

Annual Report of the Radnor Township Environmental Advisory Council (EAC) January Through December, 2024

During 2024, the Council met each month in the Radnorshire Room of the Township Municipal Building.

The Council members were:

- Margaret Reinhart, Chairperson, resigned May 2024
- Dan Burnham, starting as Chairperson June 2024
- Lisa Hallowell
- Carol Jane
- Eugenia Warnock
- Donnelle Jageman
- Ray Adams
- Ema Torres Navas, Student Ambassador, resigned May 2024
- Hayden Effron, Student Ambassador, appointed September 2024
- Commissioner Cathy Agnew, Board of Commissioners Liaison

Brief History and Remit of the EAC

Established in 1997 as the Environmental Advisory Committee and a subcommittee of the Board of Health, the EAC was renamed to the Environmental Advisory Council (EAC) and restructured into a stand-alone advisory council by the Board of Commissioners on March 10, 2008.

The Environmental Advisory Council serves as a *clearinghouse for issues of an environmental nature*. The EAC *recommends plans and programs to the appropriate Township agencies for identification and resolution of environmental problems*.

The EAC is also charged with the task of *environmental education and awareness for the community*. The EAC sees one of its major roles as "educator" to provide the citizens with useful information that will help to maintain and improve the environment in which we all live. The council also *encourages voluntary programs through community participation*.

What was accomplished in 2024

The EAC addressed environmental issues in the Township in four major areas: energy conservation and renewable energy, proper recycling and reducing household waste, sustainable landscaping, and general protection of the natural environment.

What the EAC accomplished in these areas is organized in the following sections by the specific duties italicized above.

Clearinghouse for issues of an environmental nature

Resident Notification of Land Development

In August, the EAC became aware of a resident's concerns regarding the environmental impact of new housing development in their neighborhood. After sharing with the resident an outline of the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SALDO) process provided by Stephen Norcini, Township Engineer, the EAC met with Mr. Norcini and Kevin Kochanski, Director of Community

Development, to better understand when and how residents are notified of pending land development in their area. A summary of the meeting on the SALDO process was shared with the resident.

Aronimink Golf Club Proposal

In November, the EAC was notified by the Vice Chairperson of Newtown Township EAC that Aronimink Golf Club proposed to clear cut and grub over 9 acres of mature forest for a temporary PGA tournament broadcast center in 2026. Serious environmental degradation would result not only from the loss of mature forest but also from erosion and risk of flooding and sedimentation in Darby Creek which flows into Township land in Skunk Hollow. This concern was also conveyed to the EAC by Roberta Winters, the former President of the Radnor League of Women Voters. In response, the EAC notified the Board of Commissioners of the potential risks to Darby Creek posed by the Aronimink proposal.

Maintenance of Township Rain Gardens

In November, several residents conveyed their frustration to the EAC concerning the filling in of a rain garden at Clem Macrone Park. Tammy Cohen, Director of Parks and Recreation explained that it was filled in because it had deteriorated due to lack of maintenance. She will approach contractors in the spring to restore the 4 rain gardens at Clem Macrone Park as well as 3 rain gardens at the Township building. A Zoom call will also be scheduled between the EAC, Parks and Recreation, and Radnor Conservancy to discuss first steps in setting up a long term maintenance plan. Tammy also expressed the need for a paid sustainability officer who could coordinate and facilitate discussion of issues and implementation of proposals concerning environmental matters.

Recommend plans and programs to the appropriate Township agencies for identification and resolution of environmental problems

Green Team and EAC Recommendations for the Township Comprehensive Plan

On May 2, Dan Burnham and Mark Muller, both of the Radnor Township Green Team, met with Adam Tecza, Urban Designer at FHI Studio to present recommendations for the 2035 Radnor Township Comprehensive Plan, based on the 2021 Renewable Energy and Conservation Plan prepared by Practical Energy Solutions. The focus of their recommendations concerned reduced carbon emissions through energy conservation and electrification of heating systems and adoption of renewable energy.

Implementation of Recommendations in the Township Renewable Energy and Conservation Plan

During the year, the EAC was updated on upgrades to energy systems in Township buildings that were recommended in the Renewable Energy and Conservation Plan. These upgrades included roof replacement and plans to install solar panels, replacement of HVAC systems with more efficient units, installation of interior LED lighting and lighting controls, and installation of electric vehicle (EV) charging stations. In this connection, the EAC commends the Township for being awarded grants to support these upgrades, including a DEP MORE grant in the amount of \$50,000 for a MORE Loan Interest Rate Buy-down for the Public Works Facility roof and installation of a photovoltaic solar array, and a \$500,000 PA Local Share Account – Statewide grant for installation of solar panels at the Township Building.

In addition, funding from a Local Share Account - Statewide Program grant supported the purchase of two F-150 Lightning Special Service Vehicles and a Chevrolet Blazer EV for the Police Department, and PECO rebates supported the installation of LED lights in 1,200 Township streetlights with a 50-75% reduction in energy use.

Lastly, the Township is participating in DVRPC's benchmarking program which assists municipalities with establishing an energy benchmarking ordinance for certain buildings (commercial, institutional, multi-family, etc) within their jurisdiction.

Evaluation of a Community Choice Aggregation Contract

The EAC is also following developments after a petition was filed with the PUC last summer by local municipalities for an opt-out Community Choice Aggregation contract (Boroughs of Carlisle, Hatboro, Lansdowne, Media, Narberth, State College and Swarthmore). As proposed in the Petition, the municipalities could procure electrical power on behalf of their residents, prioritizing renewable and carbon-free sources.

Evaluation of a Gas Leaf Blower Ordinance

The EAC is evaluating a municipal or regional ordinance that would require the phasing out of gas leaf blowers (GLBs) by residential, municipal, institutional, and commercial sectors. The high decibel level and air pollution caused by GLBs are widely recognized as being severely deleterious to human health and the environment. As a first step, the EAC would meet with stakeholders in each sector to hear their concerns regarding a GLB phase-out. The first stakeholder to consider is the Department of Public Works, as its endorsement of a phase-out is considered to be crucial to garnering its acceptance by other township sectors. A meeting of the EAC with DPW will be scheduled in January 2025. As of November, three commissioners are in favor of a GLB phaseout in the Township. Cathy Agnew recommended that a survey of residents be conducted as a next step. The EAC is also attending meetings organized by PennEnvironment with members of EACs in neighboring municipalities to share ideas and progress in advancing a GLB ban.

Township Support of Tighter Emission Standards for Heavy-duty Vehicles

In response to an EAC request, the Board of Commissioners approved in April the signing of the Climate Mayors letter to the President Biden supporting the tightening of EPA Greenhouse Gas Emissions Standards for Heavy-Duty Vehicles.

Township Food Waste Composting Program

In support of the EAC's interest in a Township-wide food waste collection and composting program, the Township applied to the USDA Compost and Food Waste Reduction Program. Unfortunately, in December, it was learned the Township was not selected for funding. However, that month, Delaware County submitted an application to the US Environmental Protection Agency for funding to create a County Composting Facility, Permanent Household Hazardous Waste Collection Building, and Recycling Hub.

Central Glass Collection and Recycling

The EAC in the spring evaluated Pennsylvania Resource Council's Traveling Glass Bin Program whereby glass is recycled via a 'traveling glass bin'. However, the EAC decided not to progress further with this program, as it was learned that the proceeds from the collected glass in Haverford Township were just enough to pay for the bin rental fees. Also, Republic Services already recycles glass and the 'residue rate' is low (11-13%).

Environmental education and awareness for the community

Public Announcements

The EAC shared at its monthly meetings announcements of public events concerning the environment. Examples include events promoted by Radnor Conservancy, Birdtown PA, The League of Women Voters, and the Township's Shade Tree Commission, The Radnor High School Career Workshop, Eco

Camp hosted by the Willistown Conservation Trust and Delaware County 4-H, The Township's Anything with a Plug Recycling Day and Paper Shredding Event, Radnor Memorial Library's no-buy, clothing swap, the Delaware County Household Hazardous Waste Collection Event, and Plastics Free July.

Wayne Business Association Fall Festival

In September, the EAC again had a table at the annual Wayne Business Association Fall Festival. The EAC's various environmental programs and information leaflets were displayed.

The EAC Lecture Series

The EAC Lecture Series, established by Eugenia Warnock, included several public lectures at the Township Building in 2024:

- 'Low-Waste Lifestyle' by owners of SHIFT in Narberth.
- 'Wild Philly: The Extraordinary Nature of Our Backyard' by Michael Weilbacher
- 'How to Recycle in Radnor' by Republic Services
- 'Microplastics: the Invisible Pollutant' by Michael Weilbacher
- 'A Guide to Solarize' by Solarize DelCo
- 'Installing a Native Plant Garden' by Jenkins Arboretum and Gardens

Several lectures were scheduled for 2025:

- 'Good Things Come In Trees: The Benefits of a Neighborhood Canopy' Villanova Professor of Environmental Science Jen Santoro, March 19, 2025, 7 PM
- 'Native Plants and Meadows: Creating Habitat at Home', Mike Cranney, Willistown Conservation Trust Director of Stewardship, March 25, 2025, 6 PM
- 'Climate Change in the Delaware Valley' Michael Weilbacher, April 29, 2025, 6 PM

Planned 2025 lectures include:

- Drinking Water Treatment and Quality. Aqua PA, Dave Rustay, Director of Water Quality and Environmental Compliance
- The Delaware County Sustainability Plan. Rebecca Yurkovich, Delaware County Office of Sustainability
- Practical Energy Solutions and progress in municipal building energy upgrades

Also for 2025, a collaboration in public education is planned between the Radnor Township EAC and Haverford EAC, whereby the EAC Lecture Series and the Haverford Township Workshop program are advertised through both township websites.

Print and on-line publications

The Radnor News Community Newsletter

- Summer issue: Gas Leaf Blowers: More Harm Than Just Noise
- Winter issue: 'The Role of the Radnor Township Environmental Advisory Council'
- Submitted for 2025 spring issue: 'Recycling Guidelines for Radnor Township'

Suburban Life

- Submitted for 2025 spring issue: ‘English Ivy: Danger to Trees!’
- Submitted for 2025 spring issue: ‘Recycling Guidelines for Radnor Township’

Radnor Township EAC Website:

- Financial Incentives For Saving Energy and Going Green

Radnor Township EAC Website: Earth-Friendly Tips

- Gas Leaf Blowers: More Harm Than Just Noise
- Interested in Replacing Your Heating System With a Heat Pump?
- English Ivy – Danger to Trees!
- Submitted for 2025: Smart Salting: A Radnor Homeowners Guide to Winter De-icing

Encourage voluntary programs through community participation

Eco-Friendly Yard Program

The EAC’s Eco-Friendly Yard program awards residents with a yard flag denoting their commitment to diverse plantings of trees, bushes, native perennials and pollinator-friendly species, as well as avoidance of chemical fertilizers and pesticides and reduced amount of grass turf. Twenty-five residents across the Township have been awarded an Eco-Friendly Yard flag since the program’s inception by former EAC Chairperson Margaret Reinhart.

Native Perennial Plantings

In October, volunteers organized by the Radnor Conservancy and future EAC member Sven Dethlefs planted perennials in the South Wayne municipal parking lot. Because the soil was hard clay, Sven recommended locations with better soil, perhaps through a more decentralized planting approach whereby residents are given perennials to plant at their homes.

In December, as requested by Sven, Cathy Agnew secured \$4000 from the Township for the purchase of up to 2000 native perennial plant plugs. This amount could purchase 2000 native grass and perennial plugs that could be given in groups of 12 to ~165 homeowners at the annual EAC plant giveaway planned for the spring of 2025.

Radnor Memorial Library Seed Library

Anjana Vidyadharan, a Villanova resident, asked if the EAC would be interested in setting up a native perennial seed library at the Radnor Memorial Library based on the one at the Easttown library in Berwyn. The seed library would be a much more affordable alternative to purchasing expensive perennial plants. Three EAC members will schedule a meeting with RML Executive Director Joyce Platfoot in January 2025.