



THE COUNTY OF CHESTER



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Environmental and Energy Advisory Board
Government Services Center Suite 351E/Zoom

April 24, 2024
Hybrid meeting

MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT IN PERSON: Paul Spiegel, Chair; Carol DeWolf, Vice-Chair; Brian O'Leary, Secretary; Kelsey Boyd; Seung Ah Byun; Madhu Gurthy; Steve Krug; Sarah Sharp; Jim Wylie.

MEMBERS PRESENT VIA ZOOM: Mark Connolly; Britnee Sanseverino; Kevin Warren; Wyatt Williams.

OTHERS PRESENT IN PERSON: Rachael Griffith, Kate Hutelmyer, Gene Huller, Heather Jacobson, Sally Warren.

OTHERS PRESENT VIA ZOOM: None

CALL TO ORDER:

The Environmental and Energy Advisory Board meeting, held in the Government Services Center in Suite 351E and via Zoom video/audio on Wednesday, April 24, 2024, was called to order at 2:30 P.M. by Chair, Paul Spiegel.

ACTION ITEMS:

Approval of January 24, 2024, Minutes:

A MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM THE JANUARY 24, 2024, MEETING WAS MADE BY MR. O'LEARY, SECONDED BY MS. GURTHY, AND PASSED BY UNANIMOUS VOTE OF THE BOARD. MOTION CARRIED.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

Subcommittee Reports

Environmental Subcommittee:

Ms. Byun reported that the subcommittee met and discussed a number of grants including the Schuylkill Highlands Mini-Grants and the Vision Partnership Program (VPP) County Grants and how they align with the County Climate Action Plan goals and other goals of this Board.

Mr. O'Leary introduced a pilot program within the VPP program involving a rolling application for mini-grants, beginning in Spring 2024, to fund municipal projects that would implement CCPC's municipal outreach initiatives. It was noted by Mr. O'Leary that the criteria for scoring VPP applications next year will encompass all county plans – not just Landscapes3 – including Watersheds 2045, the Climate Action Plan, Heritage Tourism Plan, Ag Development Plan, Public Transportation Plan, and the Trails Plan.

Ms. Byun added that with Watersheds 2045 being adopted, the subcommittee is identifying goals and strategies that the Board could help implement, similar to its role with the Climate Action Plan.

Ms. Griffith added that the County has applied for a PA DCNR Grant to fund mini-grants for what is being called an Open Space Accelerator Program, aimed at a specific scope of work geared to municipalities that have already completed some Open Space Planning. Ms. De Wolf added she heard confusion as to whether agricultural lands could be included in a PA-DCNR Open Space Accelerator project, as opposed to other funding sources that prohibit agricultural land use within open space. Mr. O’Leary noted that agriculture can be included in this DCNR-funded planning work and added that the Farm Bureau also had questions regarding the applicability of agricultural lands. He will be attending the June Farm Bureau’s meeting to clarify.

Ms. Byun discussed a need to broaden Environmental Advisory Council (EAC) outreach and education, including an inventory of responsibilities of each EAC and map of all EACs in the county.

Clean Energy Subcommittee

Mr. Krug briefed the board on a future Agrivoltaics Conference, planned for Winter 2025, after the PA Farm Show but before Earth Day.

Mr. Warren added that he and Ms. Griffith are working on ideas to re-ignite the Municipal Cohort group. Ms. Griffith is going to send out more emails to the group with information related to a broad range of topics. She is working with Montgomery County planners on an Ordinance Toolkit for energy efficiency, with regional examples along with legal guidance.

Mr. Wiley spoke about an effort to enable Community Choice Aggregation (also known as municipal aggregation), which is about municipalities procuring electricity for all their residents as the default option. A group of boroughs believe the PA Borough Code gives them the authority to do this. PUC will offer a determination in May 2024.

Mr. Warren listed the other issues this subcommittee is tracking, which include: the need for more education on efficient heat pumps as contractors seem slow to adopt this technology; monitoring the status of the regional benchmarking initiative; and providing updates on the alternative energy portfolio standard, which is likely to be significant for renewables and less about efficiency.

Municipal EAC Engagement

Ms. Griffith spoke about a possible role this board could play in engaging with EACs to augment their capacity and to implement the various county plans. Several ideas were offered: develop a Junior EAC role for high school and college students interested in volunteering; develop an avenue for idea sharing between EACs; and develop a contest (like sustainable Pittsburgh’s Sustainability Sprints). Ms. Griffith shared a map showing the municipalities that have an environmental committee.

Several ideas were offered by the Board, including: expanding the Christina Watershed Municipal Partnership group to be county-wide; helping to form regional EACs, especially for the more rural, low-population and low-staff municipalities in the County; holding workshops for EACs, potentially as part of the Sustainability Summit; or providing a resource to municipalities like a Shared Energy Manager. Mr. Wylie expressed mixed feelings about regional EACs noting that the greater West Chester EAC has fizzled due to turnover of leadership; he suggested a County-level EAC.

Ms. DeWolf pointed out there are a number of other watershed and non-profit groups in the county that can help bring the power of fundraising to EACs.

Ms. Byun suggested having a meeting with all the EACs, followed by surveying them to see where they are. Ms. Griffith agreed to prepare a survey for EACs to gauge their needs as a next step.

Outreach to Environmental Justice Communities

Ms. Griffith introduced an idea to engage low-income and disadvantaged communities in an effort

to connect residents and businesses with federal funding and regional programs related to energy transition initiatives. She shared three maps that define these communities in Chester County: DVRPC's "indicators for potential disadvantage" map, the PA DEP Environmental Justice Map, and the federal "Climate and Economic Justice" mapping tool. These maps identify disadvantaged areas in or around: Coatesville, Toughkenamon/Avondale, and Oxford. Ms. Griffith shared information about regional programs in development that would support these communities, such as DVRPC's regional Clean Energy Hub that would retrofit homes in these communities with energy efficient systems, and the Commonwealth's recent \$156 million grant for a Solar-for-All project, aimed at these low-income and disadvantaged communities. Ms. Griffith asked the board how to engage people to participate in these programs at a large scale.

Ms. Byun added that if the board had funding for outreach, that would help to educate low-income communities about these opportunities. Ms. Griffith seeks the advice of board members to help facilitate this effort and a brainstorming session was proposed by Mr. Wylie.

UPDATES AND COMMENTS:

Updates from the Board - Chester County Association of Township Officials (CCATO)

Ms. De Wolf reported she recently took on the role of Executive Director of CCATO, with an entirely new board, including Jim McHugh, who is the new Secretary. The board of nine meets monthly and the mission is: promoting excellence in local government by advocating, educating, and facilitating communications for the quality of life in Chester County.

CCATO works on resolutions that can be lifted up to the state level for potential legislation. CCATO is re-evaluating if they will only have one or two conferences per year. They host "coffees" and networking meetings throughout the year. There will be a Fall Conference on November 14, 2024, at the White Manor Country Club in Willistown Township, Malvern, PA.

Mr. O'Leary asked if CCATO will produce a newsletter and will they be looking for content. Ms. De Wolf responded this topic is on the agenda for a meeting tomorrow.

Board Updates

Mr. Krug added that last year, Rachael Griffith was chosen as a statewide millennial superstar and this year that award was given to the EEAB former Chair, Jess Cadorette.

Mr. Wylie shared there was a Climate Summit in Lancaster with a fantastic agenda and speakers, on Saturday, April 27 at Millersville University.

Planning Commission Director's Report

Mr. O'Leary mentioned the County's new Farm Guide is available for free now. The 30th Anniversary of Town Tours & Village Walks program is set for this summer. The planning commission is holding a meeting on the 5-year assessment of Landscapes3 on May 14 at the Government Services Center. A survey will be part of the summerlong follow up.

Sustainability Director's Report

Ms. Griffith thanked the Board for contributing to the county's recent SolSmart Gold designation.

The county was allotted \$480,000 through the federal Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program, which the county has decided to use for three things: 1) an energy strategy program for the county's facilities; 2) a pilot program for electric park maintenance vehicles; 3) a solar installation at 313 Market Street.

Ms. Griffith added Ms. Jacobson created a map on the Planning Commission website that identifies municipalities that have passed single use plastic ordinances. Ms. Griffith thanked Ms. Jacobson, an intern for the past few months who has done a lot of work supporting the sustainability work of the Planning Commission.

Facilities Director's Report

Mr. Martynick was not present. Ms. Griffith reported the county received a federal grant for public charging stations at sixteen county facilities, and the goal is for installation in 2025. The county also submitted as part of the Philadelphia Energy Authority's application to the EPA Climate Pollution Reduction Grant Program a request for \$ 2.6 million for solar canopies at the future Chesco Connect bus depot. The county is also participating in the PA DEP Shared Energy Manager program.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

The next quarterly meeting will be on July 24, 2024.

ADJOURNMENT

THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS, A MOTION TO ADJOURN AT 4:15 PM. WAS MADE BY MR. KRUG SECONDED BY MS. GURTHY AND PASSED BY UNANIMOUS VOTE OF THE BOARD.

Respectfully submitted,



Brian N. O'Leary, AICP
Secretary

BNO/RG/saw