



THE COUNTY OF CHESTER



COMMISSIONERS
Marian D. Moskowitz
Josh Maxwell
Michelle Kichline

Brian N. O'Leary, AICP
Executive Director

PLANNING COMMISSION
Government Services Center, Suite 270
601 Westtown Road
P. O. Box 2747
West Chester, PA 19380-0990
(610) 344-6285 Fax (610) 344-6515

Chester County Environmental and
Energy Advisory Board

Hybrid Meeting – GSC Suite 351E/Zoom
Government Services Center
January 25, 2023

AGENDA

2:30 p.m. 1. CALL TO ORDER

- A. Welcome and Introduction of New Members *Jess Cadorette, Chair*
Joe DiRocco, Tredyffrin Township (Municipal Mgr. Consortium)
Wyatt Williams, West Whiteland Township (Citizen representative)

2:35 p.m. 2. ACTION ITEM

- A. Appointment of 2023 Officers *Nominating Committee*
B. Adoption of October 26, 2022 Minutes *Jess Cadorette, Chair*

2:45 p.m. 3. DISCUSSION ITEMS

- A. EEAB Subcommittee Reports
1) Environmental Subcommittee *Rachael Griffith*
2) Clean Energy Subcommittee *Jim Wylie, Subcommittee Chair*
B. Solar Stakeholders Roundtable Discussion *Jim Wylie*
C. Municipal Plastic Bag Bans *Rachael Griffith*
D. Sustainability Summit event discussion *Rachael Griffith*

3:20 p.m. 4. UPDATES AND COMMENTS

- A. Planning Commission Director's Report *Brian O'Leary*
B. Sustainability Director's Report *Rachael Griffith*
1) Solar ordinance inventory
2) Update on Climate Action Plan metrics
3) Sustainability eNewsletter
C. Facilities Director's Report *Jan Bowers*
1) Regional Power Purchase Agreement Update
D. Other Updates *Board Members*
E. Public Comment



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4:00 p.m. 5. ADJOURNMENT

Next quarterly meeting – April 26th, 2023

Attachments:

Draft October 26, 2022 Minutes



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Environmental and Energy Advisory Board
Government Services Center Suite 351E/Zoom

October 26, 2022
Hybrid meeting

DRAFT MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT IN PERSON: Brian O'Leary, Secretary; Seung Ah Byun; David Busch; Ann Hutchinson; Steve Krug; Paul Spiegel.

MEMBERS PRESENT VIA ZOOM: Jess Cadorette Chair; Jon Altshul; Jan Bowers; Mark Connolly; Karena DiLeo; Sarah Sharp; Carol De Wolf; Kevin Warren; Will Williams; Jim Wylie.

OTHERS PRESENT IN PERSON: Carol Stauffer, Assistant Director; Gene Huller; Beth Cunliffe; Nancy Shields; Rachael Griffith, Sustainability Director.

OTHERS PRESENT VIA ZOOM: Molly O'Brien; Nathaniel Smith.

CALL TO ORDER:

The Environmental and Energy Advisory Board meeting, held in the Government Services Center Suite 351E and via Zoom video/audio on Wednesday, October 26, 2022 was called to order at 2:30 P.M. by Chair Jess Cadorette.

ACTION ITEMS:

Approval of July 27, 2022 Minutes:

A MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM THE JULY 27, 2022 MEETING WAS MADE BY MR. KRUG, SECONDED BY MS. HUTCHINSON, AND PASSED BY UNANIMOUS VOTE OF THE BOARD.

Approval of 2023 Meeting Dates:

A MOTION TO APPROVE THE 2023 MEETING DATES WAS MADE BY MR. KRUG, SECONDED BY MR. BUSCH, AND PASSED BY UNANIMOUS VOTE OF THE BOARD.

Appoint a Nominating Committee:

A MOTION TO REAPPOINT STEVE KRUG, CAROL DEWOLF, AND SEUNG AH BYUN AS THE 2023 NOMINATING COMMITTEE MEMBERS WAS MADE BY MR. O'LEARY, SECONDED BY MR. SPIEGEL, AND PASSED BY UNANIMOUS VOTE OF THE BOARD.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

Facilities Director's Report:

Ms. Bowers reported that the Southeast PA RPPA (Regional Power Purchase Agreement) group continues to meet looking closely at options, but no decisions have been made. Their current energy broker, Provident, presented a package at the last meeting which addressed a range of services needed if the county decides to use a more self-managed procurement process. Provident has been asked to gather pricing information for extending the county's current agreement for another year through 2024. Ms. Bowers reported that key staff positions are vacant within her department making it difficult to proactively work on energy management, but they continue to work towards the grant for the EV charging stations and fleet conversion. Ms. DeWolf mentioned the recent EV Summit which is posted on the CCATO website.

Subcommittee Reports:

Environmental Subcommittee:

Ms. Stauffer reported that the Environmental subcommittee met earlier this year with discussions on woodlands and tree protection. As a result of this meeting and follow-up comments, Ms. Stauffer has pulled together information for a website page specific to this topic. The next subcommittee meeting will go over the webpage items including: woodlands and tree canopy mapping; tree planting and reforestation programs, plans, and resources, including grant programs and training; tree protection and replacement standards; and a series of woodland and tree protection eTools and planning guides. This supports the 2022 work program and is planned to be completed by the end of 2022. In 2023, CCPC plans to research carbon credit programs and woodland/natural resource stewardship plans. After the website is up and running, outreach is planned via training and social media campaigns.

Clean Energy Subcommittee:

Mr. Connolly reported on the following:

- The subcommittee wants to assist and create a presence at TMAcc's upcoming EV Summit.
- Per Ms. Bowers' comments, benchmarking for CC Gov Facilities is on hold until Facilities staff is in place who can maintain records that are accurate for sharing publicly.
- Benchmarking for big energy users – hoping to get big users to report their energy usage data and display it on a map, similar to Philadelphia. Putting a grant together to assist in establishing a program was also discussed.
- Municipal cohort of municipalities taking climate action – Ms. Griffith is getting the Climate Action Plan out to the municipalities. This will be a cross committee effort. Ms. Griffith mentioned having an online event in February 2023 for municipalities as a Climate Action Plan training session and sending out a guide as a follow-up to the training. Mr. O'Leary mentioned that CCPC is planning on holding an all-day Sustainability Summit in 2023.
- Mr. Williams compiled a list of funding and financing resources for clean energy for school districts and municipal funding. Committee is determining how the information will be disseminated and updated.
- Building codes training – a date is being confirmed with SEI
- Solar stakeholders conference has been planned for December 8. The program and speakers are still being confirmed. The intent of the conference is to identify barriers and to see how to get the big users to adopt solar.

Municipal Plastic Bag Bans

Ms. Griffith reported that the Environmental Policy Director of the PA League of Women Voters reached out letting Ms. Griffith know that the League will be starting a plastic bag campaign in 2023

at both the state and county levels. The County Commissioners are supportive of the concept and will support municipalities who are interested in starting a bag ban. The following municipalities already have bag bans in place; Tredyffrin, Easttown, Uwchlan, West Goshen, and West Chester. Enforcement seems to be the biggest challenge. Ms. Cadorette mentioned that Penn Environment is also working on a plastic bag ban and would be a good resource. Ms. Cadorette asked the board to review the resources provided in the packet and the incoming ordinances. At the January meeting, this board will finalize recommendations for the commissioners.

Climate Action Plan Metrics

Ms. Griffith reported that since the last meeting, the metrics have been fleshed out a little bit more and have identified where the data comes from noting that this is similar to what is in the adopted Climate Action Plan. Chester County Facilities items were expanded upon. Due to Facilities staff shortages, the Building and Energy metrics A1-A5 are on hold. Mr. Krug mentioned applying for a grant for a shared energy manager and outsourcing the work may be an option. Ms. Griffith went on to highlight A7 and D4. Ms. Griffith reported that 2021 baseline data for the metrics will be gathered by the end of 2022 creating a webpage or, the information may possibly live on the Climate Action Plan webpage.

2023 CCPC Work Program draft

Mr. O'Leary reported that the Clean Energy Subcommittee has spoken with Ms. Griffith about the items they would like to see in the 2023 work program. Mr. O'Leary highlighted the following sustainability related items: Preserve Goal – Municipal Open Space Outreach, Open Space Preservation Updated Mapping and Data (POST), Preserved Open Space Map, and Open Space Summit; Protect Goal – Solar Ordinance Inventory and Outreach, Sustainability Summit, Sustainable Practices for HOAs, Woodland and Tree Conservation, Keep PA Beautiful Affiliate Implementation, and Regional Benchmarking Initiative; Prosper Goal – Advancing Sustainability Reporting within the Agricultural Sector; Connect Goal – Countywide Trails Master Plan. Mr. O'Leary asked for board comments over the next couple of weeks and mentioned that if the board would like an item added, that an item would have to be removed as we are at full staff capacity.

UPDATES AND COMMENTS:

Planning Commission Director's Report

Mr. O'Leary reported that CCPC has reviewed and has provided input on the DVRPC model solar ordinance. The ordinance is currently out for industry expert review. The reviews are anticipated to be complete by the end of this year allowing for a presentation to be brought to this board at the January meeting. Mr. O'Leary mentioned that Ms. Griffith has set up a meeting on December 6 for county departments to come together to talk about Climate Action Plan implementation.

Sustainability Director's Report

Ms. Griffith reported that they've kicked off a Keep Chester County Beautiful affiliate group, a branch of Keep PA Beautiful which is a branch of Keep America Beautiful. A steering committee has been formed to direct the group. The overall goals of the group are to expand capacity in the county for litter abatement, waste reduction, beautification, and environmental stewardship through communications, events, and recognition programs. A website and social media accounts will be released by the end of the month. An article will be written about this new group in the new quarterly Sustainability eNewsletter.

Ms. Griffith also reported that the Agricultural Development Council would like to invite the EEAB members on a farm tour. Ag Dev is trying to take all of the county's boards to visit a farm because farming is a large part of Chester County's economy, landscape, and sometimes misunderstood. Ag

Dev was hoping to combine a farm tour with EEAB members and the Work Force Development Board to Phillips Mushrooms south of Kennett Square. A doodle poll will be sent out to help decide on a date.

Lastly Ms. Griffith reported that she has met with all of the Environmental Advisory Councils and Sustainability Advisory Councils at the municipal level. They are very supportive of the Climate Action Plan.

Ms. Cadorette reminded members that there is an EAC Network conference, sponsored by We Conserve PA, scheduled for February 25, 2023.

Mr. Connolly asked the board members to get back to him if they have any feedback, knowledge, or known resources on making the Phoenixville school district's new 90-million-dollar elementary school as sustainable as possible.

Mr. Wiley was able to connect to the meeting and thanked Mr. Connelly for giving the subcommittee reports. Mr. Wiley will email the board with follow up comments. Mr. Wiley did mention the PPA for county facilities. In light of the Inflation Reduction Act, opportunities to secure grants and refunds for onsite solar, the county may want to factor onsite solar when considering the cost of purchasing electricity. Ms. Griffith mentioned that solar feasibility studies for three different facilities were completed a couple of years ago. Ms. Griffith is looking into getting those studies updated.

The next quarterly meeting will be on January 25, 2023.

Public Comment:

Molly O'Brien of Easttown asked to be kept in the loop about the upcoming solar conference. Mr. Connolly will follow up with Ms. O'Brien.

ADJOURNMENT

THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS, A MOTION TO ADJOURN AT 4:00 PM. WAS MADE BY MR. O'LEARY SECONDED BY MR. KRUG AND PASSED BY UNANIMOUS VOTE OF THE BOARD.

Respectfully submitted,



Brian N. O'Leary, AICP
Secretary

BNO/CJS/RG/ncs

Barriers Captured During the Dec 8, 2022 Solar Stakeholders Roundtable

State of Solar in PA

- Goals in PA (8% for renewable, 0.5% for solar) is too low. Much lower than neighboring states.
- Chester County is 7th in PA in # of solar sites. Behind Montco and Bucks.

Solar Financing Panel

- Lack of demand for financing of solar projects - financing companies don't put effort into solar specific products or trying to compete
- Supply chain problems and tariffs
- Understanding of the financing process is lacking in customers and installers. It's complicated.
 - There is a need for collateral beyond the solar equipment itself and good cash flow to show creditworthiness for solar loans
- Variability of SREC values
- Financial institutions worry that the surge in demand for solar is temporary - only fueled by the current incentives.
 - Even though solar is cheaper now to install without any incentives than it was in 2009 with the incentives, which caused a solar boom.
- Education (for customers and installers) about:
 - Equity in the property is needed for financing
 - And a strong cash flow
 - For bigger systems you need to be close to a substation
 - Payback of solar energy systems and ROI
- The Landlord doesn't pay the electric bill and isn't incentivized to install solar on rental properties
- Finding out grid upgrades are needed can increase project cost significantly
- More job training for installers is needed

Permitting & Inspections

- Every municipality has a different solar ordinance (permitting and inspection process), whereas neighboring states have a state-wide uniform code
 - But staff don't see the benefit of uniformity - given the infrequent use
- Inconsistent building codes (enforcement?)
- HOA rules can restrict residents from installing solar, and PA has no Solar Access Law
- Lack of municipal capacity to process applications
 - Expecting a surge in 2023 with IRA incentives kicking in
- Need more training of municipal staff on solar technology
 - Get to a place where there is a level of trust in certain brands and installers
- Many solar ordinances are not "solar-friendly". They are not written to encourage solar and reduce soft costs.
- How can solar installers know if a township is "solar friendly"? Look for solar equipment on municipal buildings and properties.
- PA building codes are not the latest version
- Stormwater management is a big consideration, but municipal project reviewers need to understand that ground mount systems are not impervious surfaces.
- Permitting costs in the region are well above (more than double) the Solsmart recommendation of \$450.
- SolarApp adoption is low because there are no requirements for structural approvals or wiring diagrams. Installers agree these are needed.

Interconnection, Zoning and Siting Guidelines

- Land availability (but see Ron's chart)
- Not In My Back Yard
- Politics
- Lack of education of customers & installers
- Solar is not addressed adequately in comp plans and zoning
- There are silos of responsibility within municipal, county and state governments that don't communicate or coordinate well.
- Developers should be "encouraged" to reserve space (land and rooftops) for solar. And plan for resilient power infrastructure.
- Streamlining the permitting process will reduce soft costs.
- Prioritize brownfield areas
- Encourage/require solar-ready new construction
- There is a lack of info on location of electrical infrastructure
 - PECO has a viability map showing voltages, but this is a moving target
 - red/green/yellow maps are not helpful enough
- Land availability is an issue for large scale projects
 - Suggest a discussion with municipal officials about priorities for solar development in Chester County
- Expect an increased volume of new projects in 2023. 2022 was already the highest year yet for project starts.
 - We'll need increased capacity to process applications in government and utility
- Smart meters are important, PA (and PECO) already require smart meters
- Communication between installers and the utility (PECO) is essential. Many meet with PECO Green Power on a weekly or bi-weekly basis.
 - PECO has a digital solar toolkit
- Some townships have old, even paper-based, forms and limited office hours that installers need to navigate.

- PECO has unique grounding requirements for some larger systems
- Concern - some “bad actors” give the solar industry a bad reputation for being untrustworthy or having misleading sales methods.
 - PECO doesn’t rate or audit installers or make recommendations.
 - Other states (NJ) have state-approved installers
- Need for further education for customers on what to expect on their bills

Clean Energy Subcommittee Initiatives Update - January 2023

- **Solar Stakeholders Roundtable - Dec 8, 2022**
 - **Robust Discussion with 10 Panelists/Stakeholders Representing:**
 - **PECO, Installers, Financers, Solar Industry, DVRPC, Municipal Gov, CCPC**
 - **About 50 attendees - at WC Borough Hall and online**
 - **New relationships started and continued growth of CES identity**

Clean Energy Subcommittee Initiatives Update - January 2023

- **Solar Stakeholders Roundtable - Barriers Identified ([full list](#))**
 - **Focus on Municipal Governments**
 - **Education and Analysis Benefits** Impact and benefits of ground mounted systems lacking. Analysis needed for potential rooftop, parking lot and open land properties.
 - **Advocate for Policy Changes** Need more advocates for updates in comp plans and zoning.
 - **Staff Training and Capacity Issues** - IRA expected to create surge in projects

Clean Energy Subcommittee

Initiatives Update - January 2023

- **Solar Stakeholders Roundtable - Barriers Identified**
 - **Focus on Public (potential solar customers)**
 - **Education** Public needs more education about ownership and financing. Customers need to print out on-line CONTRACTS and READ!
 - **Focus on Solar Installers**
 - **Supply Chain** PV Module shortages will continue as market grows.
 - **Training and education** - Shortage in local companies and skilled installers. Opportunity for County job growth
 - **Increasing Consumer Confidence** Local installers competing with on-line regional / national sales organizations. Industry wide need for ethical practices in sales, financing and project installation to avoid bad reputation of growing Solar + Storage industry.

Clean Energy Subcommittee Initiatives Update - January 2023

- **Solar Stakeholders Roundtable - Barriers Identified**
 - **Focus on PECO Communications with Installers and Customers**
 - PECO unable to complete interconnection applications due to shortage of staff, creating friction between customer and installer on installation start schedule and / or additional engineering study requirements.
 - PECO new on-line processes working for applications, additional customer notifications coming but not yet working to inform customer.
 - PECO meter installation delays frustrating installers and customers, delaying completed and working systems from being turned on.

Clean Energy Subcommittee

Initiatives Update - January 2023

- **Solar Stakeholders Roundtable - Next Steps**
 - **Condense and Prioritize Barriers List**
 - **Consider Actions We (EEAB) Can Recommend, e.g.**
 - **Develop A Solar Guidance Brochure With Guidance On:**
 - **priority siting (parking areas, flat roofs), financing, zoning, permitting templates, installer ratings sites, case studies (good & bad)**
 - **Application Processing Capacity- Suggest Alternatives**

Clean Energy Subcommittee Initiatives Update - January 2023

- **Cohort/Network of Climate Action Municipalities**
 - **Planning meeting soon**
 - **Platform for sharing best practices and learning about concerns**
 - **Potential to build on for more Sustainability opportunities**

Clean Energy Subcommittee Initiatives Update - January 2023

- **Training for Municipal Code Enforcement (IECC 2018)**
 - **SEI hosting Jan 24 - [register](#)**
 - **Challenge to get inspector's attention - severe staff shortages**
 - **Probably repeat later in 2023**

Clean Energy Subcommittee Initiatives Update - January 2023

- **Benchmarking**

- Tracking tools being developed by DEP, DVRPC, GBU
 - Possible shared regional energy managers funded by DEP
 - Probable outcome - Benchmarking online toolkit
- 

Clean Energy Subcommittee Initiatives Update - January 2023

- **Solar Adopters Conference**

- Targeting late spring
- Need to build contact list of: farms, corp campuses, industrial, schools, etc
- IRA incentives will be a key theme
- Would like to have action plan from Solar Stakeholders Roundtable

Clean Energy Subcommittee Initiatives Update - January 2023

- **Communicate Benefits of IRA - once in a lifetime opportunities**
 - **Encourage Chester County to revisit solar projects**
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Clean Energy Subcommittee

- **New Members?**

- **Currently meet 3rd Wed at 4:00 via Zoom**