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# West Reading Environmental Advisory Council

500 Chestnut Street  
West Reading, PA 19611  
610-374-8273

E-mail: [eac@westreadingborough.org](mailto:eac@westreadingborough.org)



## MEETING MINUTES

January 25, 2021

### Members Present

Chairperson Patrick Kaag; Vice Chairperson Brian Adams; Jenna Hiester, Samantha Kaag, Ryan Lineaweaver, Jim Keller; Associate Member Nicole Phillips; Borough Manager Nicholas Imbesi; and Borough Secretary Cynthia Madeira

### Visitors

Allen Heist, Resident      Jack Gombach, Borough Council President      Andrew Kearney, Mayor

### Call to Order

Patrick Kaag called the Zoom meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

### Public Comment

Mr. Heist inquired as to any progress in plans to improve the fishing dock area. Mr. Gombach noted joint discussions that were recently held by the Schuylkill River Trail, City of Reading, Reading Area Community College and local police departments to improve safety along the Thun Trail. The suggested improvements are to be presented to Borough Council during their regular February Council meeting. Mr. Heist volunteered to help improve the area and noted that he recently adopted a section of the trail to maintain.

### Approval of Minutes

**Moved** by Ms. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Adams to approve the minutes of December 16, 2020. **Motion carried.**

### Solar Discussion

Mr. Gombach provided information regarding discussions that were held with Customers Bank to finance solar improvement projects. The first area of focus would be the Second Avenue area where tax incentives could be leveraged to attract investment opportunities. The first step of the plan is to review energy usage to create a better understanding on how to proceed. A formal presentation by Customers Bank will be provided to the Environmental Advisory Council (EAC) during the February meeting. A formalized plan would then be shared with Borough Council. Mr. Keller noted his intent to seek grant funds to install solar panels on the large span of roofing at the Borough Garage and then to proceed onto the Fire Station. These types of improvements may encourage private property owners to follow the example.

### Selection of Secretary

A volunteer from the committee was requested to take on the role of Secretary to record minutes. There were no immediate volunteers, therefore, Mr. Kaag requested members to consider this opportunity.

### Community Garden Update

Mr. Adams requested feedback from committee members as to the proposed 2021 Community Garden Registration Form. In an effort to spark interest in the community garden, a variation to membership was proposed where the member would have access to the garden to harvest vegetables from designated Borough plots that would include Cherry Tomatoes, beans, a variety of peppers and Loofa plants.

The representation and involvement of the EAC in the community garden was discussed with regards to liability issues. The West Reading Community Revitalization Foundation (WRCRF) is the holder of the lease agreement with the property owner, and as such should be the sole entity to oversee this program. The designation of Mr. Adams as the Community Garden Manager to handle the daily maintenance and membership aspects of the garden has been approved by the WRCRF for a period of one year. Committee members agreed to only advise the WRCRF as to aspects of the community garden, which would allow additional time for this committee to focus on environmental improvements.

### **2021 Goals**

**Public/Social Media Outreach** – Mr. Kaag expressed his liking to the increased public/social media outreach efforts through the EAC and Community Garden Facebook pages. A goal for 2021 would be to continue to respond to posts that address environmental concerns/comments, such as trash and recycling questions, in an effort to assist and educate residents.

Mr. Adams noted an Earth Day event along Penn Avenue that is planned on Wednesday, April 22<sup>nd</sup> and suggested that the EAC provide educational materials to the attendees. Information would be forwarded to EAC members for further discussion at a later date.

**Trash/Recycling Program** – Mr. Kaag recommended reviewing alternate haulers to potentially expand the number of accepted recyclable items. Mr. Imbesi noted that the Borough is in a contract with the current hauler through the year 2022. The list of items that are being collected has been specified by the Berks County Solid Waste Authority, and are materials that are currently being accepted by recycling establishments. The hauler has been assisting in the educational efforts by leaving informational flyers at residences to notate the accepted recycling practices. It was recommended to monitor the list of acceptable items to keep up-to-date with regulations. Mr. Lineaweaver recommended researching commercial composting and yard waste removal options to limit the items entering the landfill.

**Inventory of Green Space** – Mr. Kaag recommended reviewing a map of the Borough to identify green spaces and opportunities for conservation development. Ms. Kaag recommended attending classes at the Reading Public Museum to gain knowledge on how to move forward. The 11-acre parcel owned by the Borough near the cloverleaf has been found to not be a viable option for development due to watershed and right-of-way issues associated with the railroad. This parcel may only be usable as a green space. It was also recommended to review viable options for Borough park lands.

**Selection of Secretary** – Mr. Kaag inquired as to members thoughts on filling the Secretary position to record minutes. Ms. Phillips volunteered her services.

Motion to appoint Nicole Phillips as the Secretary to record EAC meeting minutes beginning February 2021. **Moved** by Mr. Kaag and seconded by Mr. Keller. **Motion carried.**

### **Closing Remarks**

Mr. Kaag noted that the primary purpose of the EAC is to perform the legwork to advise Borough Council on environmental aspects to potentially turn these plans into action. The best way to do this is by identifying the who, what, where, when, why, and how.

### **Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:47 p.m. **Moved** by Mr. Adams and seconded by Mr. Keller. **Motion carried.**

**Next Meeting: Monday, February 22, 2021 at 6:00PM**