



Planning Perspectives

A Newsletter from the York County Planning Commission

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Environmental Advisory Council

The York County Planning Commission has long been aware of the importance and complexities involved in the management of York County's natural resources. The purpose of this issue of *Planning Perspectives* is to provide information about **Environmental Advisory Councils** - a tool made available by law, which, if used properly, may enhance environmental resource management at the local level.

What is an Environmental Advisory Council (EAC)?

An Environmental Advisory Council is a group of three to seven community residents, appointed by local elected officials that **advise** the local planning commission, park and recreation board and elected officials on the protection, conservation, management, promotion and use of natural resources within its territorial limits. EAC members devote time and energy to assist elected and appointed officials in protecting the environment.

EACs **DO NOT** regulate; they advise. They can act on a municipal or multi-municipal level. Municipalities are authorized to establish EACs through Act 177 of 1996, originally Act 148 of 1973.

Who are the members of an EAC?

Anyone is able to apply to serve as a member of their municipality's EAC. Members should be persons who are interested in environmental issues, local government, and the welfare of their community. Members are not required to have a particular area of expertise; however, whenever possible, one member of the EAC should also be a member of the municipal planning commission.

What does an EAC do?

The tasks EACs choose to engage in are agreed on, jointly, by the municipality and the EAC. The EAC is there to help the municipality; the municipality can assign the EAC with specific tasks. In accordance with Act 177, EACs are authorized to perform the following acts:

- Assist local officials in making policy decisions;
- Review plans, conduct site visits, and prepare reports for municipal officials;
- Make recommendations about the use of open land;

- Advise local government agencies about the acquisition of property;
- Educate the public on natural resource protection and other environmental issues;
- Promote a community environmental program; and
- Plan and implement projects to physically improve the municipality's environment

What are the benefits of EACs?

Overall, EACs help alleviate the workload of municipal officials. EACs are able to devote full attention to environmental protection, which assists municipal officials in making environmentally sound decisions. By acting as a *liaison* and a point of contact for their community members and decision makers, EACs are able to make sure that important environmental issues are communicated in an organized and proper manner.

In addition to the local planning commissions, EACs work closely with and compliment park and recreation boards as well as watershed organizations. EACs are able to create, promote, and find *funding* for various community environmental projects, plus engage community volunteers and the private sector in natural resource protection.

Where can more information be found?

The Pennsylvania Environmental Council is available to assist municipalities with the process of establishing an EAC. If you would like assistance or more information about EAC's, please visit **www.eacnetwork.org** or contact the Pennsylvania Environmental Council by phone, mail, or email. The York County Planning Commission is also available to assist with the process.

Pennsylvania Environmental Council
Attention: Leanne Beck
130 Locust Street, Suite 200
Harrisburg, PA 17101

York County Planning Commission
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Planning Perspectives is a newsletter created by the staff of the York County Planning Commission. It covers current topics of interest in the field of Urban and Regional Planning. If you have a suggested topic for future issues, please contact Felicia Dell at 771-9870.