
West Reading Environmental Advisory Council

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MEETING MINUTES

February 26, 2024

Members Present

Chairperson Patrick Kaag, Nicole Weik, Samantha Kaag, Ty Gardner, Jay Santo Domingo, Kerry Grassley, Allison Snyder

Visitors

Maureen Hasty, Resident
Nick Johnson
Melissa Heiser, Resident
Paul Heiser, Resident
Robert Kulesa, Resident
Nathalie Kulesa, Resident

Call to Order

Mr. Kaag called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

Moved by Ms. Kagg and seconded by Mr. Gardner to approve the minutes of January 22, 2023. Motion carried.

Wyomissing Creek Group

Mr. Johnson spoke about the MS4 program and the regulations that West Reading must follow. He Stated that the main goal of the program is to mitigate flooding and eliminate pollution from water bodies. One of the requirements of the program is public out reach. Mr. Johnson states that the Wyomissing Creek is on a pollution diet for sediment. He stated that all 8 municipalities within the Wyomissing Water Shed are joining together to study how to mitigate some of the pollution. Mr. Johnson stated that for the first five years only 10% of the excess sediment is required to be removed. West Reading is currently working on some projects that have helped erosion to the creek. Ms. Kaag asked if there are any grants we could be looking at to help benefit this group further. Mr. Johnson stated that they have seen grants that have flooding and environmental mitigation components. Mr. Gardner asked if this group could help give suggestions about how to work flood mitigation into current projects taking place near the creek. Mr. Johnson stated that the group meets monthly and he can come to the group to discuss. Mr. Grassley asked about projects that have already taken place and how they get credit for work done and paid for already in house. Mr. Johnson stated that they have in the past helped with the long term maintenance but that as a group they can discuss this at the next meeting.

Public Comment

Ms. Kulesa asked about the status of the "Pocket Park". Ms. Kaag suggested that we change this name because it is not meant to be a park but just a reuse of green space. Ms. Kulesa stated her concern for this idea and how she is not really aware of what is going on with this "park". Ms. Kaag stated that this is still in the very early stages of an idea and was something that was brought to us as an idea from a resident. Ms. Kulesa asked what brought about the idea. Mr. Gardner stated that there are currently kids that are playing in that area and it is a safety issue. Mr. Grassley brought up that parents were concerned with the bus stop being close to there and

cars are flying through that area. One way to try and slow the traffic down would be to prevent that straight through shot. Mr. Grassley mentioned that he is not interested in making that space into a playground. Ms. Weik mentioned that we had discussed adding things like benches and greenery to try and show that it is not a place to play. Ms. Kaag reiterated that the idea came from not wanting kids to play there as it is a dangerous space and we can't just remove people from a public space. Mr. Kaag stated that if we were to remove that strip of road between Pine St and Sunset Rd it would increase the borough's green space while creating a T intersection. Mr. Kaag also stated that this could help with flood issues that have been seen in that area more recently. Ms. Kulesa mentioned that the firehouse is down there and so we would need to look at response time. Ms. Kaag stated it shouldn't effect that as the fire trucks can't make that turn but that before anything is done TNI will be looking into all of this. Ms. Kaag mentioned that we are still in the very early discussion stages with this and all of the concerns are things we are trying to think of now. She mentioned that any concerns someone might have they can email Mr. Kaag and get it put on the agenda to be discussed.

Mr. Kulesa brought up that the turn on the top of the hill at Sunset Rd is very dangerous. Mr. Kaag stated that TNI would do a traffic survey before anything is done to that section. Mr. Heiser asked if the road bed would be removed. Mr. Kaag reminded everyone that we are still in the very early discussion stages and this was not something had been decided yet. Mr. Heiser brought up the idea of making that section into a dog park. Ms. Kaag stated that her concern would be not having people clean up after the dogs. Mr. Kaag also brought up the noise that it might cause.

Ms. Hasty brought up that it was her initial idea that she had brought to the borough council. She stated that her idea was if we reduce the asphalt then we increase our permeable ground which could help with flooding and pollution. She also brought up the heat violent effect which is when the asphalt absorbs the heat throughout the day and then releases it at night causing warmer nights. Ms. Hasty also mentioned that there is a tree right there that would have to be removed if we redo the sidewalk. She also mentioned how the roads there don't really make sense and that section isn't really needed. Ms. Hasty stated that kids are gonna play where they play and we can make it safer for them by doing something like this. Mr. Gardner stated that he believes this is a compound of problems. Mr. Kulesa expressed his concern with removing two points of exit and entrance to that section. Ms. Kaag stated that while these are all good questions until a traffic and road survey is done by TNI we won't have these answers. Ms. Weik mentioned that if this isn't beneficial to the community we won't move on with this project.

Spring Free Market

Mr. Kaag stated that the spring free market is coming up and it will be on April 21st from 10am-2pm at the pavilion. This event will also be combined with the earth day clean up. Ms. Kaag stated that she is almost done with the graphic and can send it to everyone via email. Mr. Kaag shared that Dumpster Dudes will be providing a dumpster for us that day and be sending some volunteers. Mr. Kaag shared that he has reached out to the Buy Nothing Facebook group and they will be helping to advertise. Ms. Kaag suggested getting more pickers since the ones we have are either broken or gone. Mr. Grassley asked if a truck from public works will be needed. Mr. Kaag agreed a truck would be a good idea for taking trash bags back to the pavilion.

Palmer Memorial Garden Update

Mr. Kaag mentioned that he had reached out to Mr. Weisman from NewCastle and that the memorial garden is almost complete and only the plants going in the raised planters need to be planted yet. He mentioned that they are trying to coordinate a time and date to have the dedication/unveiling ceremony. Mr. Grassley mentioned that they would like to do a small ceremony just for the family and friends of the people who lost someone. Ms. Kaag suggested having Mr. Weisman come to the Event Committee meeting on Friday to finish with the final plans for the dedication /unveiling ceremony. Ms. Weik suggested that since the raised planters are the last thing to be planted that maybe that be done at the ceremony since each one is supposed to

represent someone who was lost.

Community Garden

Ms. Kaag stated that she is currently working with West Reading Elementary Center on ideas to incorporate them into the Garden. She also mentioned that Spades has created a site plan for the Garden and she is looking into grants that could help offset the cost. Ms. Weik asked if the community garden is now under the borough. Ms. Kaag stated that it is still with the WCRF but since it will be back on borough property the borough is looking to take it back over. Mr. Kaag stated that he has found a combination garden shed and greenhouse and is looking into grants for this item.

Memorial Gardens Update

Mr. Gardner stated NewCastle is putting together a design for both the Delaney Memorial and the Veterans Memorial. Ms. Weik asked if either of these will be a pollinator garden which had been previously discussed. Mr. Gardner stated that they brought this idea up to the designer to add plants that would make this more possible. Ms. Weik asked if the plan is to move the Veterans Memorial. Mr. Gardner stated that he walked the borough with Mr. Weisman and multiple places were suggested and so a few designs are being worked on.

MS4 Monthly Update

Mr. Kaag shared that ice melt can be an issue with getting into streams and destroying the infrastructure. Mr. Kaag suggested using as little salt as possible. Ms. Kaag shared that coffee grounds can be a good alternative. Mr. Kaag also mentioned that the salt can be an issue for the dogs in the area as it hurts their paws.

Global Update

Mr. Kaag shared that we are getting very close to a stable fusion reaction. Scientists have now been able to get more energy out of a reaction they they have put into it. Mr. Kaag stated that this is how we can get away from fossil fuels.

Adjournment

Moved by Ms. Weik and seconded by Mr. Gardner to adjourn the meeting at 7:17p.m. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Nicole Weik
EAC Member