

ANNUAL EAC REPORT TO READING CITY COUNCIL

Mr. President, Members of Council, Mayor Scott

My name is Cathy Curran Myers and I serve as Chair of the City's Environmental Advisory Council; EAC for short. The Ordinance that created our EAC obligates us to prepare an annual report for City Council on our "activities, goals and accomplishments." I am here this evening to deliver that report for 2015.

Over the course of the past year, the EAC has actively sought to carry out the five core duties prescribed in its By-Laws:

1. "To coordinate, at the request of Council, ongoing and to propose and promote new environmental protection and sustainability initiatives among residents, businesses, governmental and nongovernmental agencies, and educational organizations through education and outreach programs.
2. To advise and make recommendations to City Council, City Administration, and City Boards, authorities and commissions on policies and programs that infuse the work of City government with an operating philosophy based on environmental protection and sustainability.
3. To recommend plans and programs to the appropriate agencies for promotion and conservation of natural resources and for the protection and improvement of the quality of the environment within the City of Reading.
4. To make recommendations as to the possible use of open land areas within the City of Reading.
5. And to promote community environmental awareness programs."

In furtherance of these core duties, this past year the EAC embarked upon and completed a number of initiatives.

- Most significantly, after numerous public hearings and meetings with the Planning and Zoning officials, we recommended and City Council adopted two important new environmental ordinances. The Alternative Energy Ordinance will promote and regulate the use of geothermal, solar, wind, and hydro alternative energy systems within the City. The Riparian Buffer Ordinance will reduce stormwater impacts and protect water resources by protecting streambanks during development and redevelopment.
- We received extensive further comments on our proposed Steep Slope Ordinance and will continue to work with the Zoning and Planning offices to address those concerns in the coming year.

- We commented upon and recommended the adoption of two important resolutions of Council, a Zero Waste Resolution, calling for development of a new and comprehensive waste minimization plan for the City, and the Clean Power Plan Resolution, supporting adoption of a state implementation plan that assists municipalities to achieve energy efficiency and conservation goals to reduce climate impacts.
- We prepared formal comments on the updated Comprehensive Plan and participated in the public hearing on the Plan. We were gratified that most of our comments were incorporated into the final draft version of the Plan. The EAC welcomes the opportunity to provide comments and recommendations on the “greening” of our City, and hopes to be included in such planning efforts in the future.
- We continued education and outreach on the value of rain barrels and the City’s Rain Barrel Ordinance. Having held four informational workshops throughout the City in 2014, in 2015 we moved to hands-on sessions in collaboration with RACC, in which participants built their own rain barrels. We continued to partner with the County Conservation District and the City Recreation Commission in promoting rain barrel use as one means residents can employ to help reduce stormwater flooding and pollution, including BCTV programs and a webpage with FAQ in both English and Spanish.
- We continued to co-sponsor the BCTV program *Our City Our World*, and to appear on other environmental programs to support the City’s environmental initiatives, and educate the public on environmental issues.

This was my first year as Chair, and it seemed an opportune time to engage in strategic planning, to identify both short and longer term priorities and consider procedures to facilitate the fulfillment of our mandate to assist in the continual improvement of the environmental quality of the City of Reading.

- Our strategic planning efforts resulted in the identification of structural changes within the EAC, adding subcommittees and inviting knowledgeable members of the community to serve to supplement the efforts of the members of the EAC. Subcommittees will add resources and improve networking and collaboration within City government and in the larger community. We also welcomed the addition of Councilor John Slifko as a regular participant in the EAC.
- Priorities for the EAC going forward include a continued emphasis on managing stormwater through green infrastructure such as rain gardens and urban tree canopy, revitalizing and expanding the recycling programs within the City and County, and collaborating on integration of open and green spaces in connection with the City’s Complete Streets Initiative.

Our By-Laws allow for 7 members, and while we had six active members for most of 2015, we currently have one vacancy and are anticipating a second. Members during 2015 included:

1. David Beane, the former chair of the EAC, a local Reading-based attorney who restricts his practice to environmental, energy and sustainability law,
2. Andrew Molteni, a local community activist and Geologist,
3. Pier Ignozzi-Schaeffer, the Vice Chair, a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design or LEED Accredited Professional,
4. Barbara Coyle, the owner of MJ Reider labs,
5. Callie White, a Professional Geologist with Liberty Environmental, and me, a member of the faculty and coordinator of the Masters in Leadership for Sustainable Communities at Alvernia University, and former Deputy Secretary of PA DEP for Water Management.

Callie White has relocated to the Lancaster area, and we will regretfully be accepting Pier Ignozzi-Shaffer's resignation, as she retires to Florida.

We continue to actively recruit new members and have applications pending. However, if you know of any constituents who are credentialed in the fields of environmental science or sustainability, we would certainly appreciate your help in encouraging them to consider volunteering their time to serve as a member of the EAC, or as a participant on a one of our subcommittees.

In addition to the expertise of our members, we are privileged to have the regular support and expertise of two extraordinary City employees, Michelle Katzenmoyer, Deputy City Clerk, and Deborah Hoag, City Public Works Utilities Division Manager and Environmentalist. Shelly Katzenmoyer, although not a member, serves as our Secretary and has been invaluable on Sub-Committees that are working on ordinance reviews. Shelly's working knowledge of City government, talent with recordkeeping, and congeniality are responsible for much of the success the EAC has enjoyed this year.

Deb Hoag, as the City's Environmentalist, shares her knowledge of environmental compliance, and of the myriad initiatives affecting environmental quality and sustainability in the City. Without the technical expertise Deb brings to the table as the City's Environmentalist, your EAC would find it extremely difficult to discharge its duties. Her energy and "can-do" attitude makes many things possible that would otherwise get bogged down. We are very grateful for the sharing of their talents with us.

In addition to being on the look-out for new EAC members, City Council can also assist us by identifying environmental concerns and issues within your individual districts that

might warrant further study. We want to address issues of local concern, and by referring issues to us for study and recommendation, you help us to better discharge our core functions.

Thank you for this opportunity to present our Annual Report for 2015.

Are there any comments or questions?