

I. **OPENING**

**CALL TO ORDER:** The Environmental Advisory Council meeting of Lower Saucon Township was called to order on Tuesday, February 9, 2021 at 6:32 PM, via Zoom, with Sandra Yerger, Chairman, presiding.

**ROLL CALL: Members:** Sandra Yerger, Allan Johnson, Dru Germanoski, Cindy Oatis, & Michael Boyle.

**Associate Members:** Thomas Carocci, Atom Kallen, Nicholas Lynn & Katlyn O'Connor Sommer; Staff: Leslie Huhn & Diane Palik. **Open Space Consultant:** Laura Baird-Bower; **Absent:** Ted Beardsley, Laura Ray, Glenn Kaye, and Hellertown Representative Terry Boos.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**ANNOUNCEMENT OF EXECUTIVE SESSION:** None

II. **OPEN SPACE SUB-COMMITTEE**

A. **PROPERTY UPDATES**

Mr. Germanoski said there are no updates. He said Mrs. Palik asked him if the Open Space Sub-Committee could score the property and they thought they could and then came the snowstorm. With that kind of snow, they can't see ground and from a practical standpoint, he can't imagine they'd be able to find parking. As soon as the snow clears up, he'll see what he can get lined up.

Mrs. Huhn said she understands the developer has a site plan in front of us and they are saying they are going to move forward if they don't hear anything on the open space part of it. Is this something we could do through aerials or google earth, or do you have to walk the property.

Mr. Germanoski said you can get a lot of information via google earth and so forth and even some of the hydrological features. The aerial photos are good because they show seeps, wetlands, and wet areas. If we are dealing with a scenario like this and we are under the pressure of time and development, he thinks they could. If people are willing to trust his professional judgment, he'd put together for the other members screen captures, circle things and then he can drive out there and take a couple of landscape views that would give them a sense of scenic value. Google earth can give the ground and road views. This is unprecedented so as long as they have the ability as a Sub-Committee, then a Committee, to vote and decide to accept that approach, then he doesn't see that they would really fundamentally really miss anything of great significance in such a way that it would compromise the integrity of the entire endeavor.

Mrs. Huhn said she's just throwing it out there. Mrs. Yerger said more and more Land Trusts are relying on not having personal visits when they monitor certain properties. There's tons of abilities out there and they are actually monitoring the properties through different kinds of GIS formatting. To Dru's point, they can probably get a lot more details than walking the properties especially when you have properties that are a couple hundred acres like they do in the Midwest. She thinks it's very feasible to do this electronically.

Mr. Germanoski said this is what he does, evaluate the earth surface and so using these technologies are just part of his daily existence. He'll be candid and fair about anything that he trusts versus don't trust as well. When he's talking about the soil survey's, he's talking about the old county surveys and those aerial surveys are old and the Northampton County one dates 1974 and the air photos they use are older than that. The advantage of that is those are pre-major Lehigh Valley development in age, so you can see a lot on that and the soil scientists were able to see a lot that was obscured today and so that's actually a good data set. He can also go to the site and look at historical photos also and can put something together that will legitimately reflect what a property attributes are and share them with the Open Space Sub-Committee and they can put something together. He would be willing to do that leg work and he can do it this week.

Mr. Kallen said you had mentioned some of the photos used in the past were old, can you see on the google earth when those were taken. Mr. Germanoski said the google earth ones, they have a date

of when they were flown and day and then they also have a historical tool that lets you look at a few historical photos that they have scanned. Their data set for photos doesn't go back as far as some other data sites do; mainly he's thinking about the Penn State data site and you can get aerial photos that go back to the early 1900's in some cases and get air photo coverage. It shows vegetated spots and drainage and sometimes it's quiet remarkable what's available.

Ms. O'Connor Sommer said that would be awesome if he can go and put all that together. She said she can volunteer and drive by and do some current photos for the scenic value. She doesn't have much knowledge of what to look for on the maps. Mr. Germanoski said that would help him a great deal and just do a few landscape photos just what your assessment of what the view scape would look like. He's appreciate that and he'll take care of all the map stuff and geology which is all easy for him. Ms. O'Connor Sommer said she will get to that this week.

Mrs. Yerger said thank you for always volunteering scoring these properties.

### **III. NEW BUSINESS**

#### **A. REVIEW OF OPEN SPACE SUB-COMMITTEE SCORING SHEET**

Mr. Germanoski said one of the ones that jumps out at him is the "Carbonate Geology" one, and has always bothered him. We have a special development ordinance for carbonate veins. You can't put an in-ground swimming pool in without a geological assessment so the Township recognizes the environmental sensitivity of carbonate landscapes, yet we only have one point available to us for scoring carbonate geology. That's insufficient for a couple of reasons. First of all it's an all or nothing value pretty much. He supposes we could do a half a point, but we've never done that. A lot of the properties they look at they may have some carbonate terrain on them, so if 10% of the site is carbonate geology, well there's carbonate geology there. It would sure be nice to have a couple of points to work with to differentiate between a site that's 100% carbonates versus 10% or 50%. The other thing is carbonate terrains are quite sensitive hydrologically and the nature of the carbonate geology. It's one thing to say it's under laid by carbonates, but then we now have county-wide sinkhole maps, photos to tell if there are sinkholes on the site or closed depressions and they have hydrological significance as they are places that hold stormwater a bit. They are places where groundwater gets recharged and so a site that has multiple closed depressions maybe liniments on it versus one that doesn't, those should be scored differently. If the site has multiple closed depressions, they would have high environmental value functionally. He doesn't understand why we don't give carbonate geology something like three points or two at least just to give us some leeway to accommodate those variations from place to place. They are significant features. Some of it transfers over to sensitive natural features, it perhaps can be accommodated by stormwater which only takes up a point also. It would be sensible to raise the point total for carbonate geology to three points or at least two.

Mr. Germanoski said the new feature the "Public Access" issue. The one thing with accessibility with the landowner make the site accessible to Township residents. A couple of things come to mind. He wonders if that would serve as a disincentive to a landowner. They might want to preserve it as open space but at the same time they don't want to invite people to use it for hiking or other things. He recalls a couple years ago a resident from Steel City would come to our meetings and every time we would score a property he would raise that question of is that accessible to the public.

Mr. Germanoski said just conceptionally bear with him this thought experiment. Imagine the site is accessible, and he's a Scout leader, does that mean he can bring 15 boys hiking on the property and everything that comes along with that. We are trying to preserve hydrological features so if you have 15 boys and are out and about, and there's a little stream there. When he was a kid if that stream had a gravel bed, they put a dam on it as fast as they could. You could potentially be interfering with or disturbing some of the very attributes of one of these properties that we were trying to preserve and then it raises the question for the landowner of are they agreeing to make a site accessible with perpetuity. They are liable to find out they have people banging on the door frequently to request access or people who are just helping themselves to the property. He just wonders if accessibility is

a can of worms and then it raises liability issues also. You have people on your property, what if someone is injured. Is that a realm we really want to open up? Those were the main things he had.

Mr. Germanoski said there's always the issue we sort of solved by having availability. We know we can't score it. Development potential, Jim has agreed to put in a score for that as it helps a great deal with ordinance issues we may not be on top of as well as we should. He wondered if we are going to modify the score sheet if it would make sense to re-categorize a couple of these elements like "Matching Funds", "Availability", and "Development Potential". We can leave development potential right up front as James will score them. We as the Open Space Sub-Committee can accept that, but we have been scoring and leaving availability and bargain sale and matching funds blank because we don't have access to that information, so he wonders if making it a two-stage process, which almost already is functionally, and just put "Bargain Sale", "Matching Funds" and say "Availability" into a little category with another vertical divider just to make clear that sort of be on the realm of the Open Space Sub-Committee to be able to evaluate.

Mr. Boyle said what if there's no development potential Mr. Germanoski said he and Kaitlyn just scored a property a few weeks ago and Jim listed it as no development potential, but we went and scored it in addition to that anyway, and that's one of the things they sort of shook their heads at. Could you imagine if we started to say yes we should make open space acquisitions to place and have zero development potential, wouldn't the rest of the Township residents says well that doesn't make sense, why are we spending Township money to preserve something that's already preservable. They went and scored the property and were up against that very issue several weeks ago.

Mrs. Yerger said here's one of the things that come into play and it's something that comes up to a higher level and this isn't going to fix it, but one of the issues is, yes, it will score as per our ordinances that it is not developable but then they have the right to come for a variance or waivers and a lot of times they are granted, and then all of a sudden a property that is not developable becomes developable. We can't control that as the Open Space Sub-Committee so it puts extra commandeering into the whole mix.

Mr. Carocci said that particular property, you are right, it's not developable, but it's not one of the reasons some of the Township was somewhat interested in it. It would stay the way it is, and it's more of a natural barrier between Steel City and the landfill. There's no category for that but the people of Steel City would say it's a benefit to keep the landfill from expanding in that direction. Mrs. Yerger said just the natural resources on it again, sometimes the quality of them make it so you don't want it developed even though it says it can't be. There are ways around it if you would.

Mr. Germanoski said to the point that was helpful to know those two things, that makes good sense. Mrs. Yerger said she understands your dilemma too. Mr. Germanoski said they don't make the decisions on whether or not to preserve a property. They make a recommendation based on these attributes, but like so many things, whether you choose to preserve something or not, he's sure is determined on other higher level criteria as well in many cases. It seems this is one set of attributes that Council can take into consideration and obviously not the only criteria. As far as he's concerned and speaking for himself, he's happy to go and score properties even if they score zeros on development potential and again, Sandy's point about people requesting variances is very well taken as that certainly happens a lot so that is a compelling argument and he should look through his EAC manual again because Kaitlyn raised that same question, can they log a site if it's preserved, and he said he's not 100% on that. He knows they can't develop it in terms of building, but he doesn't know if they can, so it helps to know that.

Mrs. Yerger said usually a conservation easement will allow for limited logging, but there's no clear cutting. It's a different type of logging. Mr. Germanoski said it creates a different standard. Mrs. Yerger said it's a much higher standard and sometimes again it may include reforestation. She can tell you from a majority of the conservation easements, if there's funding from DCNR or some other state agency, they will allow limited logging.

Laura Baird-Bower from Heritage Conservancy said the first thing with regards to the forestry question and Sandy was right on point, DCNR and other entities will allow certain types of timbering on a wooded preserved property. Typically it has to be in accordance with the forest stewardship plan that is specifically developed for the health of the forest and taking into consideration the habitat on the property. Typically if timbering is done on a preserved property, it is really looking for the long term health of the woodlands, not for the economic gain of selling the timber. You can look at it two ways. Are they timbering to earn money from the sale of the timber or are they doing selective timber harvest for the health of the woodlands. They do allow it in their easements. DCNR does, the County does, but they have to be in accordance with a forest stewardship plan that has been reviewed and approved by the holder prior to the landowner allowing any type of timbering on the property.

Laura Baird-Bower said one of the other pieces that was brought up was the public access. She looked at the scoring sheet with Leslie and had put this on only because this topic was coming up time and time again and Sandy can speak to this being on Council, certain Council members wanted to know why does this property not have public access. Public tax dollars are being used to preserve this property, it should be one of the potential requirements. Dru was right on a lot of different points. This could open up a huge can of worms. It comes down to what a municipality's priorities are. When you raise money to do open space, if the taxpayers wanted to see public access as part of land conservation, certainly it makes sense to fold this in. Not every Township requires it. We do see requirement at the County level and at the State level for public access with restrictions. It can be limited to only guided tours that are prescheduled, no more than five times a year, no more than three people. The owner has to be made aware of it and they have to give permission. There's something as restricted as that. Something less restricted might be that it is open a certain number of weeks during the year, only during daylight hours, only on a portion of the property. Maybe it's a trail that goes through the property. This is a topic that has been discussed at length by many different municipalities at the County and State level. She actually just presented a project to Northampton County Council a couple of months ago and asked for a waiver from the public access requirement as they are very adamant about asking for public access. The way she was able to get around it was this property is not conducive, it had rare and endangered species that showed up when she did the PA Natural Diversity Index search and those species were considered highly collectable for economic value, so they don't want someone on this property as there were endangered species that were highly collectable that could be sold. The County granted the waiver from public access. This is something she thinks maybe Leslie or Sandy can fill in where the Township was coming from with the public access. She thinks some Council members were asking for it.

Mrs. Huhn said she thinks so. She liked Dru's idea of maybe moving that off to the side that maybe not putting that decision at the Open Space Sub-Committee's level, but then when she and Laura get involved, they start working with the homeowners and working with Council towards an appraisal and things like that. Maybe that's something we could flag and say it's a yes or no; and maybe not score it with a number in passing their recommendation to Council then.

Mr. Germanoski said the other advantage of that is this is something you have experience with. If he goes out and does it, and he's not tactful enough, he would scare someone right out of the program. He wondered if for some guidance, we should perhaps look at the language that defined the referendum vote on open space fundraising and see what the Township residents thought they were voting for. Were we voting for open space that was just untouchable, open space to preserve, with some element of the rural nature of this Township or were people voting maybe with the mindset that this might also create some public land. There's a dual element to our open space preservation program functionally so far as some open space properties are just open space and still private property fundamentally. The most obvious end of the spectrum would be the Woodland Hills Golf Course that is fundamentally public land and in essence, a park land for hiking and walking. We do have this very dual nature to the way we've applied our open space acquisitions, access to trails, and so forth. It could be damaging to leave it up to the Open Space Sub-Committee to broach the subject, to try to start negotiating with the landowner over this. He said to Laura, we missed her because they had bad weather a long time ago, so he's happy to hear all the advice she has to offer on these subjects

because of her expertise. He thanked her for being here and sharing her thoughts and experience and knowledge.

Mrs. Yerger said if you think back, and you were involved with some of the first properties we conserved, we were still getting funding to help pay for that acquisition, meaning conservation acquisition from DCNR who was going to require public access.

Ms. Baird-Bower said it comes down to the funding entity. If it's just the Township that is funding a certain project, do you feel as though this property is conducive for public access, does it make sense? The other piece is talking to the landowner early on in the process so this doesn't come to them later on and they are surprised by it. Just if we are able to straighten this out, is this going to be some type of requirement and to what extent, will it apply to every property or is it only certain ones. Maybe it's only ones where it connects to a particular trail route or something like that. If it's something that is at least brought up with the applicants early on in the process that it may be asked how do they feel about that, is it a deal breaker, is it something they would not be willing to work with. Dru had brought up a good point with the liability potential associated with folks coming out on private land and properties. When they are working with landowners that do allow the public on their property, there is legislature out that is called the Recreational Use of Land and Water Act. It was put into place to protect landowners who willingly open up their property to the public and don't charge. If someone were to get hurt and they try to sue you, it doesn't try and stop them from suing you, but this can be used in your defense. She always tells landowners if you are working with an attorney please share it with your attorney so that they can give you a level of comfort with allowing the public on your property. The public access comes and you can build restrictions in it and it may only be a certain time frame, maybe not during hunting season. This is a really big topic and she works with other Township's where they discussed this and it varies from Township to Township.

Mr. Germanoski said with that liability with respect to hunting, he knows that applies to that particular aspect, for folks to hunt, they have that built in as a legal indemnification. He's not speaking against access to properties, he just thinks it would be better handled by someone other than the Open Space Sub-Committee just because of the issue of expertise and experience in terms of how to broach the subject and in having the knowledge to respond to landowners questions that the Open Space Sub-Committee is not as versed.

Ms. O'Sommer Conner said because it seems like the public access, ties in with the scenic view a lot. If there were no public access, it seems they shouldn't get points for scenic view because who is going to see the view except them really. The scenic view, public access, and then there's the bargain sale and matching funds all seem like categories that would be initial conversation with the landowners. She and Dru ran into this with the question, what are they wanting to do with this, are there matching funds, but what is their plan B if they don't want to develop this. Do they really want to try to get a variance? There's the hard science categories like the Ag soils, hydrological features, all things we can look at and count and there's right answers to those things. The other ones are more they can go either way. Is there a way to get more information to us as the Sub-Committee on those specific things beforehand? By taking them all away, it's not definitely in their area of expertise, but she only has the expertise that Dru taught her on any of the hard science stuff anyway. She thinks we could educate ourselves to continue making those part of whether they recommend or don't recommend but will definitely going into the process need more information and a lot of that would come from the landowner, whether they would want to allow public access, whether they would want to do a bargain sale. She doesn't know if the score sheet could be made into two parts. Whoever talks to or whoever the landowner is working with on the Township, if not assign a number, at least get a couple of bullets together for what they are talking about in each of those categories. Write down what they are looking at for public access, and then come to the Open Space Sub-Committee and they can go out with those bullets and having that information. Yes, they have matching funds, awesome, then they can intelligently rank that number. It should be a big part of what they look at overall because along with the hard science the people in the Township would expect us to consider all of those other aspects as well. She knows she would be more okay with this property isn't really developable but we're going to get it at a really good bargain. She would be

happy if the Open Space Sub-Committee said yes, let's spend the money even though they can't technically develop it without variances. She doesn't know if that can be done beforehand bullet-wise or something that we need to expand into and then we can also knowing if they are willing to allow public access, they can take a look at it and say maybe we haven't done any public access in the last three years, so this can be higher as we want to have the dual goals of having some strictly protected and some with public access. There are times when it's important to protect it and don't let people on it and there's time if we are looking at the goals of the Township, letting people access it might be a strong vote in their favor.

Mrs. Yerger said her recollection as far as the scenic value what did it look like from the road. Ms. O'Connor Sommer said that makes sense. Mrs. Yerger said or you can see a small lake or stream or it was the road view basically.

Mr. Germanoski said as a Township resident, and to be candid, where he lives in the hills on the east side of the Township, he gets frustrated at looking up towards Gaffney Hill and thinking that 20 years ago when he drove home at night, he just looked at darkness up there and now he sees lights all over the place. He was much happier when he looked at darkness, so he thinks that's another major point is that the Township residents value open space individually so they look at a rural landscape element as opposed to big mansions. Sandy's point is well taken if we think about the scenic value multiple ways but in particular looking at that landscape, does it provide scenic value undeveloped.

Mrs. Yerger said we do have a fair amount of mountains. The one behind her that is preserved is Granite Hill and people like looking at it, it's all wooded. Mr. Germanoski said do we want to make motions to change this or how do we proceed. Mrs. Yerger said she thinks the point is well taken. Do you want Laura and staff to look at it and come back to us with recommendations? We can do it one of two ways. We can make the recommendations and have it go that way. You pretty much said your recommendations. Mr. Germanoski said he would summarize it by saying he thinks we should raise "Carbonate Geology" to three points and that several items such as "Availability", "Bargain Sale", and "Matching Funds" be placed in a separate category for Township officials to evaluate. He could see that going both ways. He sees Kaitlyn's point if we had it up front that could be helpful to them in some subtle ways but on the other hand, he would imagine that sometimes it makes more sense to be done subsequently. He doesn't know how you go about it, but if he's imagining matching funds, if a property has a lot of environmental characteristics you could probably use that to entice matching funds. You say this site scores a three on hydrologic features and a three on geology and three on sensitive natural features and maybe that helps convince the County to match funds or wherever you find additional funds. Whether that happens first or last, it isn't of importance to him as long as we move it into a separate section of the overall scoring sheet. That would satisfy his concerns, but he's just one person.

Mrs. Huhn said she thinks there's been a lot of good discussion and Dru and Kaitlyn have made a lot of input and things we need to look at. Some of what was discussed was really Laura's area of expertise, so if the EAC is comfortable, she and Laura can take this back and have some discussion. Laura can weigh in if she thinks it's better to move the public access and matching funds and bargain sale discussion before the EAC Sub-Committee scores it or after, then we can bring it back. Let them play around with it a little bit and bring it back and see if you like the changes or the options they can present.

Mrs. Yerger said that's a good idea. Laura has worked with multiple municipalities and many, many landowners and has a good handle on what's really out there. It would be very helpful to have her input and work with Leslie and come back with maybe a draft and/or some options. Mrs. Huhn said maybe some new process. Mrs. Yerger said that's fine. Ms. Baird-Bower said she's happy to do that. She likes setting goals and putting dates on calendars so is this something we want to work on to have ready for their next meeting. Mrs. Huhn said she thinks we could. They've given us a lot of the information to work with so pretty much the job is done and we just have to put something together. Ms. Baird-Bower said what is the date of the next meeting? Mrs. Huhn said March 9<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Baird-Bower said she'll put that in her calendar.

Mr. Carocci said as long as we are going to score that property and don't postpone that. Mrs. Huhn said if Dru or Kaitlyn have any questions, just call the Township. If there's anything we can do for the Ronca property, just let us know. If Kaitlyn can't get out there if the weather changes, we can try and get out there and get some pictures. Mrs. O'Connor Sommer said she doesn't have a problem going out there.

**B. DISCUSSION ON CARRYOUT PLASTIC BAG BAN**

Ms. Oatis said Tara Zinski, Northampton Council woman, is reaching out to all municipalities in Northampton County and is actively and adamantly supporting the plastic bag bans. She's focused right now on the Philadelphia initiative which she doesn't fully understand, but she believes it involves the City of Pittsburgh as well as Philadelphia pressuring the state to move in this direction. She doesn't know how the Committee feels about it whether you'd like to invite her to come but she feels if we don't invite her, she's going to contact us and ask to come. It's up to how the Committee feels about this. Mrs. Yerger said Delaware has moved in that direction. It's a problem in a lot of municipalities.

Mr. Carocci said he doesn't think it hurts for someone to come and talk to us about it. The problem with the PA stuff right now is the state is saying no local bans yet and that will be a problem, but that doesn't mean we can't listen to what they say. He doesn't want to join the Philadelphia or Pittsburgh initiative as that would be a lot of legal costs that we shouldn't be spending. He doesn't think it's any problem listening to Tara come and speak about it.

Mr. Kallen said from what he sees across states and counties, this is the way the wind is shifting, so it doesn't hurt to know at least where we stand and get a head of it. Mrs. Yerger said does Leslie want to reach out to her on behalf of the EAC and see if she wants to come to one of our meetings. Mrs. Huhn said she will do that. She said they did choose a date, March 24<sup>th</sup>, where they are going to have their first County COG meeting since COVID so she'll reach out to her and maybe she's going to present something there. She'll reach out and invite her to one of our meetings also.

**C. DISCUSSION ON RECYCLING INDUSTRY**

Ms. Oatis said most of you have an overall understanding of the recycling industry so she'll limit it to municipal overview of the last ten years. Back in 2012, there were a couple of contracts that resulted in huge amounts of revenue to municipalities, mainly two or three in Lehigh and Northampton County areas. There were \$4,000 to \$5,000 in revenue per month coming in from their marketing of recyclables. That didn't last long and after a couple of years, by 2014, the market was in trouble. Most of you probably know about the China National Sword Policy that limited the contamination rate to about 5%, which is unrealistic for the European countries. Pretty soon the containers began to stack up because the cost of recycling was more expensive. Then the media blitz came and by the time "60 Minutes: did their initial segment on the project, much needed information was already outdated. A year later the country became very disheartened about recycling. This led to a lot of questions, and people have been asking her over the last couple of years, were recyclables being trashed? Yes and no. Yes, they were being recycled in metropolitan areas because it was more expensive to trash it. At \$600/ton you had to recycle just to keep your costs under control. In rural areas, mainly in the Midwest where there weren't recycling processors and very low cost landfills, a lot was just going into the landfill. During this time a lot of changes were taking place and that's really where this update lies. More effective education is being put out there, they are concentrating on less on the slightly problematic matters like pizza boxes and plastic bags remain something that jams up their machinery and causes costly shutdowns, but truly dangerous items they are putting a lot of effort into, those like lithium batteries, propane tanks. The next thing is change has been in recycling process technology. Back in 2012, a lot of material recovery facilities (MRF) were manually separating recycling like on a conveyor belt. Now it's being sorted with optical sorters to sort plastics, magnets to separate metals, also they are separating metal and paper. The other thing is big business has become involved in recycling. Walmart began requiring every vendor they do business with to submit sustainability reports demonstrating their efforts, responsible packaging, and community environmental education. Then along came the recycling partnership, a non-profit and funded comprised by numerous business powerhouses, Apple, IBM, Amazon, Proctor & Gamble,

you get the idea. They have provided grants and paid for everything from automated curbside collection carts to educational graphic content free to businesses and municipalities in their recycling campaign. They have funded social and technical research programs. You will hear about one of these soon in the Lehigh Valley where it has been outfitted with a \$200 million upgrade that will process flexible and single use plastics. This is a big deal as those single use plastics were previously considered contamination which contamination destroys the value of recycling. It's a significant thing that's about to be implemented in two of our local municipalities. Then we have companies like Waste Management, they have continued in 2020 despite economic challenges, they are infusing millions, in fact 200 in the last two years and they are outfitting their MRFs with 10 to 12 high tech robots that will speed up recycling efficiency. They are opening a new state-of-the art MRF in Salt Lake City and then they are opening the MRF of the future in the Chicago area as well. Where do we stand locally? Notable, that Governor Wolf identified recycling as a "essential business" during the pandemic that was because of its importance in the manufacturing supply chain, like cardboard, certain plastics are important components in packaging and shipping, high tech building materials. Overall the Lehigh Valley is doing pretty well. Municipalities that are mandated under PA Act 101 are able to subsidize their respective programs with grants. Despite the economic strain, there are three strong recycling processors in our area that have stayed viable and are allowing municipal recycling programs stay afloat during these tough times. The 4Q2020 is the beginning of the rise in the commodity markets and we hope they continue. We don't have the huge revenue of eight years ago. Bottom line recycling is a commodity and commodities are always subject to market fluctuations; and hopefully that market is smoothing over and will stay strong.

Mr. Johnson said he recently read a book called "Junkyard Planet" and it seems like a lot of the valuables don't really get separated until it gets to China. How much of the other stuff like glass, cardboard, plastics are actually utilized in the United States and not sent over to some foreign country to be remanufactured into something useful. Ms. Oatis said that's a huge question. She will say that recycling is localized and what we see here in our area and communities is dramatically different than what you would see in California, Maine or Georgia. Every market is locally specific. Looking at it from a big picture, glass, it has no worth, zero and it's been zero for a long time, but it has found a home in being ground up and used as landfill cover as basically glass is sand. That is a situation where it doesn't have any worth, but it has found a reused process. Plastics are one to three, the higher numbers are not but we are seeing new plastic plants coming on strong. China was such a big part of the recycling market that when we lost that, the world and the country had to come up with new ways to process. They are also coming up with new markets, how can we use this material. Unfortunately, it all comes down to economics and closing the loop. As we retool this industry, we're seeing the shifts. Paper mills are another one that they are thriving in some parts of the country, but not in others. It's hard to provide an easy answer to his question.

Mr. Johnson said when you first started talking, you said something he didn't know about that China made a requirement that the recyclables that are imported to their country can only have 7% pollution. That sounds like a political thing to him. Even in the book, the people who are actually getting their dirty fingers in there doing the work, they are not worried too much about 7% of contaminants. It may be part of the political back and forth that's going on for the last four years with China. Ms. Oatis said this actually happened before the Trump administration, so it goes back to about six years. Yes, they basically said they didn't want any recyclables anymore. 80% of our recyclables went to China and that's similar to many other countries as well. When they said they would only take a 5% contamination rate, it pretty much halted the industry. They just decided they were going to try to get these materials within their own country. That hasn't worked very well. If you've ever been to China or if you've ever read about China, they have people that run around and pick up your cigarette butts or wrappers as you drop them on the ground. People who live in China or visit, feel like they would be taking jobs away from their own people to recycle so they are having a hard time. Consequently, they are opening it up slowly. They've loosened up their restrictions on some and are clamping down on others. It will be up to the rest of the country to find domestic markets.

Mr. Johnson said what did they mean by contaminants? Ms. Oatis said if you look at your recycling bin and all the items in it are acceptable items like plastics, paper, all the things you hear about and



then somebody throws in a basketful of grapes. That destroys the worth of that bucket of recyclables as now it is uncleaned and can't be processed. Contaminants just means an amount of trash that renders the recyclables invaluable.

Mr. Johnson said so its actual garbage type organic trash. Ms. Oatis said it could be anything. Mr. Johnson said if it's a bundle of plastic material for recycling and it has a few tin cans in it, is that a contaminant. Ms. Oatis said no tin cans are recyclable. Mr. Johnson said mixed in with a bundle of plastics, like they have these huge bundles of material that they ship to China, all wired up in a big bundle or in a shipping container, are they talking is this supposed to be a shipping container of plastic and there's 5% of wood in it, is that what they are complaining about or is it organic garbage type stuff. Ms. Oatis said it can be anything that's not supposed to be in there like wood, it could be a little Tykes tricycle, it could be plastic bags. They are a huge contaminant as they gum up the processing material. Anything that is not supposed to be in the recyclable bucket.

#### **IV. DEVELOPER ITEMS**

##### **A. EDELMAN – 1816 READING DRIVE MINOR MIN 01-21 – ONE LOT MINOR SUBDIVISION**

Mr. Germanoski said he didn't see anything that he would red flag. The EAC had no comments.

##### **B. LEHIGH UNIVERSITY – SEIDERSVILLE ROAD MINOR 02-21 – MASTER MINOR SUBDIVISION**

The EAC had not comments.

#### **V. UPDATES/REPORTS**

##### **A. TERRY BOOS REPORT – HELLERTOWN REPRESENTATIVE**

Mrs. Palik said Terry Boos said the Farmers Market will be taking place at the library again. He also said if the EAC wants to go to the Farmers Market and take the plants there from Edge of the Woods, he will speak to Sandy about it.

##### **B. UPDATE ON GUERRILLA GARDENING**

Mr. Kallen asked if Mrs. Yerger brought this up to the Solicitor about the gardening. Mrs. Yerger said she did not talk to him yet, but she will talk to him. After she talks to Linc, we can put it back on next month's agenda. Mr. Kallen said did anyone see any red flags with the initial thoughts he put together. Mr. Johnson said the one thing that occurred to him, if he's going to go through the effort to grow something, he doesn't want to give it away to other people. He's not sure if this is going to work unless it's a community effort. The idea of growing food on your property and letting anybody come by and pick it, that doesn't grow with him. Mr. Carocci said his concern would be homeowners who participate getting upset if they feel people not in our community are stopping and taking our food. He'd like the Police Chief to weigh in on this if he'd see any type of issues people accessing other people's property. It's a good idea but we need to think about any logistics. Mr. Kallen said he wonders how that would be noticed or enforced. He lived here 30 years and people move in and out all the time. Mr. Carocci said if you go to some of our parks, you see a lot of NY and NJ license plates. It's accessing somebody's property and taking something from that property. Mrs. Yerger said many years ago Lehigh University did that and it did go away, she doesn't know why. Mr. Carocci said where he lived they had a community garden, but not on other people's properties. Mrs. Yerger said we can talk to the Police Chief and talk to Linc and get back to the next meeting. Ms. O'Connor Sommer said has it ever been talked about doing a community garden as it's a separate place like in front of the Dog Park at Polk Valley Park, at the field and then have it run by volunteers. Mrs. Yerger said that parcel is being looked at to extend the Dog Park. Mr. Carocci said if we do have an open space for community gardening, that would be fine and if we don't have one now, maybe in the future. Mrs. Yerger said over at Lehigh she thinks it was also the deer population. Mr. Kallen said another big issue is the location. Mrs. Huhn said we can look into it and get back with more information, we'll check with Linc and Chief.

Mr. Johnson said several years ago he attended a course at Northampton County Community College and they had a community garden there for the people who attended the course. The big problem was water. You need to be able to water your plants during hot days in the summer. He came back

to the EAC and mentioned using the area north of the dog park for plots for people, but at that time, he was told there was no water and the Township wasn't interested in supplying water to people for their gardens, so you have to think about that, is there a water pipe up there? Mrs. Huhn said Roger does have water up there, but it's a small line to a dog fountain.

**VI. OLD/MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS**

**A. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF JANUARY 12, 2021 MINUTES**

Mr. Kallen said his first name is spelled wrong, it's Adam instead of Atom.

**MOTION BY:** Mr. Germanoski moved for approval of the January 12, 2021 minutes, with one correction.

**SECOND BY:** Mrs. Yerger

**ROLL CALL:** 5-0 (Absent – Mr. Beardsley & Ms. Ray)

**VII. PUBLIC COMMENT ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS**

Laura Baird-Bower had to leave the meeting and she said she looks forward to your meeting next month.

**VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION BY:** Mr. Germanoski moved for adjournment. The time was 8:28 p.m.

**SECOND BY:** Mrs. Yerger

**ROLL CALL:** 5-0 (Absent – Mr. Beardsley & Ms. Ray)

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Sandra B. Yerger, Chair