
West Reading Environmental Advisory Council

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

E-mail: eac@westreadingborough.org



MEETING MINUTES

June 24, 2024

Members Present

Chairperson Patrick Kaag, Nicole Weik, Jay Santo Domingo, Bethany Bower

Visitors

Melissa Heiser, Resident

Dr. Angela Adler, Wyomissing Resident

Nathalie Kulesa, Resident

Call to Order

Mr. Kaag called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

Moved by Ms. Bower and seconded by Mr. Domingo to approve the minutes of April 22, 2024. Motion carried.

Public Comment

Ms. Kulesa asked if there was any update on the "Pocket Park". Mr. Kaag stated that no new discussions have taken place about that idea as other issues have taken precedent. Ms. Kulesa also mentioned that she has noticed residents leaving their trash cans in the alleys and not putting trash bags in trash cans. Mr. Kaag stated that he will talk to public works who can communicate some of these issues to the trash company. Ms. Kulesa also stated that the trash truck has been causing damage to the curb and edge of the ally. This damage is causing an issue with water flow when it rains. Ms. Kulesa asked if the codes inspector could drive the borough more often.

Agenda Amendment

Mr. Domingo made a motion to amend the agenda. Ms. Weik seconded. The motion carried. Ms. Bower made a motion to add a discussion to the agenda about the enabling ordinance for the borough managers attendance. Mr. Domingo seconded. Motion carried. Mr. Kaag shared that the borough is trying to reevaluate the staff and their involvement in the committees. Mr. Kaag asked what our thoughts were on amending the EAC ordinance so that the borough manager is not required to attend every meeting. He shared that the EAC is the only committee that has this requirement written in their ordinance. Ms. Bower asked why it is written that they attend this meeting and not all the other committee meetings. Mr. Kaag mentioned that he likes the idea of someone from the borough being present at these meetings. Ms. Weik agreed stating that it will help with decision making and planning. Mr. Domingo suggested amending the wording to say if a council member is not present then the borough manager must attend or as needed. Mr. Kaag stated that he is going to take these questions to council and come back with more information.

Palmer Memorial Garden Heat Wave Maintenance

Mr. Kaag mentioned that he has been checking on the Palmer Memorial Garden recently and due to the heat wave it is getting very dry. Ms. Bower asked what could be an option for insuring that the plants don't die. Mr. Kaag suggested that the EAC do a night watering and that the water from the fire department can be used. Mr.

Domingo suggested asking if the Fire Department could water the garden since it is right next door to the garden. Mr. Kaag also suggested having public works install a hose tap and watering tank. He stated that he will talk to public works and follow up with the EAC members once he hears back.

Community Garden

Mr. Kaag shared that the EAC members met for a workshop and need to recap everything that was discussed. Mr. Kaag asked what everyone thought about the spot that was picked to be the garden. Ms. Weik stated that she thinks it's a good location especially since it's borough owned space. Mr. Kaag mentioned that there are plaques in the ground at this location. Mr. Domingo asked what should be done with the plaques. Mr. Kaag suggested, based on what the plaques are for, keeping them in that location but creating a new way to display them. Mr. Kaag asked if everyone is ok with moving the shed to the southern most part of the hill with the doors facing away from the sun. Ms. Bower stated that she likes the location and having the doors face away from the sun will help if we decide to add a greenhouse onto the shed.

Mr. Kaag mentioned that a resident had suggested having the winter farmer's market at the Bicentennial House. He stated that he thought this would be a good spot for this with the community garden being there as well. He also mentioned that there are options to put in solar panels in that area as well.

Mr. Kaag asked what our thoughts were for the base of the shed. He stated that it could be either a cement pad or timber with gravel. Mr. Domingo mentioned that he preferred the timber with the gavel. Ms. Weik mentioned that a cement pad might last longer. Mr. Kaag stated that gravel can also invite animals to borough under the shed. Ms. Bower stated that which ever option lasts the longest and is the most affordable is what she thinks we should use. Mr. Kaag stated that he will talk to public works and let them know our thoughts.

Ms. Bower asked what are our next steps to get the community garden approved. Mr. Kaag shared that we have tentative approval for the space and as long as we have a plan it should be approved. Mr. Kaag shared the most recent contract that the borough had for the community garden. Ms. Bower suggested that we take a look at the contract and come up with suggestions and feedback for our next meeting. Ms. Weik asked if soil testing was being done on the location. Mr. Kaag stated that the soil testing was done and it has come back normal for this area. Ms. Bower suggested looking into Berks Soil and seeing if they might donate some soil for the garden. Ms. Bower volunteered to write the draft contract for the community garden.

Delaney Memorial

Mr. Domingo asked where the memorial is being moved too. Mr. Kaag stated that the plan is to move the memorial to the spot outside the West Reading pool. Mr. Kaag shared that it is going to be about \$5,600 to move the memorial and have it set up the way it was designed. Ms. Weik mentioned that she had thought Ms. Kaag has stated that this was being fully funded already. Mr. Kaag stated that he would follow up with her on that. Ms. Weik asked if New Castle is planning on coming to a meeting and showing the EAC members the design. Mr. Kaag stated that he will set this up.

Dog Waste Station Expansion

Mr. Kaag suggested expanding the dog waste stations to areas outside the park system. He suggested that we relook at the map that Mr. Domingo had come up with where these stations could go. Ms. Bower stated that she would look into whether these could be donated from ARL or somewhere else. Ms. Bower suggested adding some of these stations around Penn Ave. Ms. Weik suggested looking at where most people walk their dogs. Mr. Kaag suggested putting a dog waste station right outside borough hall across from the playground. Ms. Weik mentioned that we should avoid placing these stations near residents homes and the businesses. Ms. Bower suggested seeing if businesses would sponsor this idea. Mr. Kaag suggested placing one near the parking lot of Penn Ave. Ms. Bower suggested placing one on Reading Ave. near B2 Bistro. Mr. Domingo suggested

putting one on 3rd and Sunset in the triangle. Mr. Kaag stated that he will bring these suggestions to public works.

Plastic Alternative Flyer

Ms Weik stated that she is going to update the flyer that she created last year and add the cost of alternative takeout containers. Mr. Kaag suggested that we could suggest policy changes to the restaurants in the area such as not including utensils unless requested. Ms. Weik also stated that an idea to eliminate plastic bags is to have a sponsored tote bag for the business to use.

MS4 Monthly Update

Mr. Kaag shared that heat waves can lead to flooding. The ground is not saturated and if there is heavy rain it will lead to flooding and run off.

Global Update

Mr. Kaag shared that during recent solar activities global power grids and communication networks held up. He shared a link that will show what is happening with the sun and solar flares.

Adjournment

Moved by Ms. Weik and seconded by Mr. Domingo to adjourn the meeting at 7:36p.m. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Nicole Weik
EAC Member