

CITY OF BETHLEHEM

Department of Community and Economic Development Interoffice Memo

To: Michael G. Colon, Council President

From: Darlene L Heller, Director of Planning and Zoning

Re: Zoning Text Amendment Related to Environmental Education Centers and other similar uses – Article 1302 Definitions, 1304 Allowed Uses in Primarily Residential Districts, 1305 Allowed Uses in Primarily Non-Residential Zoning Districts and Article 1322 Additional Requirements for Specific Uses.

Date: May 4, 2023

At its April 13, 2023 Meeting, the Planning Commission voted 5-0 to recommend approval of the above-referenced Zoning Text Amendment.

The proposal is to clarify permitted uses at Community Recreation Centers, Environmental Education Centers and Nature Preserves in order to promote greater inclusion for Bethlehem residents and visitors alike in response to the goals and objectives of the Climate Action Plan.

The original transmittal to the Planning Commission is attached for reference.

Please place this proposed agenda item on an upcoming city council meeting agenda.

Darlene Heller

Darlene L. Heller, AICP
Director of Planning and Zoning

Enclosure

C. City Council Members
Mayor Reynolds
Jack Spirk, Esq.

Laura Collins, Esq.
Craig Peiffer
Paige Stefanelli

CITY OF BETHLEHEM

Department of Community and Economic Development Interoffice Memo

TO: Planning Commission Members

FROM: Darlene L. Heller, Director of Planning and Zoning

RE: Proposed Zoning Text Amendment to Address Environmental Education Centers

We have often discussed Bethlehem's Climate Action Plan (CAP) and the ongoing efforts to incorporate climate action and environmental issues in all of the City's policies and projects. The City administration understands that many of the CAP initiatives require the support and efforts of partnerships with local nonprofits and other community organizations.

Bethlehem is proposing a text amendment to the Zoning Ordinance to clarify the definition and parameters for Environmental Education Centers, Community Recreation Centers and Nature Preserves. The attached text amendment proposes to support the ongoing and future uses that support the environment and awareness of Bethlehem's goals related to climate action.

Some of the CAP goals and recommendations include:

- Educate the community and local businesses on the benefits of renewable energy.
- Expand the inventory of Bethlehem's trees and ecosystem services.
- Expand and create new greenways.
- Partner with community organizations to promote tree planting efforts.
- Engage and incentivize residents and businesses about the options and benefits of conserving land.
- Preserve land with valuable natural resources in perpetuity using 3rd party conservation organizations.
- Establish and effectively manage native-habitat corridors and areas.
- Support local gardens and urban farms.

Environmental Education Centers, Community Recreation Centers, Nature Preserves and similar uses would each share a common mission with these CAP goals and objectives, thereby creating partners to assist in implementation of the CAP.

The Bethlehem Vision Comprehensive Plan also supports working closely with watershed associations, conservancies, educational institutions and landowners to implement environmental conservation strategies.

Because the City continues to look for partners in the education and implementation of our environmental and climate action goals and strategies, we support the attached zoning ordinance amendment to support these uses and associations and clarify their definitions and uses.

This item is placed on your April 13th Planning Commission Agenda for consideration. We request that you act on the proposal with a recommendation for approval to City Council. We can discuss the proposal in more detail at the meeting.

C. Mayor Reynolds
Craig Peiffer
Laura Collins
Alicia Karner

DATE: April 5, 2023

Darlene Heller
Darlene L. Heller
Director Planning and Zoning