

The EAC annual report

The Bethlehem Gadfly Environmental Advisory Council December 17, 2020

 *The latest in a series of posts relating to the Environmental Advisory Council* 

Annual report from one of Gadfly's favorite committees, read at City Council December 15.

Your non-tax dollars at work. A model for us all. Amazing!

Good evening, my name is Lynn Rothman, speaking tonight on behalf of Bethlehem Environmental Advisory Council (EAC) members Beth Behrend, Elisabeth Cichonski, Ben Felzer, Ben Guthrie, Brian Nicas and Mike Topping.

In accordance with our bylaws, each yr we submit a year end report to City Council, which I'll summarize tonight.

In April we moved our meetings from Illick's Mill to a virtual platform and will continue to do so until it's safe to meet. In accordance with the Sunshine Laws, our virtual meetings are open to the public over zoom.



Letters sent during the year include in March, a recommendation to the Director of Planning and Zoning that the property at 2105 Creek Road retain its Rural Residential designation because it's located in the Saucon Creek floodplain and a recommendation that the City pass an ordinance banning single use plastic bags to take effect in July and thus be grandfathered in before the State budget was passed.

In June, we supported the City's WalkWorks grant application for the creation of an Active Transportation Plan focused on the Broad Street corridor.

In July, we recommended creating an Office of Sustainability to oversee and implement the Climate Action Plan (CAP). This Office would engage and partner with the public, collaborate with all City Departments, and

work with the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission to provide coordinated climate action. Because climate action is ongoing, the Sustainability Office would monitor actions the CAP and update the plan, incorporating the latest climate science & technology.

In November, we sent a letter supporting the Pedestrian Bridge Feasibility Study.

During the year, events and activities included the first EAC Network Meeting for all Lehigh Valley EACs, coordinated by the Bethlehem, Allentown and Easton EACs. The meeting was held on March 11th at Illicks Mill. There was a strong turn out, and each EAC shared ideas for possible collaboration.

In May one of our members was a panelist at the virtual 2020 Pennsylvania EAC Network Conference.

In partnership with the Monocacy Creek Watershed Association, we held successful Monocacy Creek clean-ups in August and October, with the help of additional volunteers from outside our two groups.

In August, we tabled at the Rose Garden Farmers Market and handed out information about the upcoming CAP public meeting along with EAC flyers about sustainability.

We've met with City Forester David Shaffer to discuss the city-wide street tree inventory, which will be completed this month. Several of our members also joined Mr. Shaffer in an online Tree Tenders Course given by Penn State Extension.

Two of our members mentored high school students who prepared environmental essays for the Touchstone Theatre's Festival Unbound. Because the City was no longer able to host the EAC on their new website, in February we launched a separate Bethlehem EAC website. We've continued to maintain our Facebook page, with increasing numbers of followers.

Speakers at our meetings included Katharine Targett Gross, Sustainability Officer at Lehigh University and Kathy Fox and Joe Klinkhoff from the Bethlehem Food Co-Op.

Bethlehem Backyards for Wildlife, an active standing committee of the EAC with a dedicated group of volunteers, will give their report following this one.

Our most important work this year has been supporting the City's Climate Action Plan, being written by the consulting firm WSP. EAC members are part of the CAP Stakeholder Working Group and the mitigation subgroups for Land Use & Green Space, Transportation, Food

Waste & Product Sourcing, Electricity Sourcing, and Education & Behavior Change. Once the CAP is finalized, we'll continue to assist with its implementation.

Our great appreciation goes to Robert Vidoni, City Clerk, and Judy Kelechava, Assistant City Clerk, for responding to our requests and questions, placing meeting notices in the newspaper and facilitating communication between the EAC, City Council and the administration. We recognize and appreciate our City Council liaison, J. William Reynolds, for his assistance, attendance at our meetings, initiative and continued efforts to bring the CAP to fruition. We also acknowledge and thank Michael Alkhal, Director of Public Works, Matt Dorner, Deputy Director of Public Works, and Darlene Heller, Director Planning & Zoning, for their ongoing contributions to the CAP. Thanks also to Michael Halbfoerster, Director of Recycling, for his assistance to our Waste Reduction Committee. We commend City Council and the Administration for their support of the CAP and initiatives to make Bethlehem a greener City.

The Bethlehem Gadfly