

**Plainfield Township
Environmental Advisory Council Meeting
October 24, 2016**

The special meeting of the Plainfield Township Environmental Advisory Council was scheduled for Monday, October 24, 2016, at 7:00 pm at the Plainfield Township Municipal Building, 6292 Sullivan Trail, and Nazareth, PA 18064.

Those in attendance were:

Terry Kleintop, EAC Chairman	Robert Cornman – Vice Chairman Absent
Robin Dingle – EAC Member Absent	Don Moore – EAC Member
Bruce Rabenold – EAC Member	Robert Simpson – EAC Member Arrived 7:06pm
Jane Mellert, EAC Secretary and Member	Tom Petrucci – Plainfield Twp. Manager

Also in attendance – There were no other attendees

EAC Chairman Terry Kleintop called the meeting to order at 7:03 pm.

The pledge of allegiance was performed.

MINUTES

The October 3, 2016 minutes will be approved at the November EAC meeting.

OLD BUSINESS

Northampton County Farmland Preservation Program

Terry Kleintop voiced his concern regarding the amount of funding Northampton County will put forward toward Farmland Preservation for 2017. The County proposed budget only shows a \$500,000 contribution from the County and does not have any new money for 2017 toward the Farmland Preservation Partnership Program. He noted that the Townships that collect Earned Income Tax toward preservation need to go together in order to address the County on this issue. He is concerned that the municipalities that collect EIT will end up helping to fund preservation in municipalities that do not collect EIT.

During John Stoffa’s term as the Northampton County Executive, Northampton County residents were told that a ½ mill of real estate tax increase would fund Open Space Preservation programs. This practice was instituted instead of putting bonding in place to fund the program. The practice of reserving the ½ mill for Open Space preservation has been discontinued by the current County Administration.

Tom Petrucci had a copy of the proposed 2017 Northampton County Budget which confirmed that only \$500,000 is budgeted toward preservation. At this point the Township has not received a letter requesting Plainfield Township to notify the County about funds that will be pledged for matching from the Pennsylvania State Farmland Preservation Funding program.

Individual EAC members will be asking Northampton County Council about the funding for 2017. It was noted that the lack of funding toward the partnership program, should be brought to

the Board of Supervisors attention. The Board can then vote on whether to pursue this matter with Northampton County.

Northampton County Farmland Preservation – County/Municipal Partnership Program

- **Update on the 2015 applicants**
 - Greggo #1, #2 and #3, are moving forward with preservation. The State approved the money for the preservation.
 - Monocacy Heights on Jones Hill is moving forward, but has not gone to the State yet for approval.
 - Lock closed last week

- **Update on the 2016 applicants**
 - Lock located in Lower Mt. Bethel and Plainfield Township is moving forward
 - Witmer is moving forward

Tom Petrucci will calculate the number of acres preserved with the County money, State money and Municipal EIT money.

Terry Kleintop and Bob Simpson want to show the value of resale of preserved farmland. In Plainfield Township the preserved value per acre is approximately \$4,500 per acre.

Plainfield Township Earned Income Tax Collection for Open Space Study

The following reports were submitted:

- Tom Petrucci handed out an Agricultural (Act 149) and Natural Features Easement map and spreadsheet titled Real Estate Tax Assessments Preserved Farmland Tracts and Exclusion Areas Preserved in 1998 or later for review.
- Terry Kleintop handed out the Average Pen Argyl Area School District Enrollment for 1999 through 2016 actuals and 2017 through 2019 projected
The information includes:
 - Cost per student
 - Number of cyber school students for 2015/2016
 - Number of home school students for 2015/2016
- Don Moore lead a review on a map which color codes the farmland areas preserved, farmland in the process of being preserved and potential available land for Open Space and Farmland preservation.

The presentation to the Board will include a review of a map of Plainfield Township. The map will be enlarged for the presentation. The presentation will include:

- Current Agricultural Easements
- Prospective Agricultural Easements
- Agricultural Easements in Progress
- List of the acreage that has potential for preservation
- List of the 34 parcels preserved from 1989-2006
- List of the parcels (30) preserved from 2007-2016
- The farmland preservation program has been successful and will continue to be successful.
- A list indicating the money utilized by the State, County and Plainfield Township toward the preservation of farmland.
- List of how Act 4, 319 and 515 works

- A list indicating the tax revenue with Act 4 with the excluded area taxed at the regular millage rate.
- Time phasing of the preservation program with approximate number of acres to be preserved over the course of several years and the dollars needed for the preservation program will also be included.

Information can be pulled from the Plainfield Township, Wind Gap and Pen Argyl, Joint Comprehensive Plan.

It was noted that Maria Bentzoni can only confirm at this time that there are two Counties that excluded the homestead under Act 4. The Counties are Northampton and Lehigh.

Plainfield Township needs to correct the zoning and SALDO regulations to match the intent of the preservation program.

The question of whether the Township, Northampton County and the Pen Argyl Area School District would all need to be in agreement if the municipality wanted to discontinue Act#4 still needs legal confirmation.

The question of what happens if the Township reduces the tax millage rate needs additional legal clarification. We need to know if the preserved parcels remain at a higher frozen millage rate if taxes are reduced.

State Representative Marcia Hahn is going to get a legal opinion on how the Act #4 law should be interpreted.

Northampton County Farmland Administrator, Maria Bentzoni, will attend a meeting at the State in order to confirm the information regarding the Counties that have adopted Act#4. This information will be useful.

James W. Hunter Jr. the Director of Fiscal Affairs at Northampton County is reviewing the assessments and tax bills of the farm landowners that have questions. He is conducting a thorough review of the assessments and reviewing for compliance with Act 515, 319 and Act 4.

Cellular Tower Regulations

Tom Peturcci noted that the draft ordinance will be reviewed by the Board of Supervisors on October 27, 2016 at the Board meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

None

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Regional EAC Meeting - Tom Petrucci previously approved the use of the meeting room for a Regional EAC Meeting which will be held on November 15, 2016 from 6 to 8 pm by the Appalachian Trail Conservancy and Audubon Pennsylvania. Brooks Mountcastle Environmental Planner at the Appalachian Trail Conservancy at the Mid-Atlantic Regional Office will host the meeting. The agenda will include the status of EAC's and the EAC program

Creating Climate Stability in the Lehigh Valley and Beyond – 7pm to 8:30 pm on Wednesday, October 26, 2016 at the Northampton County Community College Fowler Center in Room 605. There will be a screening of a short film titled Facing the Surge and community conversation on Local and National Solutions. **Becky Bradley**, Lehigh Valley Planning Commission, will provide an overview of the Lehigh Valley Climate & Energy Plan, and discuss local efforts on climate mitigation and adaptation. **Randy Gyory**, Citizens' Climate Lobby, will provide an overview and outlook for federal action on climate stability, and discuss the role that community members can play in creating a healthy future.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

MEETING ADJOURNMENT

Motion - Meeting Adjournment – A motion was made by Don Moore and seconded by Bruce Rabenold to adjourn the meeting at 10:15 pm. **Vote: 5 Yes**

Respectfully Submitted,

Jane Mellert, Secretary
Plainfield Township EAC

1st draft October 24, 2016