we take this up at the October meeting. **TO DO: Each of us should think about people we could recruit for the EAC and different avenues for outreach.**

The meeting adjourned at 8:55 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
John McKinstry
Recording Clerk, *Pro Tem*

1293.07 REQUIREMENTS FOR REPLACEMENT OF VEGETATION (TREES AND SHRUBS).

(a) Calculation of Required Vegetation Replacement. Where earth disturbance exceeds 500 square feet, applied independently and cumulatively, replacement plantings shall be installed in

accordance with the standards set forth in both paragraphs (1) and (2) below. Street trees and trees planted in buffer zones shall count towards replacement tree requirements. The selection of acceptable replacement plantings shall be subject to approval by the Borough.

(1) Replacement of trees removed: For each tree with a caliper greater than eight inches to be removed, required replacement trees shall be calculated in accordance with the following schedule.

For each tree to be removed, Minimum number & Caliper
at the following calipers: of replacement trees:

One, 8" to 18" caliper One 3½" caliper

One, greater than 18", to 24" caliper Two 3½" caliper

One, greater than 24", to 36" caliper Three 3½" caliper

One, greater than 36" caliper Four 3½" caliper

(2) Additional tree planting requirements: For each two thousand square feet, applied independently and cumulatively, of new impervious surface that will be created as a result of development, one tree of at least two inches to two and one-half inches caliper shall be planted.

(b) In the event that the applicant establishes to the satisfaction of the Borough that constraints incident to the land itself (including, but without limitation, extreme topography, unsuitable soils, rock outcrops and existing uninterrupted dense canopy) render it impracticable to locate on the lot the required number of replacement plantings or street trees, then, at the election of the Borough and where approved by the Borough as a condition of any applicable subdivision or land development approval, the applicant shall undertake one or a combination of the following:

(1) Install fewer, larger or more valuable trees with an aggregate cost as installed and guaranteed not less than the estimated aggregate cost of the required number of plantings.

(2) Install required replacement plantings at a site or sites other than that subject to replacement planting.

(3) In lieu of actual installation of replacement plantings, place the equivalent cash value, as agreed upon by the Borough and the applicant, for required replacement plantings into a Borough fund established for that purpose. Such fund shall be utilized at the discretion of the Borough for the management and maintenance of public street trees and/or public park areas within the Borough.

(c) Required replacement vegetation and their measurement shall conform to the standards of the publication "American or U.S.A. Standard for Nursery Stock", American National Standards Institute (ANSI) or U.S.A.S. Z60.1 of the American Association of Nurserymen, as currently amended. All plant material used on the site shall be hardy to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Zone 6 designation and shall be nursery grown, unless it is determined by the Borough that the transplanting of plant material partially fulfills the requirements of this section.

(d) Selection of the species of replacement plantings and determination of planting locations shall reflect careful site evaluation, including the site's geology, hydrology, soils and microclimate, shall promote the design objectives of the plantings including visual screening, noise abatement and energy conservation, and shall utilize as much as possible native plant material.

(e) The locations, selected species, and sizes of all replacement plantings, along with a planting schedule tied to the timing and/or phasing of the construction, shall be indicated on the

final subdivision/land development landscape plan or building permit application, as applicable, and shall be subject to approval by the Borough.

(f) Vegetation intended to remain post-disturbance shall be protected from damage during construction, including, but not limited to, damage to above-ground vegetation structure, damage to root structure, and pollution of soil impacting the vegetation.

(g) Where any tree greater than twelve inches caliper is removed without prior Borough approval, replacement plantings in addition to any otherwise required shall be installed in a manner acceptable to the Borough at a rate of ten trees of at least three and one-half inch caliper for each tree so removed. Any other applicable penalty under law also shall be imposed. (Ord. 1044. Passed 8-8-11.)

The EAC adjourned at 9:00.

Respectfully submitted,
John McKinstry
Secretary *Pro Tem*