

## EAC Annual Report 2020



The year 2020 was difficult for all people around the world thanks to onset of the global Covid-19 pandemic. Despite being unable to hold any in-person meetings, the Lower Frederick Township (LFT) Environmental Advisory Council (EAC) met the challenge and moved forward with its responsibility to advise the supervisors and general public about the critical need to protect and conserve our natural resources.

## A Rough Year for All

In mid-March, Montgomery County officials as well as Pennsylvania’s Governor Tom Wolf began issuing orders in an attempt to control the spread of the novel and highly contagious Corona virus, which came to be identified as Covid-19. All non-essential businesses were to close their physical locations; schools were to transition to online learning; church services and other meetings were to be held remotely; employees were to work from home whenever possible; and in-person gatherings and travel were to be avoided.

Initially, all Lower Frederick Township public meetings were cancelled. However, the township manager, Mark Hudson, quickly implemented the use of the Zoom virtual conference application, and the meeting schedule resumed by April. The supervisors then adopted a disaster declaration in order to be eligible for disaster relief funds and to expedite the purchase of necessary items. Every aspect of life, public and private, was impacted.

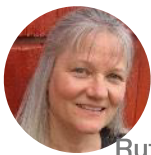
The restrictions, which we hoped would last only a few months, dragged into 2021. The stay-at-home orders and other closures that were loosened slightly during fair-weather months returned in November and December after new infection rates and death tolls began to resurge. According to the Pennsylvania Department of Health, by December 31, 2020, more than 630,000 Pennsylvanians had contracted Covid-19 (100+ from LFT) and almost 16,000 people died as a result.

Meanwhile, the number of visitors to parks and other outdoor spaces skyrocketed. Banned from traveling to a vacation destination, with kids unable to play at school and with adults having free time on hand due to company closures, families and individuals turned to nature for recreation, exercise, and solace. The Perkiomen Trail and all parks alongside it saw unprecedented, sustained use. Further, atmospheric nitrogen dioxide pollution levels dipped 30% in the northeastern United States after road and air traffic dropped dramatically in the first

### The Volunteers Who Served on the 2020 LFT EAC

and its working groups.

Name and Council Position	Working Group Participation
Ruth Heil, Chair	Below Grade Structures; Outreach
Warren Jacobs, Vice Chair	Tree Protection; Inventory
Denise Finney, Secretary	Tree Protection
Gary Bonner	Below Grade Structures; Inventory
Jackie O’Neil	Below Grade Structures; Inventory; Outreach
Monica Strawbridge	Tree Protection; Outreach



Ruth



Warren



Denise



Gary



Jackie



Monica

quarter. Wildlife was seen wandering into otherwise busy places. In short, nature gained visibility and promise.

Still, our routines were altered to such a degree that, by year's end, "normal" had become an intangible idea. Still, the Lower Frederick EAC, like all the boards in the township, maintained focus. With the dedicated assistance of the manager, supervisors and others, the council moved forward as best it could in meeting its directive: to identify and draft proposals to address critical environmental issues within the township. In fact, all six members of the council attended every meeting and thus achieved perfect attendance.

## EAC Actions 2020

Below is a summary of the actions taken during the year:

### 1st Quarter (January - March)

- Voted in favor of the potential acquisition of the Reynolds property in Spring Mount.
- Hosted a stormwater presentation for the public at the Perkiomen Township municipal building. Cody Schmoyer of the Montgomery County Conservation District presented; 30 people from various townships attended.
- Created working groups to tackle issues with 1.) building below grade and/or using sump pumps in areas with a high water table and 2.) tree loss and their protection. Both groups also met with non-EAC members of the planning commission.
- Assisted the Perkiomen Watershed Conservancy (project lead and Schuylkill River Restoration Fund grant recipient) in selection of one stormwater basin suitable for naturalization and agreed to partner with the PWC on the project once launched.
- Reviewed the Rhoads Subdivision plan with no comments.



### 2nd Quarter (April - June)

- Submitted an Earth Day press release to area news outlets and the public.
- The working groups continued researching the issues and potential solutions.



## 3rd Quarter (July - September)

- After months of discussion and research, formal recommendations entitled, “Below Grade Structures and Sump Standards for Lower Frederick Township” were approved and forwarded to the supervisors. The document called for the creation of an ordinance to limit the pumping of groundwater as a result of below-grade construction (i.e., sump pumps), calling on a need to protect groundwater quantity and quality as well as prevent additional stormwater runoff. The supervisors’ response was still pending at the end of 2020.
- The EAC hosted its second public workshop, entitled, “How and Why to Cherish Your Onlot System.” Roger Lehmann of All County Associates delivered a 90-minute presentation using the Zoom platform with Mark Hudson’s assistance. A copy of the presentation was made available [online](#) on the EAC page of LFT’s website.
- A Dropbox folder was created for members of the EAC to exchange and maintain files and research information.
- An Outreach and Communications Working Group was established.



## 4th Quarter (October - December)

- Denise Finney announced that she could not seek reappointment upon expiration of her term due to extra workload brought about by Covid-19 restrictions.
- EAC Bylaws, having never been formally approved, were presented to the supervisors for signature.
- The Perkiomen Watershed Conservancy gave its 2020 Municipal Award award to LFT in recognition of its environmental stewardship activities, including those of the EAC. Normally awarded at an in-person dinner, the presentation was virtual only, and a video was posted to [YouTube](#).
- After a lengthy evaluation of the unfortunate past events that occurred during the construction of the Arcadia Development on Zieglerville Road, the Tree Protection Working Group requested and obtained legal advice from township solicitor, Peter Nelson. It formalized a list of questions to determine the scope and effectiveness of existing tree protection measures in LFT’s Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance. The work to define and recommend adjustments to LFT’s code continued into 2021.



- An Inventory Working Group was established to facilitate an inventory of natural resources and assets within the township. The first task was to thoroughly document all structural stormwater controls, such as detention basins. These are referred to by regulators as Best Management Practices or BMPs. The group partnered with the Penn State Extension Master Watershed Team that won a grant to inventory, assess, and map all Montgomery County BMPs as well as to educate and support municipalities in doing so. They also met virtually with students from Ursinus College to share real world experience in exchange for GIS advice. The stormwater inventory and evaluation work continued into 2021.
- Recommendations for technical assistance and other resources for creating a meaningful solar farm/commercial solar land-use ordinance were approved and delivered to the supervisors.
- Comments were formalized and forwarded to the supervisors after reviewing the Prestige Development plans in preparation for a conditional use hearing originally scheduled for Oct. 29. In summary, the application's lack of a natural resources inventory and analysis made it impossible to determine the value of and best placement for the open space that would result from neighborhood lotting (if approved).

## Public requests:

Throughout the year, the EAC received the requests for input or action via comments from members of the public on the following topics:

- Township road paving plans in order to simultaneously address storm water drainage upgrades
- A leaking oil tank after a structure fire on Zieglerville Road, which was ultimately deferred to the state and federal authorities.
- Township code adjustments to allow for small wind and solar electrical systems
- PennEnvironment's advocacy coordination assistance to reduce use of single-use plastics
- Lawn care pesticide use
- Clean Air Council's advocacy coordination assistance
- Joe Zlomek of the *Schwenksville Post* commented that the *Post* would be willing to publish articles to educate local residents about environmental issues.

## Financial Information

No expenses were incurred or reimbursed; no funds were appropriated during 2020.