

**ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**January 18, 2024**

<p><b>Call to Order</b></p>	<p>The regular meeting of the Environmental Advisory Committee of the City of Meadville was held Thursday, January 18, 2024. Ms. Hicks called the meeting to order at 5:36 p.m. Committee members present were Guy McUmbler, Jenny Tompkins, Peggy Mogush, Brenda Costa, Matt Bethurem, Ian Carbone, and Ashley Hicks. Councilwoman Vogel attended the meeting on behalf of Council.</p> <p>Ms. Hicks called for a motion to amend the agenda based on the updated version she shared with city staff earlier in the day. Mr. Bethurem made the motion; Ms. McUmbler seconded; the motion passed unanimously.</p>
<p><b>Public Comment on Agenda Items</b></p>	<p>Barb Newcamp spoke on behalf of Food 4 Thought. The group is searching for a more sustainable model for their local gardens, particularly the MARC garden. The program currently operates on a member-only model, but they would like to switch to a new format. The desire is for the current shared plots at the MARC Garden to shift to an urban farm model. Additionally, the Market House is interested in partnering to connect the gardens, the market house, and local food social services. There is currently a 10-hour per week volunteer garden manager but the lack of current resources is leading to burnout. The group is hoping to partner more formally with the MARC and a farmer. There is also a garden on South Main St that needs support. The six other city gardens are well-functioning, and there is hope to increase those. If there are opportunities for the EAC to provide assistance or resources, specifically grants, those would be welcomed. Ms. Hicks asked how volunteers are recruited. There is a three-person committee with limited outreach capacity. The primary focus now is shifting to a new model before recruiting additional volunteers.</p> <p>Ms. Vogel shared more about her involvement in connecting Food 4 Thought, the Market House, and the MARC. The city grant writer is evaluating grant opportunities for a local food coordinator. Autumn made the connection between this discussion and the EPA/DEP Community Change Grants later in the agenda.</p> <p>George Stabile in support of no-till farming. He intends to investigate this more and would like to the EAC to be aware. Carbon sequestration and soil quality improvement are relevant to the EAC mission. Mr. Stabile is wondering how this could be done on a smaller scale with smaller equipment as an educational example. Ms. Costa recommended connecting with the Crawford County Conservation District on this topic. There is a funded piece of equipment – a no-till seed drill – that the Conservation District has access to.</p>
<p><b>Approve Minutes</b></p> <p>December 21, 2023 /  December 2023  Subcommittee  Meetings</p>	<p>Mr. McUmbler moved to review the December minutes at the February meeting; Ian seconded; the motion passed unanimously. Ms. Tompkins will share both sets of minutes with the other members ahead of the February meeting.</p>
<p><b>Communication</b></p> <p>New Member  Introduction</p>	<p>Ms. Hicks introduced Ms. Brenda Costa as the new member of the EAC with a three-year term.</p>
<p><b>Subcommittee Reports</b></p>	

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<p>Solar Development</p>	<p>Mr. Carbone mentioned several community-based projects that are being facilitated by Allegheny students. Common Roots is interested in potentially two separate installations, Crawford Heritage Community Foundation is also interested. Students are investigating the possibility of solar carports for two of the potential installations. This is a new concept to try to implement for all involved. Mr. Carbone was in recent contact with the PA Solar Center who connected him and his students with a large solar installation firm. PA Solar Center is hopeful that some recycled panels may be able to go to this student-facilitated installation phase.</p> <p>Mr. Carbone participated in a webinar related to the federal solar tax credit related to last month's discussion about the DEP city solar project. There is now a web portal and a form. There is now a process to accept applications of the tax credit, and a receiving organization like the city needs to register with the IRS Direct Pay System. The city will next need to apply to this system. Ms. Vogel suggested giving the EAC more power to lead the city solar project moving forward. Mr. Carbone sought more guidance for a hand off from the city to the EAC to keep the project moving. Mr. Carbone agreed to set up a meeting with city staff (City Manager and Finance Department), PA Solar Center, and Ms. Vogel to discuss this.</p>
<p>Weatherization</p>	<p>Mr. Bethurem mentioned that he and Ms. Tompkins received communications from the DEP Office of Environmental Justice about a potential funding opportunity under new business.</p> <p>The two current members discussed that the subcommittee's most impactful role would be education and outreach for resources. The committee is learning more about the IRA tax credits and rebates. Ms. Tompkins started reaching out to subject matter experts who may serve as presenters or trainers on these federal opportunities. Local tax accountants may be able to assist with the IRA tax credit education, a former certified energy rater agreed to provide a Weatherization 101 training for renters and homeowners, PA DEP agreed to share more information about the rebates program they will launch with federal funding likely later in 2024, and both Common Roots and Northwest Weatherization preliminary agreed to participate in the events in some capacity.</p>
<p>Commercial Energy Efficiency</p>	<p>Mr. McUmbler mentioned that the subcommittee had a meeting with the Green Building Alliance regarding their 2030 District Program and its applicability to Meadville. The GBA oversees the program currently in Pittsburgh and Erie. GBA is working on a specialized program for smaller cities with a pilot in New Kensington. GBA has several sources of funding to expand this type of work in NWPA. The next step is to develop a proposal for council to consider.</p> <p>There was a meeting with the city about their participation with the Climate Action Plan and opportunities for energy efficiency. Recently, the committee worked with the city for the Sustainable PA Communities Certification Program. The subcommittee is going to assist with a staff training program and a policy for city staff outlining goals and best practices. Regarding the partnership program, the hope is to hold a spring event at Voodoo to present the partnership program. The hope would be to show off what the city/EAC have been up to and to recruit other organizations to be partners in the CAP. Ms. Hicks is interested in exploring tying together efforts of Voodoo and Palmiero Toyota. Tabling for the EAC would also be beneficial. Ms. Vogel confirmed that the city's recertification application was submitted in early December.</p>

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<p>Mobility</p>	<p>The city discussed potentially leveraging their parking study to increase mobility. The initial discussion was whether the parking reform could be used to increase walkability. Ms. Wrubleski shared that 1/23 there is a parking town hall at Meadville Public Library at 7 pm.</p> <p>Ms. Mogush reported that the subcommittee discussed three items at their recent meeting. 1. Allegheny College Impact Grant: Ms. Vogel shared that the grant was received but there is a concern about using the funds to offset labor and installation costs. As a result, all the funding will now be used for bike racks – 25 racks with several clusters. The money needs to be spent by the end of January. There is a local welding firm that the city is working with. The subcommittee will be submitting a grant report soon.</p> <p>The WalkWorks grant was the other major focus. The outreach event for the pre-planning grant will be Monday, February 12<sup>th</sup> – public event 5:30-7 pm at the Meadville Public Library. This will be a listening session to get input for an Active Transportation Planning grant. Ms. Mogush will work with other subcommittee members to develop the event in more detail. Mr. Grella will do a short presentation/introduction on active transportation planning followed by a facilitated discussion.</p> <p>Finally, the group discussed the active transportation grant. Mr. McUmber shared that the city received a pre-planning grant for active transportation. An application would be submitted for a full WalkWorks grant for up to \$35,000. This application is due March 22<sup>nd</sup>, and the city grant writer is assisting. A Planning Commission member is consulting on the application. Recently, the city was designated an EJ community overall, but now only a portion of the city now qualifies.</p> <p>Ms. Hicks lastly will be investigating additional funding for EV charging stations. There is no update on charging coming to Giant Eagle, and it would be great to have another event later in 2024. This would be another educational event.</p>
<p><b>Old Business</b></p> <p>Discussion – 02/24/2024 EAC Network Conference</p> <p>Discussion – Shared Energy Program Manager Update</p>	<p>Ms. Tompkins, Ms. Mogush, and Mr. McUmber are all attending the virtual conference. We can have two additional members participate on that day. Mr. McUmber encouraged other interested members to let him know if they are interested in attending.</p> <p>Ms. Wrubleksi shared that the city was accepted for the Shared Energy Manager Program for 2024. Local Wilson Engineering will be providing the technical assistance services. Wilson is working to schedule an initial kick-off call with the city. Ms. Wrubleski would like a couple of EAC to attend these meetings and advise on what we would like to see from the program.</p> <p>Ms. Mogush asked for clarification on the type of services that could be provided. Ms. Vogel shared that this is an opportunity for Phase II of LCAP implementation. Ms. Vogel shared the following ideas for consideration: making city operations more sustainable and solar implementation/feasibility assessment assistance. Mr. Carbone asked if there are services are largely engineering planning and tasks. Mr. McUmber mentioned an example from another municipality focused on municipal operations. Energy assessments and renewable</p>

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	<p>energy studies were two potential areas of assistance Ms. Mogush shared from the program webpage. Ms. Tompkins mentioned that some assistance breaking down the city’s GHG inventory for EAC members and the community may be good to consider.</p> <p>Mr. Carbone, Ms. Hicks, &amp; Mr. McUmbler all volunteered to participate in the kickoff call.</p>
<p><b>New Business</b></p> <p>Discussion – EPA Community Change Grants Program</p>	<p>Mr. Bethurem and Ms. Tompkins received an email from Elspeth Koehle, the DEP Northwest Regional Environmental Justice Coordinator about a desire for DEP to invest some EPA Community Change Grant Funding in Crawford County.</p> <p>Both members requested additional information from DEP about this opportunity, and the following information has been shared:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">EPA Program Webpage</a></li> <li>• “DEP, through the EPA, is offering grant money to community organizations and/or learning institutions.”</li> <li>• “The fund will be distributed to DEP sometime in February”</li> <li>• “There are no specific deadlines for community partnerships in the Northwest – that will come when agreements have been signed after the initial meetings.”</li> <li>• “Once you have found entities who want to match up, I can submit the request.”</li> </ul> <p>Ms. Wrubleski shared that she attended a webinar by Senator Casey’s staff on this topic and that there are two different application tracks with rolling submission review. The one track is for \$10-20 million for implementation money, and the other track was within the \$1-3 million for planning. It appears Pennsylvania already received approval for Track 1 funding.</p> <p>Ms. Tompkins recommended that the EAC hold a community stakeholder meeting to discuss interest with nonprofits as DEP is hand selecting groups in other counties. Can the EAC promote alignment with the CAP through the partnership or determine any other priorities it has for a partnership?</p> <p>Ms. Wrubleski recommended clarifying with DEP exactly what the City’s or EAC’s role would be. Does DEP determine the partnership and funding distribution?</p> <p>Ms. Tompkins requested that a segment of the EAC determine the following: date and location of a community meeting; outreach information for potential partners; and EAC/City priorities for a partnership. Ms. Hicks, Ms. Vogel, Mr. Bethurem, Mr. McUmbler, and Ms. Tompkins all expressed interest in participation. Ms. Ludwig offered to support as a subcommittee community member.</p> <p>Ms. Tompkins agreed to connect everyone with Elspeth to keep the conversation going as she agreed to help facilitate any meetings.</p>
<p><b>Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items</b></p>	<p>None.</p>

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<b>Chair's Comments</b>	<p>Ms. Hicks shared that she would like to reference back to our CAP recommendation spreadsheet for next month. She would like to discuss goals for 2024, including priorities for a new relationship with the Shared Energy Manager.</p> <p>Asana is now set up for the EAC thanks to Ms. Mogush. Ms. Hicks would like to continue exploring this as an organizational tool for the EAC. There is now also a shared calendar and Google Folder for the group. Ms. Mogush will share these governance items with Ms. Costa. Ms. Tompkins asked if the EAC could internally share a member roster with contact information as well.</p>
<b>Committee Member Comments</b>	<p>Ms. Tompkins apologized again for failing to share last month's minutes in a timely fashion.</p>
<b>Agenda for Next Meeting</b>	<p>None.</p>
<b>Adjournment</b>	<p>Ms. Hicks called for a motion for adjournment at 7 pm. Ms. Mogush made the motion and Mr. McUmbler seconded. The motion passed unanimously.</p>

Respectfully submitted,

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Maryann Menanno, Interim City  
Clerk