

OPENING

CALL TO ORDER: The Environmental Advisory Council meeting of Lower Saucon Township was called to order on Tuesday, March 9, 2021 at 6:31 PM, via Zoom, with Sandra Yerger, Chairman, presiding.

ROLL CALL: Members: Sandra Yerger, Allan Johnson, Dru Germanoski, Laura Ray, Ted Beardsley, Cindy Oatis, & Michael Boyle. **Associate Members:** Thomas Carocci, Atom Kallen, Nicholas Lynn; Staff: Diane Palik. **Open Space Consultant:** Laura Baird-Bower; **Jr. Council Member:** Bela Silverman; **Absent:** Katlyn O'Connor Sommer, Glenn Kaye, and Hellertown Representative Terry Boos.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ANNOUNCEMENT OF EXECUTIVE SESSION: None

II. OPEN SPACE SUB-COMMITTEE

A. PROPERTY UPDATES

1. PROPERTY NO. 2020-6

Mr. Germanoski said at the last meeting and because of the snow cover, we said we would rely on reports from Jim Young at the Township with his knowledge of the site and then Mr. Germanoski put together a PPT presentation showing the distribution of soils and geology. Ms. O'Connor Sommer went out and looked at the site and provided photographs and a report. He shared all of this information with the Open Space Sub-Committee and they scored the property 16/26 of the criteria that are available. They didn't score matching funds, bargain sale or public access. Because this was a strip of woods in a relatively heavily developed area that already seems to have some stormwater problems, they recommended that the site be considered by Council for open space preservation to provide a bit of a buffer and some open space.

Mrs. Yerger said Council did move forward and approve an appraisal for this property. It is in motion as we speak.

MOTION BY: Mr. Boyle moved to recommend to Council to move forward with an appraisal on Property No. 2020-6 for a potential conservation easement.

SECOND BY: Mr. Germanoski

ROLL CALL: 7-0

III. NEW BUSINESS

A. REVIEW OF OPEN SPACE SUB-COMMITTEE SCORING SHEET

Laura Baird-Bower, Open Space Consultant, was present. She said as discussed at the last meeting, we moved the category of "Availability", "Public Access", "Bargain Sale", and "Matching Funds" and that was put on page 2. We also felt that the "Carbonate Geology" was of greater importance so we gave that "3" points, so we increased that. Making those modifications, she thinks it makes a lot more sense, as there was a lot of great input at the last meeting. On page 2, as we discussed these different categories and they shouldn't be something that the EAC uses as part of their scoring of a property, but it's something that may be discussed among Council. One suggestion she has is if public access is going to be a potential, and maybe it's something that the EAC meets with an owner, and she can certainly write up a little paragraph letting them know that some sort of public access may be asked by Township Council. It's on a case-by-case basis depending on if the property is conducive of public access, something as little as pre-scheduled guided tours by an Environmental Group, maybe it's a small portion of the property if it's next to an existing trail. It would be different for every property. She wanted to get everyone's input on what is your comfort level with doing that and Sandy as the Council person, what are your thoughts on it?

Mrs. Yerger said it would be your point, it would have to be very carefully worded and made very obvious and sure to the property owner that it's not mandatory. It's something that may be considered.

Laura Baird-Bower said she was typing some things up today but maybe if a landowner is not either willing or able to provide public access to let the EAC know, then they can pass that on to Council. If it's a matter that the landowner would not move forward with preserving the property if they have to provide public access, then it's understood and then that would be taken out. There was some discussion up front last week about if public access is going to be a question by Council, it should be brought up as a potential to the landowner early on in the process rather than mid-way through or it's a surprise. We can maybe figure out a paragraph or something that is worded in such a way to just be aware Council could ask for it, if you're not comfortable, please let us know, we will work with you type thing.

Mrs. Yerger said she agrees with Laura Baird-Bower. Because even if public access would be desired, how do we describe what kind of public access it may or may not be requested.

Laura Baird-Bower said maybe we go back to the simple question, ask the landowner would you be willing to allow public access to your property if it were asked as part of this process. If she were a landowner, she'd want to know what does that mean, and maybe give some examples and the landowner can say "no, that's just not for me, that's not why I'm preserving my property", or you may have another landowner that says "I'm okay with that, I let people come on and walk my property anyway". Maybe we can find a happy medium here.

Mr. Beardsley said it also depends what's on the property, whether it's something that's unique and people want to see it or not.

Mrs. Yerger said to your point, the other side of the coin they don't want people as it cause potential problems.

Mr. Boyle said he thinks just people walking through the neighborhoods would love to pass through this particular property 2020-6 than see another development. It was brought up previously but have we ever considered wildlife as he knows the deer love this tract of land. That doesn't get any points, but did we ever consider that in the past?

Mr. Germanoski said he would think this falls into when we score for whether there's woodlands there or not. Mr. Boyle said if houses were developed on that property, we just recommended, that would not be good for the group of deer that come through the area as that's their main stumping grounds.

Mrs. Yerger said should we at some point, and she doesn't mean the Open Space Sub-Committee, but maybe someone from the Township should be doing a PNDI (Pennsylvania Natural Diversity Inventory) on these properties. It's basically we list any plants or animals that are threatened or endangered that have been identified on a given property. She doesn't know if we ever have done one. You can go on a website and get the information, but it might be something that we should maybe consider doing moving forward.

Laura Baird-Bower said that's a great idea. There's a number of Township's that do that and it's relatively easy and actually for municipalities, it's free. As a non-profit, Heritage Conservancy, is charged \$40 every time they do a search. It's really useful information when you are looking at sensitive natural features and they see that is one of the scoring parameters on this selection criteria sheet. She's for that and doesn't know if it comes as part of the scoring or it comes after you scored it.

Mrs. Yerger said especially if we wanted to move forward, then it would only tighten it if we have the Zoning Officer go forward and do a PNDI. Mr. Germanoski said we actually have that listed in sensitive natural features but we rarely know if that's true unless the landowner happens to know. Hans Riemann down in the Bucks, he was tuned into that and he made us aware of sensitive plants on his property but unless a property owner brings it to our attention, we usually don't know that. It would be welcome information. We do fold it into the score for sensitive natural features.

Mrs. Yerger said sometimes you don't know what's out there. It could be some kind of little salamander or whatever that is on this website, but you are not aware of it. She thinks somehow we should be including this in the process as we go forward as we are in the PA Highlands. There are habitats and deer are not threatened or endangered but it's hard to tell what's out there. Nobody can walk all pieces of the property but there have been county inventories done where it has been pulled out. She thinks it would be good to put that in.

Laura Baird-Bower said it's relatively easy and she'd be happy to show anybody how to do it if someone at the Township needs help doing that or any of the volunteers. It's really interesting and it may not tell you exactly what species, for different protection reasons, but if it's something by PA Fish & Boat, it will tell you that there's potential for an endangered species but it won't tell you specifically what it is.

Mrs. Yerger said she thinks we need to probably make a motion if you are in support of this that Council then this whether it's after the report and to your point, so you have highlighted that there's natural areas there, especially in those cases that the PNDI be done, go on the website and find out if it actually has threatened and endangered species listed in that area.

Mr. Germanoski said it might be good to change our practice. He doesn't think it really needs a motion if we just had Jim Young become familiar with that website and provide that information to us as he does when he goes and looks through development potential. Then we would have the information and we have the score category where we can take that into consideration. Mrs. Yerger said it's a good idea.

Mr. Germanoski said he would like to thank Laura for helping with this and if the time comes, and there's no further discussion he'd be willing to move

MOTION BY: Mr. Germanoski moved to recommend to Council that the EAC adopts the new scoring sheet that was discussed at the EAC meeting on March 9, 2021.

SECOND BY: Mr. Boyle

ROLL CALL: 7-0

IV. DEVELOPER ITEMS - None

V. UPDATES/REPORTS

A. TERRY BOOS REPORT – HELLERTOWN REPRESENTATIVE - Absent

B. GUERRILLA GARDENING

Mrs. Yerger said we had our Township Solicitor review the idea and he came back with advice that he was not in favor of adopting guerilla gardening and it would not be a good practice here in the Township because of the way the Township is laid out. Mr. Kallen said would that be for a centralized location or promoting satellite locations or both. Mrs. Yerger said probably both.

VI. OLD/MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS

A. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF FEBRUARY 9, 2021 MINUTES

Mrs. Oatis said page 8, line 2, change "cards" to "carts". Page 8, line 12, change "fetch" to "essential". Page 8, line 20, change "choice" to "fluctuations".

MOTION BY: Mrs. Yerger moved for approval of the February 9, 2021 minutes, with corrections.

SECOND BY: Mr. Germanoski

ROLL CALL: 7-0

VII. PUBLIC COMMENT ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

Mrs. Palik said Tara Zrinski will be at the April 13th EAC meeting.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION BY: Ms. Ray moved for adjournment. The time was 7:00 p.m.

SECOND BY: Mr. Boyle

ROLL CALL: 7-0

Sandra B. Yerger, Chair