

**Plainfield Township
Environmental Advisory Council Meeting
February 3, 2020**

The Plainfield Township Environmental Advisory Council meeting was held on Monday, February 3, 2020 at 7:00 pm in the Plainfield Township Municipal Building, 6292 Sullivan Trail, Nazareth, PA 18064.

Those in attendance were:

Terry Kleintop, EAC Chairperson	Robert Cornman – EAC Member
Robin Dingle – EAC Vice Chairperson	Robert Simpson – EAC Member
Bruce Rabenold – EAC Member	Stan Shelosky – EAC Member
Jane Mellert, EAC Secretary and Member	Tom Petrucci – Plainfield Twp. Manager

Also in attendance – Sharon Pletchen (District Manager) and Jim Clauser (Agricultural Conservation Specialist) from the Northampton County Conservation District, resident Don Moore and Brian Hillard the Co-Chair of the Sierra Club

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE - The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm and the pledge of allegiance was performed.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Motion – January 14, 2020 Minutes - A motion was made by Bob Cornman to approve the January 14, 2020 minutes. The motion was seconded by Robin Dingle.

Vote: 7 Yes

MEETING BUSINESS

Northampton County Conservation District

- Terry Kleintop introduced - Sharon Pletchan (District Manager) and Jim Clauser (Agricultural Conservation Specialist). Sharon and Jim provided an overview of what the Northampton County Conservation District does. Sharon explained the initial compliance with ACT 319/515 Clean and Green regulations. Robin Dingle explained we want to learn, have a discussion and ask questions, along with how it may link into the responsibilities of the EAC.
- Sharon Pletchen– Under Chapter 102 there is a section specific to farm properties and earth disturbance. The regulations are specific to trying to reduce soil loss. Under 102 farmers are required to have a conservation plan.
- Jim Clauser explained 95% of the farmers participate in the USDA program. When they participate in the USDA(United States Department of Agriculture) program they are required to have a conservation plan. The USDA is used for crop insurance, grants, etc.
- Sharon explained if voluntary compliance doesn't happen then the DEP can become involved.
- Jim Clauser noted spot checks for current Conservation Plans occur.
- Sharon noted that they don't have the ability to check all of the properties. Spot checks are done as necessary.
- Jim Clauser works at the NRCS office two days a week. There is an extensive program an employee goes through in order to be certified to write conservation plans. Jim just started the program.
- Ryan with Farmland Preservation has the ability to write the conservation plans. If Farmland Preservation is not gaining compliance from a property owner than they get the NCCD

involved. Conservation plans are required when a landowner applies for farmland preservation. A conservation plan suffices for a E&S Plan. (Erosion and Sedimentation Plan)

- Sharon also noted that manure management plans and nutrient management are also required of some farms. The NCCD has a program to assist landowners with developing manure management and nutrient management plans.
- Jim Clauser noted that many conservation plans need to be updated because the plans are out of date. Crop rotations have changed so much that many plans are out of date.
- Sharon noted that if the Township knows of farms that have changed hands and needs a review then we should let them know. Robin Dingle inquired whether the Township should reach out to the farmers as a starting point.
- A workshop is being planned by the NCCD but usually the workshops are not well attended. It was noted the Township may be able to help reach out to the farmers to help them know about the upcoming workshop and the educational value of attending.
- Terry K noted that farming practices can have an impact on the stream. Farmers need to know that Conservation Plans and E & S Plans need to be up to date.
- Jim Clauser noted crop rotation plans is a BMP (Best Management Practice). It was also noted hedge rows and tree lines can help with run-off issues. The large equipment used to farm can make contour farming a challenge. Many farms are rented out to crop farmers and the renter wants to get in and out quick in order to save work time.
- Terry Kleintop noted we (the EAC and Township) are out to try and stop some of the problems from run-off.
- Sharon noted it is a voluntary compliance program. A member of the Township may not have the full authority to go onto the land. The NRCS is not the enforcing agency. Natural Resources Conservation Service, is an agency of the United States Department of Agriculture that provides technical assistance to farmers and other private landowners.
- USDA – NRCS - The Northampton County, Bethlehem Field Office District Conservationist is Austin Drager
- Jim Clauser noted long ago there was a program in order to install gullies with the help of the NRCS District Conservationist and a grant program. Helping correct problems is one of the best ways to educate the farmers.
- Jim Clauser noted that if there were major run-off problems then the DEP would get involved.
- Sharon noted that our area is still their jurisdiction.
- The MS4 permit for the Township requires the municipality to work with landowners that create impacts. It was noted that the MS4 areas are limited to the urbanized areas. Plainfield Township is currently focusing on streambank restoration and will work with grant funding.
- Farmland under Acts 319/515 will need to be reviewed to determine whether there is a paragraph in the language requiring a conservation plan. (Township will find out what the language is for the program)
- Sharon noted that their staff could handle the farms under Act 319/515 but that is up to the County administration top approve a staff member for this purpose.
- Terry Kleintop spoke to Ryan in the Northampton County Farmland Preservation office and he noted there are programs out there that can be used to help farmers.
- The Township Open Space Plan language should be reviewed in order to determine if an update may be needed to be to allow for restoration work on farmland.
- Sharon Pletchen also noted their Board is looking for an Associate Director.

A discussion was held regarding whether it would be appropriate for the EAC write a letter to the Board requesting that a letter is sent to Northampton County Council member Tara Zrinski requesting an additional position for the NCCD Office Staff in order for the staff to have the ability to review Act 319/515 farms for conservation compliance. At this point Sharon Pletchen noted that they have not requested another staff member so it may be better to go through Tara Zrinski.

A resident does not have to share the conservation plan with the municipality. It is voluntary. Sharon Pletchen noted the office could turn plans around much quicker if Jim Clauser was a full-time member of the staff and his time was not split between two offices. Don Moore asked if there were another staff member, could the farmers be polled to see if they are in compliance. Sharon responded that they could.

Motion Robin Dingle – Motion to have Jane prepare a draft letter for the Board of Supervisors to review and consider. The letter will be directed to Tara Zrinski on Northampton County Council to requesting her to talk to the NCCD Board regarding adding a staff member to review the conservation plans of the non-preserved farms in Northampton County. Bob Cornman seconded the motion. Vote: 7 Yes

How can the EAC be involved. – Tom noted the 1st part should be to work with NCCD to get farmers to attend the workshops. Possibly hold a workshop in the Township in order to encourage attendance. Properties that are not preserved and have issues should be identified. Take a list of active farms and notify about the Township offering information about BMP, make them aware of the regulations and that there are updates. Start with the educational side. Open invitation to encourage the landowners to do outreach and make them aware that the farmer needs to have an up to date conservation plan and/or E & S plan.

Motion Robin Dingle – Motion for Tom Petrucci to produce a letter to the agricultural use landowners offering an educational session with experts from the NCCD office. The letter will be reviewed by the Board of Supervisors. Bob Cornman seconded the motion. Vote: 7 Yes

Little Bushkill Creek – 2020 Activities

Review and discuss proposed sample locations/approach

- Robin Dingle noted they had a very productive EAC Sub-Committee meeting with Terry, Robin, Jason, Stan and Tom to review sample locations, as noted on the maps presented.
- An overview of the contents of the 2020 Little Bushkill Creek Sampling Plan prepared by Hanover Engineering was **verbally presented** by Robin Dingle. The plan includes a 3-5 year monitoring program to be done 2 times a year June and September.
- One of the targets for sampling is a high dense cattle in the stream area on the Benders Church Road tributary. Samples are being proposed for five times a year to capture the highs and lows.
- A condensed report will be sent to the Board.
- Cost range for field sampling ballpark of \$60,000 to \$80,000. There should be a reimbursement from the DEP
- A representative will be coming out from the DEP to review the restoration projects which were done on the farms in 2019. DEP representative Mr. Klinier will be out next Tuesday.
- It was suggested that the Township could hire to conduct the work listed in the Little Bushkill Sampling Plan through professional services. The Township could also go through the RFP process. It would be more time consuming to go through the RFP process. The EAC noted it would be good to have continuity that the current environmental firms can provide if they continue the work.

Motion - Terry Kleintop -Motion – to send a letter to the Board of Supervisors with the Little Bushkill Creek Sampling Plan proposal. The sampling costs are projected to be approximately \$60,000 to \$80,000. The EAC is making the recommendation to hire the environmental firm through professional services in order to maintain continuity on the project. Second Bob Cornman.

Vote: 6 Yes Robin Dingle Abstained

It was noted that Robin Dingle will abstain due to the fact if Hanover Consulting Engineers are hired to continue the project then Hanover will hire Robin Dingle (Tetra Tech) to be involved in the project.

Review EAC Responsibilities

A list of the EAC responsibilities was attached to the agenda for review along with a graph to track EAC reviews and projects.

- Generate an 2020 EAC Action Items/Tasks list

Regional EAC Meeting - February 26th (Ash Wednesday) 7pm at Plainfield Township has been **tentatively** scheduled.

Brian Hillard (Co-Chair of the Sierra Club) – Noted that a meeting will be held on March 11th in Bethlehem

Quarries

Bob Simpson noted that there is a great deal of interest in filling (fill dirt has low level contaminants, which is labeled clean in the State of PA regulations) in quarries in the tri-state area. Can anything be done in order to protect them with Zoning. It can be questionable how the quarries are filled in. Tom Petrucci noted it can tie in with the Greenways Ordinance. The Planning Commission members can look at the Zoning impact and the EAC can look at the environmental impact.

Terry Kleintop noted that when Synagro was being proposed Senator Scavello held hearings at the Wind Gap Middle School and now we are not hearing much about it.

Robin Dingle noted that filling in quarries needs to be for a reason. The land can never be totally reclaimed to what it was. Stan Shelosky noted that some of the quarries are in the greenway and quarries do become water recharge areas.. Tom Petrucci stated there may be a way of regulating general environmental standards. The Greenways Conservation grant may be able to be utilized.

The Lehigh Valley Greenways Conservation Landscape Mini Grant is due March 6th. There is a \$1,000 min to \$10,000 max with a match of at least 50% Tom will prepare a resolution for the Board to approve up to the grant max. The grant could be utilized to fund the creation of a clean fill ordinance.

GENERAL UPDATES

MS4 Pollution Reduction Plan (Due 9/30/23) – Township Manager, Tom Petrucci

- Pollution Control Measures for Water Impaired by Pathogens
- EAC support – input on stream restoration areas (1700’)

Wildlands will be handling the coordination of the project and identifying the appropriate measures of work to be done along the stream. The Township has a \$100,000 grant from the DCNR. We now have

to create the level of stream bank restoration and identify the areas and define the scope of work. A consultant will need to be hired for the design and construction. Tom Petrucci's goal is to have the work completed a year ahead of schedule

ACT 537 Official Plan Update – Township Manager, Tom Petrucci

- Update the existing plan developed in early 90s; anticipated completion date late this summer
- EAC support/needs Plainfield Township Conservation by Design Development Ordinance Proposed Revisions
- Tom Petrucci - long-term revisions will be addressed in the future if necessary

Tom Petrucci will send out a timeline by email. There will be a series of public meetings regarding the ACT 537 Plan update.

MARCH MEETING BUSINESS

- **Open Space / Earned Income Tax** - Review and discuss previous efforts. An email will be sent out with the EIT information for everyone to review prior to the meeting.
- **Northampton County Conservation District**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

2020 Riparian Buffer Summit March 11-12 - DCNR and Western PA Conservancy

Penn State Master Watershed Steward Program – 40 hours of training and at least 50 hours of volunteer work. The program is currently open for registration.

Northampton/Kittatinny Ridge Regional EAC meeting – Tentatively scheduled for February 26th

PUBLIC COMMENT

Don Moore – Inquired about the recommendation to the Board of Supervisors regarding the Little Bushkill Creek scope of work and estimated cost.

Don Moore noted he was present and watched the DEP Hearings for the quarry fill.

MEETING ADJOURNMENT

Motion - Meeting Adjournment – A motion was made by Bob Cornman and seconded by Stan Shelosky to adjourn the EAC meeting at 9:40 pm.

Vote: 7 Yes

Respectfully Submitted,

Jane Mellert, Secretary
Plainfield Township EAC