

**Swarthmore Environmental Advisory Council**  
**Minutes**  
**Tuesday, August 24, 2021**

**Approved 9/28/21**

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

The August 24, 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 Comment**

There were no public comments.

**2. Good news re the Environment**

Elizabeth shared that the installation of the 13 solar panels on Borough Hall was complete. These will generate 5,000 kwh/year.

**3. Approval of Minutes of July 27, 2021 Meeting**

The minutes were APPROVED.

**4. Review the EAC ordinance and its history (Lauren)**

Lauren McKinney provided a review of the Borough's EAC Ordinance. In 1973, Pennsylvania passed Act 148 enabling the establishment of municipal EACs. In 1998, Swarthmore Borough Council passed Ordinance 924 establishing its EAC. Under the ordinance, Borough Council appoints the EAC members, consistent with state law. The local practice is for Council to appoint people at the suggestion of the EAC, although Council could appoint people on its own. Council also appoints the EAC Chair. As Council had the power to create the EAC, it also has the authority to disband it as well.

The original statute was focused on preserving open space. Some EACs in more rural areas focus on smart growth. Swarthmore's EAC, on the other hand, is focused on energy and climate change. The EAC is authorized to advise borough council and to educate council and the public. It is not meant to be an activist organization, but rather is meant to work with the government.

The state statute says that the EAC should do an annual report. The Swarthmore EAC has not done that, but it would be a good idea to remind people of all the work the EAC does. Allen noted that soon we will have a new council, a new Environment Committee and a new Borough Manager. He asked how will the EAC orient this new organization. Lauren saw that this is a good opportunity. She urged us to send her questions to be posed to the candidates for borough manager. She urged everyone on the EAC to reach out to the new council members and borough manager, and talk about our priorities and ask about their priorities.

Elizabeth suggested that she, Annie and John come up with a fact sheet about the EAC's activities that can be shared with the new council and environment committee.

Robin asked about the status of the search for borough manager. Lauren said that they have candidates lined up for public interviews. Jane's last day is in mid-February, but the hope is that the new person will start early January to have some overlap with her.

Robin also asked about where past projects (including open space inventory) are stored. Lauren noted that she would find out where they are stored. Sue Kelly said that there was part of a shelf in the library that had EAC files, but new shelving resulted in their disappearance. She said the open space inventory recorded all the open spaces around 2001. We could also do a new open space survey, that could be done by a scout.

In speaking of open space, Sue Edwards noted that the new development on North Chester Road seems to have lost a lot of trees. Elizabeth suggested that perhaps the borough rules about preservation of trees could be strengthened. Perhaps it could include a priority to planting native species. This could be put on the agenda for a future meeting.

Elizabeth thought these reports could be part of our fact sheet/presentation to the new council.

A question was asked about zoning and who is required to do what. Elizabeth noted that there are sections for institutions, such as the college, churches and schools and other requirements for residential areas. She offered to share with us the Zoning Code.

##### **5. Book Club Possibility on Doug Tallamy's new book, *Nature's Best Hope: A New Approach to Conservation That Starts in Your Yard* (John)**

John reported that he spoke with Jenifer Phillips, the adult services staff person at the Swarthmore Public Library about a possible joint project between the EAC and the library to have a book group discussion around Doug Tallamy's new book, *Nature's Best Hope: A New Approach to Conservation That Starts in Your Yard*. Jenifer was enthusiastic about a joint project, and she and John discussed the number of meetings and the timing, especially to give people ideas before the next optimal time of planting happens in the spring. Their preliminary thinking is to have a few book club meetings to talk about the book in January through March and end with a big event in March. An advantage of this is that it would provide time this fall to plan and to perhaps engage the author for a talk. T

Some suggested that this could be expanded to include other groups such as Borough Council, Friends of Little Crum Creek, the Scott Foundation or the Swarthmore Horticultural Society.

After some discussion, the EAC expressed its support of such a project, noting that the library's involvement made sense since it could help publicize the events. One person suggested that we might partner with Redbud and perhaps they might offer a discount if one attended the talk. Some suggested that John reach out to the Horticultural Society and the Swarthmore Senior Citizens Association. Some noted that Tallamy talked at Rose Valley and at the College, and

thought he might come back. One person suggested that if he did not want to give a full talk, we could provide a video copy of his webinar, and that he might have a Q&A session.

TO DO: John will contact Jenifer to partner with library, the Swarthmore Senior Citizens Association, the Swarthmore Horticultural Society and Redbud.

## **6. Budget items: Ideas or suggestions for discussion**

Solar (Elizabeth)

Elizabeth provided a history behind the new installation of solar panels on borough hall. In the recent past, there were discussions about buying solar credits with \$7,000. The borough decided instead to buy solar panels for Borough Hall. She noted that is the roof of borough hall, it would cost \$80,000, but it would supply only 20% of Borough Hall's needs.

Robin asked about the possibility of a blower test, which tells us points of heat transfer in borough hall. One kind of heat transfer is where outside heat comes in, indicating a need for more insulation. Another kind of heat transfer is between different parts of the building; since police carry heavy equipment, they like much lower temperatures in the police headquarters. Is there more insulation needed on interior walls which could result in greater energy conservation? Elizabeth said that the borough had reached out to PECO for an evaluation, PECO would not provide the service to the Borough because it is neither a business nor a homeowner. Robin offered to draft an email for Elizabeth, John and Sue Edwards to send to Practical Energy Solutions.

The EAC was split as to whether the budget request should go for solar panels or for energy conservation, so the issue of this budget request will be taken up at the September meeting.

## **7. Energy Transition Task Force (Robin)**

The first issue raised regarding the ETTF is the need for new members. Elizabeth wondered whether ETTF could give a presentation to A Few Steps and see if they can partner and get new recruits from them.

Robin said that she had a vision of making the ETTF as an independent entity, with its own website, domain, and its task would be energy planning, not implementation. As an independent entity, it would make suggestions to the EAC, and the EAC could then make recommendations to Borough Council. This would be similar to how A Few Steps worked: that organization had members on the EAC, which facilitated communication between the two and enabled A Few Steps' ideas to be forwarded on to the Borough.

There was discussion of where to store many of the documents in this domain. We ended with expressions of gratitude to Sue Edwards for all of the work she has done for the ETTF.

The EAC adjourned at 9:00.

Respectfully submitted,

John McKinstry  
Secretary *Pro Tem*