

**Plainfield Township
Environmental Advisory Council Meeting
December 5, 2016**

The Plainfield Township Environmental Advisory Council was held on Monday, December 5, 2016, at 7:00 pm at the Plainfield Township Municipal Building, 6292 Sullivan Trail, Nazareth, PA 18064.

Those in attendance were:

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

Also in attendance –

EAC Chairman Terry Kleintop called the meeting to order at 7:06 pm.

The pledge of allegiance was performed.

MINUTES

Motion – 2016 Minutes - A motion was made by Bob Simpson and seconded by Bob Cornman to approve the November 22, 2016 minutes. **Vote: 7 Yes**

OLD BUSINESS

PA DEP Growing Greener Plus Grant Update – Little Bushkill Creek

Testing was done on in Wind Gap on Wednesday of last week and on Thursday Hanover did source tracking

Tom Petrucci noted that the results from testing last week are starting to come in. There were high results of contaminants. Terry noted the Borough Authority is interested in reviewing the test results. Tom noted the time table for the study was pushed back due to the delay in testing the water. The delay is due to low water levels in the streams.

Northampton County Farmland Preservation – County/Municipal Partnership Program

At the November 2016 Board meeting the Plainfield Township Supervisors approved a letter to Maria Bentzoni the Farmland Preservation Administrator at Northampton County. The letter explained that Plainfield Township would move forward with committing \$250,000 of Earned Income Tax funds forward for the 2017 PA State match program. The funding is contingent upon the County agreeing that the full match amount received is allocated to the Township.

Tom Petrucci received a response letter from Maria Bentzoni on December 2, 2016. He spoke with Maria at length on Friday and she said it isn't possible to know what the Township match amount will be. She cannot promise the full match amount back to the Township. At this point the offer was the 25% or approximately \$62,500. The Township may not receive any funds back if the County would

need the money in order to preserve more farms. Mara noted that she has to be careful that she will not run out of County funds for the preservation process. The positive about moving money forward is that the Township would still be able to preserve farms in the Township that are not eligible with the State ranking regulations. The Township will then have the opportunity to preserve farms with the County that do not rank as high. It appears now that Maria is backing away from even guaranteeing the 25% State match. Once the Township commits funds for matching the municipality loses the ability to put the same money forward again in the future. There is a line item in Maria's budget to cover incidental costs.

EAC Members discussed the following question:

If Moore Township, UMBT and Plainfield Township do not put money forward for the County/Municipal program will the County have a program? The answer is yes, but there will not be as much money for preservation. Both Upper Mount Bethel Township and Moore Township meet this week. The Plainfield Township Board of Supervisors will meet next week.

It was noted that when a farm is preserved in Bushkill Township the acreage cannot be claimed by the County due to Bushkill Township maintaining a Township administered preservation program.

There is a deadline of January 15, 2017 for Plainfield Township, Upper Mount Bethel and Moore Township to get back to Maria Bentzoni regarding commitment of funds for State matching.

Terry Kleintop provided a list of the Northampton County Open Space Committee Members, Northampton County Council, and the Northampton County Farmland Preservation Board of Directors. He reviewed the list with the EAC. It was noted that several of the Farmland Preservation Board Members have collection of Earned Income Tax for Open Space in their municipalities to fund preservation programs. The members should understand how the program works and why Plainfield Township has a concern over how the County/Municipal Partnership Program funding is being administered.

It is important at this point that the three municipalities that the County contacted about committing funds for the State match program put forward funds with the same funding match request. Example put forward \$250,000 with the restriction that the municipality will get 100% of the match amount from the State.

Terry Kleintop wants to have the Board put forth the same commitment as per the November letter to the Northampton County Farmland Preservation Board. That commitment is to put forth \$250,000 for match with the State with the requirement that we receive 100% of the State match. He realizes that Maria has turned that down in the December 2, 2016 letter.

Jane Mellert noted it is not the spirit or original intent of the program to take the earned income tax funds collected for open space from one municipality and utilize the State match from the funds toward preserving land in other Townships. If the County/Municipal Partnership Program regulations do not clarify how the State match is allocated and utilized then the regulations need to be altered. The municipalities are not in favor of providing the funding for the municipalities that do not collect additional Earned Income Tax Funds toward Open Space Preservation from their residents.

It was suggested that the County should have liaisons from each of the municipalities that collect EIT for Open Space Preservation.

County/Municipal Partnership Program Fund - Commitment Recommendation to the Board of Supervisors

Motion – Recommendation Letter to the Board of Supervisors - A motion was made by Bob Cornman and seconded by Bob Simpson to recommend to the Board of Supervisors to put forth \$250,000 to Northampton County for matching with the State with the requirement that Plainfield Township will get the full (100% of the allocation) State match. **Vote: 7 Yes**

Prior to the vote being taken, Don Moore asked if the letter should include additional information regarding liaisons, support of the program, the regulations being altered, etc. It was determined that should not be included at this time.

Northampton County Farmland Preservation Application Process

Tom Petrucci sent out 26 letters to landowners in Plainfield Township that have land with the potential for preserving and are not currently in the Ag Security District. It was noted that Northampton County sends out a letter regarding the application process for preservation, but only sends to landowners within the Ag Security District.

The Northampton County Farmland Preservation Update article was handed out. The article notes that Northampton County now has 167 farms preserved for a total acreage of 14,620.

Plainfield Township Earned Income Tax Collection for Open Space Study

The following reports were submitted:

- Don Moore revised the Plainfield Township Agricultural and Natural Features Easement map. The map now includes the following:

- Agricultural Easement approximate acres preserved
- Prospective Agricultural Easement approximate acres
- Agricultural Easement in Progress approximate acres
- Prospective Natural Features Easement approximate acres

Tom Petrucci placed the map in the Drop Box and made copies for review. Bob Simpson noted that some of the areas on the map may need to be altered. A concern has been voiced from Board members regarding the amount of land area shown on the map for possible preservation. It was noted that the map will be a working document. Tom noted the map is a document to show the Board what land is available for potential preservation. Areas near the sewer franchise areas have more potential for development.

Don Moore and Terry Kleintop will revise the map to show properties in the Agricultural Security Area.

- Terry Kleintop spoke again to Walter Schlegel at the PAASD. Walter will try to give a five year projection on student enrollment.

Grants

Tom Petrucci looked into low volume road grants for Grand Central Road Bridge and Books Hill Road. He had to conduct traffic studies in order to see if the roads will qualify for the grants.

Plainfield Township Timber Harvest Ordinance

Robin Dingle would like to revisit the ordinance. A property owner near her farm cut down trees on a slope and the trees were falling into the stream. Hundreds of trees were taken down over the course of several months. The property owner took down over 300 trees without needing a permit.

Tom Petrucci noted a letter from the Attorney General was received by the Township. Timber harvest regulations were challenged in Court. The Township Ordinance needs to be revisited and revised. The tree harvesting is allowed from a legal stand point because it falls under the Agricultural Act. If the tree harvesting is done in a wetland then there are regulations.

2017 EAC Calendar

The following 2017 EAC meeting dates need to be changed January 2nd, July 3rd and September 4th. The dates were moved to the following:

- January 9 replaces January 2
- January 24 Special Meeting
- February 22 Special Meeting
- July 10 replaces July 3
- September 11 replaces September 4

Act 4 Millage Freeze

Tom Petrucci reported that only Northampton County made the decision to pull out the building envelope from the easement purchase area. The decision predates Act 4. The excluded area allows for a second residential structure, and allows for more than one principal business use. With the way Act 4 is written you have the option to preserve the entire land area, but the way Northampton County does it does not allow for the land area in the building envelope to be preserved.

Act 4 – All three taxing districts must adopt (Municipal, County and School District) for the millage freeze to take effect.

Tom Petrucci is working on spreadsheets to show the difference in the effects of Act 319, 515 and Act 4.

Tom Petrucci reported that Jim Hunter is still in the process of evaluating Northampton County assessments of the farm owners that were present at Marcia Hahn's meeting. The properties are being gone over farm by farm.

Farmland Preservation Applicant Update

- **Update on the 2015 applicants**
 - Greggo #1, #2 and #3, is in the process to finalize
 - Monocacy Heights on Jones Hill should close this year
- **Update on the 2016 applicants**
 - Lock located in Lower Mt. Bethel and Plainfield Township is moving forward.
 - Witmer has withdrawn

NEW BUSINESS

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

MEETING ADJOURNMENT

Motion - Meeting Adjournment – A motion was made by Bob Cornman and seconded by Bruce Rabenold to adjourn the meeting at 10:02 pm. **Vote 7 Yes**

Respectfully Submitted,

Jane Mellert, Secretary
Plainfield Township EAC