

## ALLENTOWN ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY COUNCIL [EAC]

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### FIRST ANNUAL REPORT (YEARS 2008-2009)

**INTRODUCTION** – The Allentown Environmental Advisory Council (EAC) was established on January 16, 2008 by City of Allentown Ordinance No. 14566 (copy attached). According to the Ordinance, the EAC is to be composed of seven City residents: five appointed by the Mayor, two appointed by City Council, and an eighth, non-voting member, appointed by the Allentown Planning Commission. The first official meeting of the Allentown EAC was held on July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2008. This report addresses the activities and accomplishments of the EAC from that date to December 31<sup>st</sup> of 2009. Future reports will be prepared on a calendar-year basis.

**ORGANIZATIONAL ACTIVITIES** – Because the EAC was created only recently, a significant amount of time during the first year and a half was spent on organizational-type activities.

- Numerous meetings were held with the Mayor and various Department heads to see what their interests were and what activities they were engaged in that had an environmental component that might benefit from our involvement.
- The Allentown EAC also met with members of other EACs, such as those from Easton, Lower Makefield Township, and Salisbury Township, to see how they functioned. We also attended meetings at other townships to support their interest in developing an EAC.
- The Allentown EAC met with members of other organizations, such as Friends of the Allentown Parks and The Wildlands Conservancy, to see if there were any overlapping areas of interest where we could be of mutual assistance and support. The City eventually entered into a public/private partnership with the Conservancy to protect the City's natural resources and enhance greenways within the City.
- Various EAC members attended numerous local and regional conferences throughout the year, including the Lehigh Valley EAC Conference at Northampton Community College, the Southeastern PA EAC Conference in Philadelphia, a three-day urban forestry conference in Pittsburgh, and a PA Building Sustainable Community Parks Conference at Allentown College. The EAC also helped promote the second Annual Tree Vitalize Conference, which was held in Allentown.
- Several special sessions were held to try to identify how to best interact with the City Administration and Council to optimize our effectiveness. At our December, 2009 meeting the Director of the PA EAC, Jon Meade,

facilitated a very useful discussion on this subject with representatives from the City Administration and City Council. *This activity is still ongoing.*

**RESPONSE TO SPECIAL REQUESTS** – During the year the EAC responded to several special requests from the Mayor’s Office to evaluate various proposed projects in the City.

- The EAC evaluated a proposed municipal waste transfer station in East Allentown along the Lehigh River. This evaluation involved a trip to Long Island, New York to inspect a facility similar to the one proposed for Allentown. The EAC submitted a report to the Mayor outlining several benefits and concerns related to the project.
- The EAC was actively involved in reviewing the new ground water withdrawal wells proposed by the Lehigh County Authority (LCA) to be located in western Lehigh County. EAC members attended several meetings of the LCA and Lower Macungie Township to voice concerns over the possible negative impacts to the Little Lehigh Creek from the increased ground water withdrawal. An agreement was eventually signed between the City and LCA to allow LCA to purchase excess capacity from Schantz Spring in exchange for drilling two larger wells. *Work is still ongoing* to get LCA to agree to monitor the Little Lehigh (the source of about 40% of Allentown’s drinking water) to identify any negative impacts on stream flow and water quality.
- The EAC performed a preliminary evaluation of a proposed experimental waste-to-energy pilot plant that would turn residual biomass and industrial waste into clean thermal energy using a proprietary catalytic oxidation process. We were later directed by the Mayor to halt our inquiry until contractual arrangements could be made between the City and the vendor.

**OTHER ACTIVITIES** – The Allentown EAC became involved in a number of other activities throughout the year that we either became aware of or that were initiated by individual EAC members.

- The EAC provided input to the Allentown Parks and Recreation Department on reduced mowing (no-mow) practices and the use of riparian (stream bank) buffers in the City’s park system to enhance the quality of the numerous streams running through the City. *This involvement is ongoing.*
- The EAC provided input on what became a controversial plan to improve the Cedar Creek Park. Based on comments provided by the EAC, a decision was made to reduce the extent of hard-surface pathways through the Park. The EAC also recommended that the park area west of Ott Street be kept free of expansive organized public events so as to maintain its natural, passive function. *This involvement is ongoing.*

- The EAC ( in conjunction with Allentown Department of Parks and recreation) prepared an application to the PA League of Women Voters for a \$5,000 WREN (Water Resources Education Network) Grant to prepare educational materials on source-water protection, specifically riparian buffers along streams, and an associated policy. The grant money was used by the Allentown Department of Parks and Recreation to produce a short film that will be shown in schools and will be available on the City's website. *Work is continuing on the policy.*
- The EAC investigated the possibility of creating new ordinances to require the use of native plants in any new developments and to ban the use of plastic "shopping" bags in the City. *This activity is ongoing.*
- The EAC attended a meeting of the Lehigh County Commissioners to encourage them not to decline a \$20,000 tree-planting grant. The Commissioners eventually reversed their decision and accepted the grant.
- The EAC established relationship with "Bike Allentown," an informal advocacy group to encourage more use of bicycles in the City and to provide more "bikeable" streets. *This activity is ongoing.*
- The EAC successfully worked with the City and several local residents to save three old sycamore trees on Walnut Street that had been targeted for removal.
- The EAC conducted a preliminary investigation into the use of water gardens as an alternative approach to controlling storm water runoff. *This activity is ongoing.*
- The EAC participated in the Green Ribbon Program initiated and led by the City's Department of Community and Economic Development. This effort will identify a number of key environmental goals for each City Department.
- We met with the Mayor to review his plans for conducting an inventory of the trees on South Mountain. We participated in a tour of an area of South Mountain along with the forester contracted to do the survey, the City Arborist, and representatives of the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR).
- We reviewed plans to construct a housing development on South Mountain that could potentially negatively impact the Little Lehigh River.
- The EAC participated in the establishment of and supported the Plaza Growers' Market in Downtown Allentown. *This is an ongoing activity.*

**LOOKING FORWARD** – During 2010 the EAC expects to be as active, if not more active, than it had been in its first year-and-a-half as it becomes a mature organization. Some of our efforts will be ongoing. Others will be new. Following are a few examples:

- Provide an independent evaluation of the tree inventory of South Mountain and any associated recommendations.
- Continue to work with Parks and Recreation to develop effective no-mow and riparian-buffer policies that can be applied citywide.

- Continue to provide input on the Cedar Creek Park Plan to the point where it is acceptable to the community at large.
- Continue to advocate for the monitoring of the Little Lehigh River to determine if there are any adverse environmental impacts from the new LCA wells.
- Continue to protect, monitor, and support restoration of the major streams flowing through the City, including specifically Jordan Creek, Cedar Creek, and the Little Lehigh.
- Continue to explore ways to reduce and eliminate the impacts of invasive, non-native plant species that are threatening all of our parks and waterways.
- Continue to support the Green Ribbon Program efforts of the Allentown DCED.
- Organize and hold an environmental awareness and recognition event to be called the “Sustain-a-Ball,” tentatively scheduled for Saturday, April 10<sup>th</sup> at the Allentown Brew Works. Recognition will be given to both individuals and organizations active in the Lehigh Valley.
- Continue to develop and strengthen relationships with the Administration and City Departments to become more of a partner in identifying and addressing environmental issues.
- Evaluate potential and proposed new ordinances that can be used to both protect and improve the environment in Allentown and to make the City more energy efficient.
- Support the Mayor’s and the Allentown DCED’s efforts to bring green-collar jobs to Allentown and to create a “Green City” identity.
- Continue to advocate for a comprehensive approach to the environmental issues surrounding South Mountain and its potentially significant impacts on the City of Allentown.
- Continue efforts to make Allentown a more “bike-friendly” community.
- Help to identify outreach, educational, and awareness programs that can get more Allentown residents involved in addressing the City’s environmental issues.
- Continue to be responsive to special requests from the Mayor, City Council, City Departments, and Allentown residents to review proposed projects and issues with a potential to environmentally impact the City.
- We will work with other involved parties in supporting The Wildlands Conservancy as it develops an urban forestry plan for the City.

Approved 01/11/10

ADMINISTRATION

ORDINANCE NO.14566

**FILE OF CITY COUNCIL**

BILL NO. 2 - 2008

JANAURY 16, 2008

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AN ORDINANCE

Creating an Environmental Advisory Council by providing operating procedures and stating the powers of the Council.

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF ALLENTOWN:

**SECTION ONE:** That the following be added as Article 177, Environmental Advisory Council, in the Codified Ordinances:

**ARTICLE 177 ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY COUNCIL**

- 177.01 Purpose**
- 177.02 Establishment; Composition**
- 177.03 Chairman; Compensation**
- 177.04 Powers and Duties**
- 177.05 Annual Report**

**177.01 PURPOSE**

Allentown City Council and the Administration of the City of Allentown deem it to be in the best interest and the general welfare of the citizens and residents of the City of Allentown to be advised as to environmental issues within the City of Allentown; to encourage sustainable design and the use of renewable energies, the protection and preservation of natural resources within the City of Allentown and maintaining possible uses of open land in the City of Allentown; and creating inventories of natural areas with unique features within the City of Allentown.

### **177.02 ESTABLISHMENT; COMPOSITION**

The Environmental Advisory Council shall be composed of seven (7) residents of this City, two (2) of whom shall be appointed by Council.

- 1) All ~~Five~~ (5) Council members shall be appointed by the Mayor, with the approval of City Council;
- 2) Council members' terms of office shall expire on the first Monday in January following the last year of their term in office;
- 3) Duly appointed Council members shall serve a term of three (3) years, except that initial appointments shall be so staggered that the terms of approximately one-third of the membership shall expire each year;
- 4) A member of the Allentown Planning Commission is to be a liaison to the Environmental Advisory Council. The Planning Commission member, as liaison, is to be in a non-voting capacity with the Environmental Advisory Council, and the liaison to the Environmental Advisory Council is to be selected by the Chairperson of the Allentown Planning Commission.

### **177.03 CHAIRMAN; COMPENSATION**

The Chairperson of the Council shall be designated by the Mayor, with approval of City Council.

Environmental Advisory Council members shall receive no compensation for their services.

The Environmental Advisory Council is to be advisory to and shall coordinate its activities with the elected officials, Planning Commission and other such local governmental agencies.

### **177.04 POWERS AND DUTIES**

- 1) Identify environmental problems, research solutions, and make recommendations to Allentown City Council and City of Allentown Departments and Administration;
- 2) Recommend plans and programs to the appropriate agencies for the promotion and conservation of the natural resources and for the protection and improvement of the quality of the environment within the City of Allentown and its surrounding areas;
- 3) Make recommendations as to the possible use of open land areas and/or environmentally sensitive lands within the City of Allentown and its surrounding areas;

- 4) Promote community environmental programs;
- 5) Keep an index of all open areas, publicly or privately owned, including, but not limited to, flood prone areas, swamps, and other unique natural areas;
- 6) Advise the appropriate local governmental agencies in the acquisition of property, both real and personal;
- 7) Review subdivision and land development plans as appropriate;
- 8) To assist in the creation of and maintain an environmental map of the City of Allentown and its surrounding areas;
- 9) Advise Allentown City Council and City of Allentown Departments and Administration upon issues of energy conservation;
- 10) To undertake such environmental tasks as requested by Allentown City Council and City of Allentown Departments and Administration.

#### **177.05 ANNUAL REPORT**

The Environmental Advisory Council shall keep records of its meetings and activities, and shall make an annual report which shall be printed in the annual municipal report (if applicable) or otherwise made known and available. Minutes of each meeting shall be forwarded to Allentown City Council and the City of Allentown Administration.

SECTION TWO: Three (3) years from the date of enactment of this Ordinance, a review shall be conducted by City Council of the work of the Environmental Advisory Council and a determination shall be made concerning renewal or non-renewal of the Environmental Advisory Council for another three (3) year period.

SECTION THREE: That this Ordinance take effect ten (10) days after final passage.

SECTION FOUR: That all Ordinances inconsistent with the above provisions are repealed to the extent of their inconsistency.

**Amendment to add Council appoints 2 persons to the Advisory Council and 5 Members of Council shall be appointed by the Mayor**

	Yea	Nay
W. Michael Donovan	X	
Jeanette Eichenwald		
Julio A. Guridy	X	
David M. Howells, Sr.		
Tony Phillips	X	
Peter G. Schweyer	X	
Michael D'Amore, President	X	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>

	Yea	Nay
W. Michael Donovan	X	
Jeanette Eichenwald		
Julio A. Guridy	X	
David M. Howells, Sr.		
Tony Phillips	X	
Peter G. Schweyer	X	
Michael D'Amore, President	X	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>