

**Bethlehem Environmental Advisory Council
General Meeting
September 2, 2015**

Attendees: Present were Council members Fran Cundall, Jack Gambino, Cathy Reuscher, Lynn Rothman, Mike Topping and George Yasko. Also present was Linda Freedman.

Welcome Cathy Reuscher: As the first order of business, George was joined by everyone present in welcoming Cathy to the EAC as City Council's representative.

Approval of August Minutes: After a short discussion, Lynn moved to approve the minutes; seconded by Cathy; approved.

Citizen's Comments: Linda expressed her concern for the mowing and spraying of wildflower and meadow areas, prime habitat for Monarch Butterflies. These butterflies have lost much of the necessary habitat for them to survive, including milkweed areas, which they rely on during their migrations to and from Mexico. Spraying is always a concern, but mowing can be done later in the year after the butterflies have left the area. She also was concerned with the recent decision by the Parks Department to remove an existing meadow so that the police horses could be relocated to a barn & paddock behind the ice rink. She noted that this area contains an existing dog park and sledding area and that conflicts might occur with the introduction of horses to the area. She had talked to Parks & Police personnel and was told this was the best area available for the horses. The EAC members advised her to prepare, in writing, a list of areas where the spraying and mowing might be a problem and also a preferred time for mowing where it is considered necessary. They also recommended that she survey the City for areas where wildflowers could be introduced in order to provide improved habitats for the butterflies and other wildlife. After a long discussion, she also offered to become a member of the Green Committee.

Sub Committee Reports:

Energy: With the constant changes in the technology involved, George and Jack will look at the latest wind energy possibilities for the City.

Green: On August 27, the Food Co-Op fundraiser was held and the pollinator film was shown to a full house, which included members of the Sierra Club and BBFW as well as the general public. The BBFW gave a talk on National Wildlife Federation (NWF) and there were many displays from various outdoor organizations. The NWF has recertified the City for the third time as Community Wildlife Habitat. The next activity will be the native plant sale on September 19-20 and 26-27, at the Unitarian Church on the southeast corner of Wall and Center Streets. On August 6, the Morning Call had a nice article, with a picture of Martha Christine, about the BBFW.

Lehigh Valley Bird Town Coalition (LVBTC): Lynn went to the LVBTC meeting where she had the opportunity to meet representatives from the Allentown and Salisbury EACs. In addition, information was given regarding the Dept. of Conservation and Natural Resources Tree Vitalize Program, which provides grants to communities and non-profit organizations. Grants can assist with tree inventory and acquisition. Cathy offered to contact City Hall and see if anyone would be available to write a grant for trees, etc. for projects in the City. Lynn will forward the information to Cathy.

Lynn attended **the Lehigh Valley Greenways** meeting at the Lehigh Gap Nature Center (LGNC) on August 13 and gave the following report:

Upcoming events:

Sept. 26: 10-5 Lehigh Valley Greenways Festival at Jacobsburg State Park

Oct. 1: Lehigh Valley Planning Commission Gala

Oct. 13: Lehigh Valley Watershed conference at Lehigh University – George has flyers

Oct. 16: Legislative Breakfast - Cathy will be at the breakfast representing the Appalachian Mountain Club and the Pennsylvania Highlands Coalition. They recently met for a similar breakfast concerning the Schuylkill Highlands with various local legislators and other members of the community.

Summary of meeting:

1. Dan Kunkle, Executive Director, Lehigh Gap Nature Center

Presentation: Landscaping for Communities and Wildlife Program

It is a 50/50 match program. Applicant's part can be labor.

In 3 years they have completed 22 projects in high profile public places such as libraries, colleges and Martin Guitar. By year 5 they hope to implement residential projects. They are preparing a guide on native plants and plan to eventually market the program and the guide outside the Lehigh Valley.

They will work with area stores that sell invasive species.

2. Jason Smith, Bushkill EAC

Presentation: Mapping Invasive Plants

Mobile app for invasive plant mapping with plant descriptions.

Mapping has satellite imagery.

Once evaluate effectiveness, hope to get funding and take to other municipalities.

3. Elissa Garofalo, D&L Trails

Presentation: Promoting Lehigh Valley Open Space/Parks/Trails

4. Discussion of successional habitat and utility right-of-ways.

DiscoverLehighValley.com: Can upload events (www.uploadyourevent.com)

Transportation: Lynn contacted Anne Felker, who has as her main concern the lack of bike racks, where needed, in the City and the need to repaint the shared lanes on certain city streets. The members agreed that the first step is to have CTAC offer a plan for where the bike racks should be installed and how many are needed. The EAC can then review the plan and recommend it to the Administration for implementation.

At the end of the meeting, Cathy advised the members that the City was considering a free bike share program for the City and that she would have more information at the next meeting.

Japanese Knotweed: Another concern is the invasive plants (Japanese Knotweed) which cover the hillside along the west side of Conestoga Street. George will try and find out who owns the property and what can be done about the knotweed

External Committee Reports:

Zoning: No report.

Planning: Cathy reported that the Martin Tower property may be rezoned and that would probably include the removal of the Tower and a redesign of the uses on the property. Although the uses involved may not be a concern of the EAC, a redesign of the site with increased paved areas and altered landscaping may be of concern.

City Council: Nothing of concern for the EAC.

Old Business:

Recycling Containers for Downtown: Kalyna had reported to George that low cost containers would not be appropriate and that the ones recommended by the Historic Board are very expensive. Recycling Director, Michael Conway, will address this situation and try and find a suitable solution in the near future. Sustainable parks for children was another item that Kalyna was interested in reviewing and she may have something to report at a future meeting.

Monocacy Creek Assessment: Contracts should be signed this month with Wildlands Conservancy and the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission for professional services so that the work can begin later this year weather permitting. The City Parks Department and the Monocacy Creek Watershed people will also be involved with this project.

Allentown EAC: Jack and Lynn will continue to try and find a suitable meeting time and place for a joint meeting with both EAC memberships. Tentative dates of September 29 or October 1 appeared to be good for most members.

Bottled Water: Although the members agreed that bottled water was a waste of money and that Bethlehem water was better, it was agreed that to oppose bottled water would be a mistake. However, an education program explaining that tap water is better than bottled water would be a good program to promote.

EAC Terms: George announced that his term will be up in January 2016 and that he will not ask to be reappointed to the EAC. He gave the remainder of the EAC member terms as follows:

Jack & Mike -- January 2016

Fran, Cathy & Lynn -- January 2017

Kalyna – January 2018

Next Meeting: October 7, 2015.

Adjourn: The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:45 PM.