

Bethel Township Environmental Advisory Council
Meeting minutes from June 3, 2019

Call to order: Chair Najarian called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

Attendance: Council members present were Mike Najarian, Fred Folmer, Daphne Meyer, Ken Norton and Marthe Olesh. Supervisor liaison Jake Meyer was also in attendance. There were no other persons present.

Approval of minutes: D. Meyer moved to approve the minutes from May 6, 2019 as submitted. Olesh seconded and the motion carried.

Old Business:

Chesapeake Bay Drainage Awareness: Final preparations were made for the drainage infrastructure stenciling to be done on Saturday, June 15, 2019 beginning at 9:00 a.m. in the Schubert village area. Folmer also shared an article from the *Reading Eagle* from May 22, 2019 entitled "Chesapeake Bay's Health Reverses Direction.

Municipal Building Wetland: There was no new report.

Recreation Board/Airport Road Property: Folmer reported the Rec Board held a workday at the property on Saturday, June 1, 2019 from 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. Seven persons cleared and chipped small trees clearing about one-half acre. Also, J. Meyer informed Council only 2 of the 3 required contractor bids were received for the initial development of the proposed park and the project will undergo a rebidding process sometime in the fall.

Land Conservation: There was no new report.

New Business:

Review of Bethel Business Park Plan: Council reexamined the plan for a nearly 700,000 sq. ft. warehouse (as they had previously done in January, 2019) proposed to be built along Rout 645 just south of Interstate 78. It was essentially the same plan with the exception that heavy truck traffic would access the business park via Fort Motel Boulevard after exiting I-78 thereby mostly avoiding Rt. 645. Concerns raised were:

- it is immediately adjacent to an existing, and currently vacant, warehouse which is approximately the same size; and
- Bethel Township already has the existing Berks 78 Business Park; and
- this warehouse will remove hundreds of acres of farmland from agricultural production as have the other large warehouses already in existence; and

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- this warehouse will necessitate the drilling of a large commercial well as have the other warehouses which, when combined, could have a deleterious effect on the underground water supply; and
- there are nearby wetlands and an existing stream in the proposed development area which will be disrupted and adversely affected; and
- in the event of tropical storm/hurricane type rainfall events, the storm water management retention basins appear disproportionately undersized compared to the very large amount of paved, impermeable areas and incapable of handling the water runoff; and
- lighting from the proposed warehouse, the already existing warehouse, the adjacent Flying J Truckstop and the nearby Best Used Trucks on Rt. 645 just north of I-78 would be a significant, and increased, source of night time light pollution; there would be greatly increased noise and air pollution from the combined heavy truck traffic from all of these sources as well; and
- the proposed warehouse would be in the viewshed of the Appalachian Trail and therefore contrary to the PA Appalachian Trail Act 24.

In light of the above concerns, Najarian made a motion urging the denial of approval for the construction of this proposed warehouse. Norton seconded and the motion carried by a margin of 5 to 0.

Leonard R. Martin Poultry PPlan: Council reviewed the plan for a multi-building chicken raising operation submitted by Leonard R. Martin. While there were no objections, it was pointed out that the Little Swatara Creek flows through a corner of the property. The plan indicates there would be extensive flooding of the buildings if an exceptionally heavy rainfall event (or two or more closely timed heavy rainfall events) exceeded the limit of the identified 100 year flood line. Folmer moved to offer no opposition to the proposal. Norton seconded and the motion carried by a margin of 5 to 0.

Ongoing Tabled Business:

Recycling: The following *Reading Eagle* articles were reviewed: "Bottle Recycler to Build in Muhlenberg" from May 4, 2019 and "Message in a Bottle" from May 23, 2019.

Spotted Lanternfly: Folmer shared an article from the *Reading Eagle* from May 9, 2019 entitled "PA's a Paradise Lost for the Tree of Heaven".

Land Conservation: D. Meyer shared an article from the 2017 Census of Agriculture conducted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. It listed the loss of the number of farmers (in thousands) and the loss of farm acres (in millions) in Pennsylvania from 1997 through 2017. It also ranked the top 10 counties in PA with the number of

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farms (in thousands) as well as the top 10 counties for total value in agricultural production (in millions of dollars).

Adjournment: At 8:30 p.m. Folmer made a motion to adjourn. Norton seconded and the motion carried. The next meeting was scheduled for Monday, July 1, 2019 at 7:00 p.m. in the Bethel Township Municipal Building.

(Minutes submitted by Fred Folmer, Secretary to Council)