

**Plainfield Township
Environmental Advisory Council Meeting
May 9, 2016**

The regular monthly meeting of the Plainfield Township Environmental Advisory Council was held on Monday, May 9, 2016 at 7:00 pm at the Plainfield Township Municipal Building, 6292 Sullivan Trail, Nazareth, PA 18064. The meeting was originally scheduled for May 2, 2016.

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 – Joyce Lambert, Matt Glennon, and Paul Levits

Terry Kleintop called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm.

The pledge of allegiance was not performed.

MINUTES

Chairman Terry Kleintop asked for a motion to approve the April 4, and April 27, 2016 minutes.

Motion-April 4, and 27, 2016 Minutes – A motion was made by Bob Simpson and seconded by Bob Cornman to approve the April 4 and April 27, 2016 minutes. The motion carried. **Vote: 7 Yes.**

OLD BUSINESS

2014 PA DEP Growing Greener Plus Grant Update – Little Bushkill Creek

➤ **RFP for the Little Bushkill Watershed Management Plan**

- The EAC met on April 27, 2016 in order to review the six (6) submittals for the RFP for the Little Bushkill Watershed Management Plan as follows:
 - Advantage Engineers LLC - \$86,250.95 Option 1 \$183,450.95 Option 2 \$284,250.95
 - Enercon - \$84,649.55
 - Hanover Engineering Associates - \$46,763.00
 - JHA Companies - \$44,900.00
 - Juniata Geosciences, LLC - \$81,879.00 - \$148,180.15
 - Terraphase Engineering Inc. - \$132,949.00 - \$199,799.00
- Township Manager Tom Petrucci compiled a detailed comparison chart of the submittals. The chart was reviewed on April 27th. Tom broke out project deliverables, tasks, etc. The chart appears as if some firms provided more but that is not the case. Tom Petrucci

reviewed all sections of the comparison chart to make sure that the RFP responses were compared apples to apples.

- The firms listed under the recommendation section are as follows: Advantage Engineers, LLC, Enercon, Hanover Engineering Associates, Inc., and Juniata Geosciences, LLC. **The lowest cost proposal is Hanover Engineering Associates at \$46,763.00.**
- Tom Petrucci spoke to a representative from Hanover Engineering and he thought everything was included. Hanover included everything in Task 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. I Hanover is approved for the project, Jason Smith, PWS Senior Scientist at Hanover Engineering Associates would be the main contact.
- Don Moore asked the differences between the charts on page 2 and 3 and requested clarification on the GGG Watershed Protection Grant Consultant Allocation chart and the GGG Watershed Protection Grant FFF Consultant Allocations
- It was noted that \$103,212 is available from the State. Robin Dingle asked for the breakdown for the contract, restoration work, volunteer time, etc. Tom Petrucci will calculate the amounts. Tom noted that some of the money within the grant will need to be shifted around from sampling to restoration, etc.
- Terry Kleintop asked if any of the EAC members were concerned that Hanover Engineering was the lowest submittal that met the requirements. The RFP went out on an email blast to over 120 firms and only six firms' submitted proposals.
- The proposals from the firms applying range from \$44,900 to 132,949.
- Terry Kleintop wanted to know if the Township is willing to spend the entire grant. Tom Petrucci does not know of any reason that the Township would not be willing to spend the full amount of the grant.
- Hanover Engineering costed out the project with volunteers and sub-contractors doing some of the cattle crossing and sampling work. The Township can directly hire the subs in order to save money on the project. Tom is willing to manage the sub-contractors.
- Tom Petrucci asked Jason Smith from Hanover Engineering to clarify Task 2-Water Sampling listed in the proposal. Some of the EAC members were concerned that the \$15,391.00 was low. Robin Dingle noted that we may see Hanover submitting change orders. Bob Simpson noted that this should be clarified prior to approving a contract.
- Robin Dingle noted that in order to meet the DEP Growing Greener Grant requirements the State will want to see some of the restoration work being done this year. The work in the study should not only be focused on sampling.
- Bob Cornman noted that Robin (Dingle) is a professional in this field and asked if Robin is comfortable with Hanover being approved for the contract. Robin Dingle noted that Jason Smith is knowledgeable, has experience, and a passion for this type of work.
- Robin Dingle noted that the firm hired should also be an environmental consultant to the Township. If there other sampling needs to be done, the Township would have the ability to utilize the firm. This allows an open door with flexibility. It was noted that there should be a meeting with Hanover prior to approval.

The motion should be to approve Hanover Engineering with the requirements that their firm will made aware that the project schedule and sampling requirements may be amended. Tom noted that Solicitor Backenstoe wanted the contract to have an appendix attached with the proposal amounts noted. Robin noted that if the Township wants to do additional outfall sampling etc. task flexibility is needed and the contract needs to allow for flexibility.

Motion - Little Bushkill Watershed Management Plan Environmental Consultant - A motion was made by Bob Simpson and seconded Bob Cornman to recommend approval to hire Hanover Engineering Associates as the Environmental Consultant for the 2014 DEP Growing Greener Plus Grant work and for additional Environmental Consultant work as necessary with a pre contract meeting to be held prior to contract approval. The motion carried. **Vote: 7 Yes**

Robin Dingle is available to meet with Tom Petrucci and Hanover Engineering representatives in the next week.

The recommendation will be sent to the Board of Supervisors for their review and approval at the May 11, 2016 Board meeting.

2015 and 2016 Northampton County Farmland Preservation Applicants

Maria Bentzoni emailed a progress update for the 2015 farmland preservation applicants and the 2016 applicant ranking sheet. The documents were attached to the May 9, 2016 EAC Agenda.

2015 - Terry Kleintop noted that not all of the 2015 farms are listed on the information from Maria Bentzoni. Jane Mellert will contact Maria get the additional information.

2016 – There were 20 applicants to the Northampton County Farmland Preservation program. The 2016 Summary of Farmland Preservation Ranking System lists 13 eligible applicants. There are 7 applications that have soils that do not qualify under the preservation regulations. The Plainfield Township applicants ranked as follows:

- #2 Witmer, Chris A. and Linda L. with 39.06 acres
- #6 Fuentes, Lazaro and Wendy with 72 acres
- #11 Lock, Johnathan with 28 acres

Joyce Lambert asked if some of the farms that get preserved have steep slopes, underground streams or a large portion of wooded acreage. She also inquired whether the land is developable. It was noted that the ranking system has set guidelines set by the State. The requirements determine whether the land is eligible for preservation.

Matt Glennon noted that when the assessments are done for the appraisals the results are comparative to the quality of the land.

Earned Income Tax Fund Collection for Open Space Study

- An article in the May 4, 2016 edition of the Morning Call titled “Poll: Most Lehigh Valley voters would support tax hike to preserve farmland” was emailed to the EAC members. The survey was conducted by the Muhlenberg College Institute of Public Opinion and funded by Renew Lehigh Valley a nonprofit that promotes smart growth and sustainability.
- The EAC discussed ways to conduct the study.
- **Goal – Step 1** - Tom Petrucci will establish a drop box account on the computer for the project. The drop box will have separate folders. Tom will review four or five properties and do a comparison. The EAC members can go into the folders and add their comments and ideas. Tom’s original document will be preserved. A list of the farms preserved each year and the report “2013 Economics of Farmland Preservation in Plainfield Township” that was compiled by Andrew O’Brien will be included in the drop box files.

- Bruce Rabenold suggested determining a timeline for the continuation of the EIT. The study should help to determine if it will be for 2 years, 3 years or longer. If the timeline is short then we may want to have a conservative approach of what parcels are approved for preservation.
- Bob Cornman noted that there will probably be a sunset for the program. It may be 2 year 3years whatever it may be is to be determined. If the County closes their farmland preservation program that will be a factor in the length of time the Township will affect the Township timeline.
- Matt Glennon noted even without Northampton County funding new money into the program, there will still be funding from roll back taxes, grants, and the Chrin development. The program will not totally close.
- Terry Kleintop noted that the County will probably only be able to preserve 250 acres a year. The rest of the land will need to be preserved by the municipalities. It was suggested that the County will not zero out the Farmland Preservation funding. Terry noted that if the County continues funding then the Township EIT funds for Open Space could last five years. If the County does not continue with funding then the Township will need to contribute more and the Open Space funds will be depleted sooner.
- Robin Dingle noted we have been given an assignment and need to set up the process. Bob Simpson wants an outline and structure in order to conduct the study. We need to take it and put numbers to it.
- Matt Glennon noted there is low impact on the tax base from Farmland preservation and preservation does not harm future labor growth. He did a spread sheet based on numbers without picking someone's individual farm. The impact per year to the real estate taxes from the Act 4 reduction is approximately \$2,033. The real tax break occurs under the Clean and Green program. The impact of preservation is not as great to the real estate taxes due to the County breaking out the homestead. The homestead is then taxed at the regular rate. The savings are not that great with the tax freeze.
- Jane Mellert noted when a farm is preserved the home and building areas area excluded from the piece that is preserved. The excluded area is taxed at the regular real estate tax rate.
- Bruce asked how natural features should be addressed. He noted that in the RFP for the Little Bushkill Creek there was a section for natural features. Natural features should be utilized in this study.
- Terry suggested compiling a survey of the landowners that already preserved and a survey of residents regarding whether they want to preserve.
- It was noted that the Township, County and School District can get rid of the tax break under Act 4.
- Additional suggestions are to conduct a public opinion survey, compile a list of the quantity and quality of the land that is left for preservation, and find out the opinion of regarding farmland preservation from the Pen Argyl Area School District.
- Jane Mellert noted that she would like to conduct interviews with landowners that have preserved and compile a list of their comments.

GIS

The purchase of a computer in order to use with a GIS program was discussed. The unit will need to have the proper memory storage for the program.

Ordinance #357 Tree Protection and Timber Harvest Management and Ordinance #342 Maintenance and Preservation of Riparian Buffers and Open Space

- The Ordinances will be reviewed at a future meeting.
- The revisions for the draft ordinance #357 were emailed to the EAC members for review at the April 4, 2016 meeting.

Robin Dingle requested an email on the current changes to the two ordinances.

(Note on the agenda or in an email when the EAC members are to bring copies to the meeting and what version is being utilized)

NEW BUSINESS

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

MEETING ADJOURNMENT

Motion for Meeting Adjournment – A motion was made by Robin Dingle and seconded by Bob Cornman to adjourn the meeting at 9:05 pm. **Vote 7-0**

Respectfully Submitted,

Jane Mellert, Secretary
Plainfield Township EAC