

Green Team Meeting

February 18, 2021

5:00 P.M.

The meeting took place over Zoom.

Attendees: Bracken Burns (Supervisor), Assistant to the Township Manager Patrick Connors, Janie Deemer, Mary Helicke, Colleen Johnson, Mark McCurdy, Kathy Pienkowski, Penny Steggles, and William Ursic

Also in Attendance: Daniel Bitz and Bill Gates

Topics of Discussion

- Mr. Daniel Bitz – CNX Bat Boxes in Community Park

- Mr. Danile Bitz stated that he recently moved into South Strabane Township and was looking to become more involved in the community. He noted that he works for CNX Gas Corporation within their Canonsburg Office. He continued by highlighting that he had met with the Township's Community Park Master Plan Steering Committee earlier in the week to outline CNX's Program. He discussed the challenges facing local bat populations, particularly white-nose syndrome. He stated that CNX Energy has partnered with numerous communities including Peter's Township and Upper St. Clair to establish bat boxes within suitable green spaces to assist local bats in establishing safe habitats away from human dwellings and structures. He provided illustrations of the units as well as the accompanying signage. He then noted the educational component of the sign. He continued by citing the boxes are specially constructed with aluminum shells to ensure durability. He concluded by reporting that the initiative has been nominated for a Governor's Excellence Award.
- Mr. Ursic inquired regarding the safety of park visitors in regards to the bats. Mr. Bitz stated risk to park patrons is minimal highlighting that bats are nocturnal and tend to avoid humans. Ms. Pienkowski stated that her son who resides in Greensburg had experience with a bat box in his residential neighborhood. She noted he did not mention any issues with the structure. Ms. Johnson encouraged Staff to advertise the project throughout the Township within both physical and digital mediums. Ms. Pienkowski stated the Citizens Library could promote the project.
- Following a question from Mr. Burns concerning the overall health of local bat populations a discussion ensued. Ms. Deemer inquired regarding re-locating a bat colony which resides in her barn. Mr. Bill Gates, a former U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologist noted his experience working with bats in Louisiana. He stated that currently there are very strict rules concerning the relocation and handling of wild bats citing increased restrictions after the COVID-19 pandemic. After some further discussion the group unanimously expressed their approval for the project. Mr. Bitz stated that he would work with Staff, the Community Park Master Plan Steering Committee, and the Pennsylvania Game Commission to establish a bat box at an amicable location within Community Park.

- Following the discussion, Mr. Burns asked Staff to formally place Mr. Bill Gates on the Green Team.
- **Update Regarding Aiden McCoy's Eagle Scout Project**
 - Assistant to the Township Manager Connors reported that Aiden McCoy would be presenting his final project proposal to the Board of Supervisors during their February 23rd Regular Meeting. He highlighted that Aiden would be requesting an amount not to exceed \$400.00 to cover the remaining costs for the sign, installation equipment, and landscaping not covered through his fundraising efforts. Citing their efforts and input dating back to 2019, Assistant to the Township Manager Connors thanked the Green Team for assisting Aiden with his project.
- **Community Park Master Plan Update**
 - Assistant to the Township Manager Connors stated that the Community Park Master Plan Steering Committee conducted their second meeting on February 16th. He noted that the group would be conducting monthly meetings on the Third Tuesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. He cited that for the time being meetings are being conducted over Zoom. He continued by encouraging the members of the Green Team to visit Community Park in the coming months and asked that they relay and thoughts, comments, or ideas concerning existing or future park facilities to Staff.
- **Beautification Awards**
 - Mr. Burns began discussion by highlighting that equity amongst different types of property owners (i.e. agricultural, residential, commercial) is paramount within the Program. He acknowledged that a variety of the Program's aspects need ironed out by the March meeting. Mr. McCurdy stated that local businesses should be integrated within the program. Mr. Gates inquired what neighboring communities are doing. Mr. Burns highlighted that he launched and managed a similar program for Washington County while he was a County Commissioner. He stated the central theme of the March Green Team meeting should center around the creation of the Program's mechanisms and details. He asked Staff to prepare accordingly.
- **Legislative Updates**
 - Open Burning
 - Mr. Burns provided an update to the Green Team on the topic of Open Burning. He reported that during the Board of Supervisors legislative meeting conducted on February 9th his colleagues on the Board did not wish to pursue further action on the matter of Open Burning. He stated the Board directed Staff to more strictly enforce the current ordinance moving forward. Ms. Pienkowski noted her frustration with the matter citing that property owners cannot control the actions of their neighbors, but they can be impacted by their neighbor's actions. The Green Team echoed the concerns of Ms. Pienkowski.
 - Aluminum Bin
 - Mr. Burns reported that during the aforementioned legislative meeting and after careful consideration the Board choose not to move forward with the aluminum receptacle which was proposed for the Recycle Center.

Adjournment: 6:20 p.m.