

**PLAINFIELD TOWNSHIP
ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING
MAY 3, 2021**

The regular monthly meeting of the Plainfield Township Environmental Advisory Council was held on **Monday, May 3, 2021** via Telephone Conference Zoom Meeting Call-In Number 1-877-853-5247 (US Toll Free).

Conference ID: 852 0157 6208 (Press # when prompted)

In accordance with Governor Wolf's ongoing COVID-19 pandemic emergency declaration by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Plainfield Township officials are holding this regular meeting utilizing the Zoom authorized telecommunication device platform only. Remote meetings are permitted under the provisions of Act 15 of 2020 (Health Care Cost Containment Act). The Environmental Advisory Council members will not be physically present at this meeting. This public meeting will be recorded. We kindly ask that all interested parties participating via the dedicated conference call line to only speak during the sections of the meeting that are specifically reserved for public comment or when prompted by the Chairman and to also state your name each time you are speaking. Members of the public and all interested parties will have the opportunity to comment via the telephone conference call prior to any official action taking place and during the Citizen's Agenda/Non-Agenda portion of the meeting. Anyone intentionally disrupting the meeting will be promptly muted and/or ejected from the call.

Chairman, Bob Cornman, called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M.

ROLL CALL:

The following members of the Environmental Advisory Council answered roll call: Robert Cornman, Bob Simpson, Jane Mellert, Bruce Rabenold, Stan Shelosky, and Jeff Beavan.

Also present was Township Manager/Secretary to the Environmental Advisory Council, Tom Petrucci.

Now that the roll call of the Environmental Advisory Council is completed, we will proceed with a roll call of all members of the public who are participating on this call. Please state your name(s) one at a time so the Township can make sure that your participation is recognized.

PUBLIC ATTENDANCE:

None

I. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES – March 1, 2021 Draft Meeting Minutes

ACTION: Bob Simpson made a motion to approve the March 1, 2021 Draft EAC Meeting Minutes, as submitted. The motion was seconded by Jeff Beavan.

Prior to the vote, Bob Cornman called for any questions or comments from members of the public or the EAC.

The motion was approved. Vote 6-0.

II. MEETING BUSINESS:

1. Plainfield Township Open Space Plan Update

Tom Petrucci provided an overview of the draft Open Space Plan to the members of the Environmental Advisory Council. While the current adopted Open Space Plan certainly allows the Township to acquire open space properties other than agricultural properties (ex. environmentally sensitive lands, conservation easements and passive/active recreation properties), the policies and procedures to do so are not currently well-defined. The intent of the revised “Additional Ways to Preserve Open Space” section of the Open Space Plan (dated 4/30/2021) is to provide uniform, consistent, and equitable procedures to preserve open space properties outside of agricultural properties. Tom Petrucci noted that the current Open Space Plan primarily utilizes data from the 2004 Regional Comprehensive Plan, so it is out-of-date. In lieu of updating the entire Open Space Plan at this time, it seems more prudent to only amend and replace the “Additional Ways to Preserve Open Space.”

Appendix H- Flow Chart

Tom Petrucci stated that he had discussed the open space acquisition process of Bushkill Township with their Open Space Coordinator, who is Kerry Reider. Per the request of the Environmental Advisory Council, the steps of the flow chart that could be pared down are listed as follows:

- The Environmental Advisory Council (EAC) and the Township Manager could be empowered to accept complete open space applications for review, conduct physical inspections and then render a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors.
- Overall, the various steps that are also listed are necessary due to local, state and federal regulatory requirements. Some items could be delegated to the EAC and the Township Manager; however, where required, the Board of Supervisors would need to take official action (ex, authorization to conduct survey and authorization to acquire easements/properties). When determined to be feasible, the Township

could eliminate the practice of having applications reviewed before both the EAC and the Board of Supervisors at multiple meetings, thereby streamlining the review process. The recommendation is to involve the Board of Supervisors in the beginning, and as the Township accumulates more experience in this process, the EAC could solely handle certain administrative responsibilities (where feasible and permitted by law).

- It was recommended that the Township should utilize one appraisal company rather than obtain price quotations each time an appraisal is needed.
- Special meetings of the EAC could be utilized on a case-by-case basis to attempt to expedite the review process.
- It was suggested that the Township could possibly explore sending the property owner a “Letter of Intent” which communicates the interest of the Township to acquire a property, but the Township Solicitor will need to weigh in on that matter.

Overall Comments on draft Open Space Plan Update:

Stan Shelosky provided the following comments on the draft Open Space Plan Update:

Paragraph 3.1 - Identifying Potential Properties:

Potential for habitat preservation and restoration should be addressed. Also, consider suitability for the preservation and reintroduction of native plant and animal species.

Paragraph 3.2 - Initial Property Observation:

The results of a walk-about observation of the property, including the general condition of buildings and other improvements, and obvious encroachments and easements, erosive conditions and environmental problems, should be included. This should also be included in the property scoring system.

Paragraph 3.3 – Scoring Process:

The EAC should seek the input of a land preservation NGO, such as the Wildlands Conservancy, before finalizing the candidate property scoring system and for land management concerns. This is especially pertinent if the NGO might be a go-to organization for assuming management of open space.

The EAC should test out a proposed candidate property scoring system on real properties, and see how well it functions in practice.

General Comments:

Short term acquisition properties acquired by the township should not be open to the public.

Bob Simpson inquired as to whether this program is entirely separate from the Northampton County Farmland Preservation Program, and the answer was that the program would cover agricultural properties that do not meet the criteria for the Northampton County Farmland Preservation Program.

Bob Simpson also identified the need for a list of the properties to be targeted for preservation. Tom Petrucci stated that the Township would primarily focus on the riparian/stream corridors, as well as properties that are identified on the Official Map. The goal would be to solicit these properties.

Bob Simpson inquired as to whether there will be a significant impact to the tax base. Tom Petrucci responded that conservation easements only take a portion of the development rights of a property; that information is quantifiable and could be demonstrated by way of a case study.

Jeff Beavan identified the need for including a potential scenario where the Township has to incur the cost of a subdivision in lieu of a developer doing so for certain short-term fee simple and/or long-term fee simple acquisitions. This would be especially applicable where a portion of a parcel is subdivided to protect a natural resource, and the rest of the rest of the residual tract is retained by a developer. The Township would pay for the associated subdivision costs to preserve the natural resource lot, but the Township would not incur the costs of purchasing the entire property fee simple.

Jane Mellert provided the following comments:

- Preservation Categories: include Official Map by reference.
- Preservation Categories/Active Outdoor Recreation: does the Township need more active outdoor recreation for sports? If included, there should be a cost study analysis which quantifies the “per resident” costs of active outdoor recreation property acquisitions. The Township should also charge the end users of active outdoor recreation in order to help offset ongoing maintenance costs.
- Preservation Categories/Historic: Questioned whether the School House on Bangor Road/Books Hill Road was included.
- Fee Simple Purchase for Short-Term Holding: A section should be added which clarifies that the Township would still need to meet all legal acquisition obligations.

- The Township should be able to identify the open space properties that are targeted for acquisition.
- Option B- Farmette Subdivision: The nine (9) acres should be increased to ten (10) acres. The minimum of 1 acre and maximum of 3 acres should be reviewed with Maria Bentzoni of the Farmland Preservation Program. Clean and Green should be factored into the acreage amounts as well.

Bob Cornman suggested that the Open Space Plan should include an Executive Summary which clearly identifies the roles and responsibilities that the Township will need to take on as a result of this expanded open space acquisition program.

III. CITIZEN’S AGENDA/NON-AGENDA (*There is a 5-minute time limit for speakers. Please state your name prior to addressing the Environmental Advisory Council*)*

*In addition to direct public participation during the meeting, written comments concerning any listed agenda items may be submitted to the Township Manager by way of an email to manager@plainfieldtownship.org or via U.S. Mail C/O Township Manager, Plainfield Township, 6292 Sullivan Trail, Nazareth, PA 18064.

Mr. Adam DeRobbio, who is the Sr. District Manager for Waste Management, was in attendance; however, he did not render any comments.

IV. ADJOURNMENT:

Having no further business to come before the Environmental Advisory Council, motion was made by Stan Shelosky and seconded by Bob Simpson to adjourn the meeting. Motion approved. Vote 6-0.

The meeting adjourned at 8:07 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas Petrucci
Township Manager/Secretary
Plainfield Township