

ALLENTOWN ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY COUNCIL [EAC]

2014 ANNUAL REPORT

INTRODUCTION – The Allentown Environmental Advisory Council (EAC) was established on January 16, 2008 by City of Allentown n Ordinance No. 14566. This report addresses the activities and accomplishments of the EAC during 2014.

Allentown EAC Activities and Accomplishments - 2014

During 2014, the Allentown EAC welcomed new members Randy Fey and Arundhati (Tinku) Khanwalkar, and expressed gratitude as long time members Julie Thomases and Dan Poresky completed their terms. Tinku now serves as the Chair and Secretary, and standing member Rich Niesenbaum now serves as the Vice Chair. Carolyn Albright remained on as a standing member. John Mikowychok resigned as the Director of Parks and Recreation, and is thus no longer serving as the administrative liaison. Much of our energy and effort has been dedicated to managing and adjusting to this transition. The EAC urges the Mayor and City Council to fill the three vacant EAC positions, and to appoint a new Liaison so it can be more effective in carrying out its mission.

One of the major accomplishments of the EAC in 2014 was the extremely successful Sustain-a-ball held in April; Julie Thomases chaired the effort. The Allentown Environmental Advisory Council hosted the Sustain-a-Ball, on May 3rd, at the Allentown Brew Works. The event was a celebration of Lehigh Valley initiatives to protect and preserve Allentown's natural resources, with a focus on food sustainability. The event brought together many individuals, groups, and government entities responsible for the progress being made in the City of Allentown and the region. The purpose of the Sustain-a-Ball was for the Allentown EAC to highlight the good work being done to protect the resources that make Allentown a warm, welcoming, and environmentally healthy place to live. The event netted \$1600, which was donated the City of Allentown Health Bureau to support its community gardening efforts within the city of Allentown, which include seven gardens. Over 200 people attended the event, including environmental groups, business and industry leaders, media, elected officials, municipal and agency representatives and individuals including youth from local colleges. CACLV Executive Director, Alan Jennings hosted the event. Speakers included Mayor Pawlowski and PA State Representative Peter Schweyer.

The EAC made improvements to its official web page and is keeping it updated. In order to expand reach and exposure, an Allentown EAC Face Book page was developed and is being used to promote the activities of the EAC and other local environmental information.

We considered the need for natural resource and environmental inventories for The City of Allentown. It was concluded that the inventories available through the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission and other information available from the Wildlands Conservancy and the Department of Parks and Recreation can meet current needs for such inventories. This is something the EAC will continue to pursue as determined by need.

In June 2104, Christa Kraftician, Janet Milkman and Holly Shields gave a presentation to the EAC on the Green Building concept. The concept is particularly timely for Allentown with all the new buildings and renovations underway. Philadelphia has a new law requiring commercial operations to track and report on their energy use which then allows for benchmarking and ranking against others on energy efficiency; Philadelphia began this program with its own buildings. The members discussed whether the Allentown EAC should recommend similar legislation for Allentown and/or the appointment of an energy manager, and it continues to explore these possibilities.

After conversations with the Mayor, its members and other stakeholders, the EAC has refocused its orientation to that of a think-tank for generating ideas about sustainability for the city of Allentown. As such we are currently, reviewing ideas that have been demonstrated as successful in other communities. We are also using a prior Sustainability report for the City of Allentown as a guide for this process. Our goal for 2015 is to generate a number of well developed proposals for consideration by the Mayor and City Council.

The EAC expressed concern about the use of invasive and inappropriate plantings in the city planning process and felt the need to play a role in the planning process to assure sound and sustainable practice. It was then recommend by the Mayor that a member of EAC also serve on the Planning Commission so as not to add an additional step and thereby slowing the approval process. Richard Niesenbaum has agreed to serve in this capacity. His application is pending approval from the Mayor's office

The EAC has made contact with and is in the process of exploring the possibility of establishing a collaborative relationship with the neighboring Bethlehem EAC.

The EAC spent considerable time reviewing a number of environmental initiatives and issues, and reported on them in our minutes. Where appropriate letters of support for these initiatives were written and sent to City Council and the Mayor.