

**Salisbury Township
Environmental Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes
November 18, 2009**

A Public Meeting was held on the above date at the Salisbury Township Municipal building located at 2900 South Pike Avenue, Allentown, Lehigh County, Pennsylvania. The meeting was brought to order at 7:00 P.M. Committee members in attendance: Bruce Burchard, Louis Cinquino (late), Jane Benning, Richard Niesenbaum, Commissioner James Brown, Joseph Hebelka, Planning Commission representative and Ms. Cynthia Sopka (Secretary to the EAC).

Mr. Burchard called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M.

Ms. Sopka announced that all sessions of the Salisbury Township Environmental Advisory Counsel regular meetings are electronically recorded as required by the By-laws and for the purpose of taking the Minutes.

Minutes – 9/16/2009 and 10/21/2009

Motion was made by Mrs. Benning to approve both the September 16, 2009 and October 21, 2009 Environmental Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes as submitted. Motion seconded by Mr. Cinquino. The Motion passed by unanimous voice vote

Agenda Review

Report of officers and committees (including BOC, PC, Manager and/or Planning/Zoning):

Ms. Sopka highlighted the Zoning and Planning Meetings for the month. In regards to Zoning, there was no activity.

Ms. Sopka referenced the October 13, 2009 meeting of the Planning Commission for **Devonshire Park Apartments** located at 1601 33rd St. SW recommendation to the Board of Commissioners to deny the waiver request from the recreation fee requirements. The Board of Commissioners denied the waiver request from recreation fee payment for land development since the open space was previously dedicated as an obligation with the City of Allentown in 1965.

Ms. Sopka provided a brief history and reviewed the land development plan and Conditional Use application for **Lehigh County Department of Corrections** site plan at 1600 Riverside Drive. She stated in 1992 the Zoning Hearing Board approved the change of use to a treatment/work release facility from a temporary minimum security prison. They are requesting an increase of inmates to include male and female and facility expansion. This expansion would provide a housing increase from 300 to 400 residents, including women.

Ms. Sopka stated that the Board of Commissioners and Planning Commission approved the 90 day request for extension for Preliminary/Final plan approval for **Crossroads Baptist Church** located at 1860 E. Emmaus Avenue.

Old Business

Presentation was made by Mr. Cinquino and Bruce Burchard, who approached the Board of Commissioners on November 12, 2009 to address and provided finalize areas of interest for the Natural Resource Inventory.

New Business

Presentation by Wildlands Conservancy: Scott Cope, Tom Gettings and Kent Baird: Mr. Gettings started the presentation stating they have been a non-profit organization for the past 35 years with 19 employees. They are located on the 77 1/2 acre Pool Wildlife Sanctuary located in Upper Macungie Township and focus exclusively on environmental issues within the Lehigh River Watershed.

The Conservancy focuses on four major program areas:

1. **Land Protection and Planning** – In the last 35 years they have protected over 46,000+ acres and have worked on 18 counties plus the Lehigh River Watershed. They have 48 properties with conservation easements. They work with Municipalities including assisting in open space plans.
2. **Environmental Education Program** – They offers internship possibilities for elementary/secondary education. They have educated approximately 16,000 children per year on site. They are trying to expand adult/community education. Summer camps, Municipal parks programs, and animal education presentations are provided.
3. **Rivers Conservation** – This deals with water quality, riparian buffers, and stream restoration. They stated their biggest ongoing problem is the Lehigh River's (abandoned) mine drainage.
4. **Greenways & Trails** –Not all greenways have trails in them and not all trails have greenways. A greenway is a linear corridor of natural open space. The trail is the physical footpath for recreation to enjoy the open space. The Conservancy has been involved with over 90 miles of trails and are becoming more proactive in the trail planning for communities.

Mr. Gettings stated that the Lehigh Valley Greenways was the initiative put out by the State several years ago. The intent is to get all the environmental state holders to work together and move forward to protect natural resources. Mr. Gettings stated the Lehigh Valley Greenways is a potential funding source that has small grants available and could be a useful tool for local EAC's. Mr. Scott Cope is the contact person for grants.

The Lehigh Valley Planning Commission authorized the 2007 Greenway plan for the Lehigh Valley. Their goal is to address different land connections at the same time offer protection to natural resources. Mr. Gettings identified some of these landmarks with small discussion.

Mr. Hebelka inquired if the land is preserved through easements and what is the primary method of saving the land and how to gain access. Mr. Gettings advised that the method is both easements and acquisitions.

Important Lehigh Valley natural areas were discussed. A combination of Lehigh and Northampton Counties, there are 79 Natural Area Inventory sites that total over 85,000 acres and there are 49,000 interior forests. Salisbury Township is home to two: Gauff Hill and Bob Rodale Nature Reserve.

The Highlands Conservation Act was briefly referenced. It is a federal program that provides finances for land protection. The Conservancy submitted a five million dollar grant to purchase and protect land on South Mountain, they are awaiting their response. Furthermore, four million dollars was allocated for four states, all for the South Mountain Ridge continuing into Maryland. The federally dedicated highland regions range from Connecticut to the Maryland border.

A question was posed regarding the biggest environmental issue facing the Lehigh Valley. Mr. Mario Spagnoletti, from the Whitehall EAC, believed it is stormwater and brief discussion ensued. The biggest issue is that every six years agriculture or woodlands equal in size of Allentown is lost in the Lehigh Valley due to development.

Mr. Hebelka noted discussion on quality of streams and drinking water issues and referenced the City of Allentown is currently pursuing a source water protection plan. In regard to the Little Lehigh, it is a watershed being reviewed under Act 220 of the state water plan, which is one of three basins being screened for a critical water planning area.

Mr. Gettings continued the presentation referencing projects pertaining to creating green open space trails such as, hiking, biking and walking trails for any outdoor recreation that attracts people.

The Wildlands took the initiative to create connected greenways from the Trexler Game Preserve into Allentown, to Jordon Park, to Leaser Lake into the Appalachian Trail. Mr. Gettings stated that the Wildlands did a one year ecological study on the 1,100 acres the Trexler Game Preserve owns to assist in finding what could and should be done to keep the property natural. When the ecological study was complete, a master site plan was accomplished and proposed 12 miles of trails for passive recreation. The County hired the Wildlands Conservancy to implement the plan and ended with 19 miles of trails on 1,100 acres of natural recreation. The Trexler Nature Preserve which hosts the Lehigh Valley Zoo offers archery, hunting, horse back riding, mountain biking, etc.

Mr. Gettings provided discussion regarding Upper Saucon's EAC participation of the **Official Map** for Upper Saucon. The EAC recommended updating the official map to include various aspects such as trails, land earmarked for preservations, farm land, etc., with the assistance of the Upper Saucon Township Engineering Firm, The Pidcock Company and the EAC, the map was developed and is pending final approval and adoption.

The official map is very important to complete and implement because if a developer intends to build on land that has been designated for protection, the Township has one year to address the intent by either purchasing the land or making an agreement with the land owner. The official map provides documentation of trails, areas for preservation, farm land, open space, etc.

Mr. Baird stated when developing the official map, if doing an open space plan or comprehensive plan, they should overlap conservation and recreation; therefore, they can reference each other.

The presentation concluded with land preservation from village design, farmland to smart growth. Mr. Baird offered a brief history of options for land preservation. Such as, Mr. Teddy Roosevelt who contributed to the preservation of 30 million acres in the 1900's.

Mr. Baird reviewed the distinction between prime farmland and natural areas. Lehigh County has over 20,000 acres of farmland preserved with the means of conservation easements. The Wildlands provides guidance in conservation easements as it is a complex deed restriction. For land owners with more than 10 acres there are tax advantages with conservation easements. Mr. Cope stated a direct letter should be sent to land owners and also land owners who live near riparian buffers to invite and educate them to a Township workshop for land preservation. Wildlands Conservancy representatives offered assistance to the Township to host program of this nature

Status of Game Commission Farm Game, Forest Game and Safety Zone programs, Tree and Shrub seedling order for spring 2010. Ms. Sopka confirmed that Salisbury Township does participate in the program and permitted to order a certain amount of trees; therefore, an order was placed for 400 seedlings. Mr. Hebelka stated because the seedlings are from the game commission, there are requirements that the seedlings are planted on Township property that allows hunting/archery.

Ms. Sopka believes this would be a nice element to coordinate with local Colleges, civic groups, etc. and have a community tree planting in the spring. Discussion continued to organize, identify areas and consider placement of trees while also seeking potential volunteers, and consider protections after the seedlings are planted.

Resignation of Frederic Brock was accepted by the Board of Commissioners. A recommendation for replacement is pending the Board of Commissioners consideration.

Ms. Sopka stated that The Board of Commissioners were afforded a presentation by Ms. Kennedy regarding the need of Natural Resource Inventory. The Board of Commissioners requested from Ms. Kennedy a formal scope of services. Ms. Sopka provided the STEAC members with the scope of services and suggested their review. This document will then be presented to the Board of Commissioners for their decision. There was concern expressed in regard to the new election and 2010 change of the Board of Commissioners and their interests. Commissioner Brown stated that there should be no concern and would like to see this on the agenda for December 10, 2009.

Small discussion continued in reference to the Salisbury Township Natural Resource Inventory, the Salisbury Township official map with amendments to the comprehensive plan that would include updating the official map.

Mr. Burchard inquired what the process would be about zoning issues/concerns and the need to make recommendations for zoning changes, if required. Ms. Sopka stated there is a protocol to follow and reviewed the series of steps.

Ms. Sopka advised all members that they are invited to an EAC gathering hosted by Lower Macungie EAC on December 9th, at the Allentown Brew Works. They are reaching out to meet other local EAC's in hope of working together in future environmental projects.

Ms. Sopka reported that she did attend the EAC Conference on November 7, 2009. She stated it was very inspirational and believed there are many people willing to help guide other EAC's. She made communication with Northampton County Watershed Coordinator. She also advised that she obtained documents for grants; one is for the tree vitalization program.

Discussion was made regarding possibly amending the Bylaws to include an associate member(s). The associate member(s) would not be a voting member but could be active with the EAC.

Public Comment

None

Agenda for next meeting

Adjournment

On a motion by Mr. Burchard, second by Mr. Hebelka the meeting was adjourned.