

**ROSS TOWNSHIP ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY COUNCIL MINUTES**  
**March 16 , 2023 7:00 PM**  
**Ross Township Board of Commissioners Chambers**

**In attendance: Deemer, Finkenbinder (on Zoom), Hockenberry, Hulle, Schawalder, Lange, Junior EAC Members McElhaney and Burkhart (on Zoom)**

**Absent: Gill**

**Staff: Adam Ravenstahl**

Meeting Called to Order at 7:01 PM

Approval of Minutes for January, 2023. Motion by Hulle, Second by Schawalder. Passed Unanimously.

1. Public Comments

- a. Lindsey Dill, Allegheny Land Trust (ALT), made a presentation about an additional ALT acquisition opportunity in Ross Township. ALT has a property in Ross Township, Lowries Run Slopes, and there is an adjacent property they would like to extend conservation to along Lowries Run. The property is under contract and ALT has until December 2023 to raise the funds to acquire it. Is currently fundraising; \$555,000 is needed to be raised. Watershed protection and greenspace preservation. EAC Discussed that this was one of the sensitive locations on the landslide prone map.
- b. Darlene Didonoto, asked if the sound was working and was there a roll call. Comment on breakouts. Asked about the purpose of a Landscape Ordinance.

2. 2023 Goals Point Persons Volunteers

- a. Recycling: Finkenbinder will get clearer wording for the website.
- b. Hulle will investigate a plastic bag ban.
- c. Schawalder will lead EAC Community Days efforts, all available to volunteer.
- d. Lange will investigate yard waste programs and promotion

3. Landscape Ordinance Review

- a. Review of the response to the Request for Qualifications (RFQ) was tabled at the December 2022 meeting. The Commissioners asked the EAC to prepare a Request for Proposals (RFP). Deemer introduced language for RFP for the EAC to approve.
- b. A motion to issue an RFP to the successful respondents to the RFQ, Motion by Hockenberry, second by Hulle. Passed Unanimously.
- c. Motion to subsequently clarify the RFP as to the ordinances ("including but not limited to" the examples listed). Motion by Hulle, Second by Hockenberry. Passed Unanimously.

4. Composting Rebate Program

- a. Motion to recommend to the Board of Commissioners the instituting of a composter rebate program, subject to qualified purchase of composting bins. Motion by Schawalder, Second by Lange. Passed unanimously.

5. Invasive Species Program Recommendation

- a. Motion to recommend the development of a Ross Township Invasive Species educational campaign to respond to invasive species, particularly spotted lantern fly, tree of heaven, and jumping worms. Motion by Hockenberry, Second by Lange.

Approved Unanimously.

6. Community Involvement Activities
  - a. Earth Day Event/ Community Clean up April 22-23 discussed.
  - b. Junior EAC Member McElhaney asked to reach out to Environmental Club and class to participate in Community Days
    - i. Denny Park on Saturday, May 13, 2023;
    - ii. Herge Park on Saturday, July 8, 2023;
    - iii. Scharmyn Park on Saturday, July 29, 2023;
    - iv. Bruno Sammartino Park on Saturday, August 12, 2023;
    - v. Evergreen Park on Saturday, September 16, 2023.
  - c. North Hills EAC network continues to inform each EAC to foster intergovernmental knowledge-sharing, communication, collaboration and assistance. Hampton to host the next meeting. Events:
    - i. Hampton Community Clean Up Day March 25, 2023
    - ii. Ross Composting Event (PRC) March 27, 2023
    - iii. Ross San Martino Park Earth Day Clean Up April 22-23
    - iv. Franklin Park Clean Up Day April 29, 2023
7. Break Outs session occurred to review the Landscape RFP Specifications, Community Days programs. Drafts reviewed attached.
8. Connect Climate Action Plan will be invited to attend the next meeting- Review CONNECT Multi-Municipal Climate Action Plan to continue to evaluate and decide on eventual recommendations to the Commissioner. Hockenberry will invite CONNECT to present at the April meeting.
9. Motion to Adjourn by Schwaldner, Second by Hulle, passed unanimously.  
Adjourn 8:26 PM
10. Next meeting: April 20, 2023, 7 PM, Ross Township Municipal Complex, 1000 Ross Municipal Drive, Pittsburgh, PA 15237.

Respectfully Submitted,

Susan G. Hockenberry  
Secretary

# Landscape Ordinance RFP

## Introduction

Ross Township is looking for consulting services to make a wholistic review of all ordinances pertaining to site development, erosion, run off, landscape development, and pedestrian access. Qualified candidates should be licensed in Landscape Architecture or Civil Engineering in the state of Pennsylvania. LEED Certification for Communities is recommended but not required. The consultant will provide the township with suggested edits to current ordinances and details that illustrate their implementation.

## Background

Ross Township is a Certified Platinum Community with Sustainable Pennsylvania. Like many communities, it's ordinances have been written and implemented over time, and while they reflect the best information at the time of their writing, may not be in line with current best practices. The township has a large retail corridor that serves many surrounding communities, as well as many green spaces and residential areas. Major areas of concern for the township are:

- Landslide prevention
- Flooding and run off along the McKnight Corridor
- Pedestrian access in retail areas and parking lots
- Pedestrian safety along township roads in residential areas
- Street Trees

## Proposals

Successful proposals will include the following:

- Summary of Qualifications
- Fee schedule
- Detailed proposal including time for review, editing and details

Applicants should use the following table format for their proposal submissions:

Ordinance Section	Ordinance Review (Hours)	List of Proposed Details & Schedules	Edits (Hours)	Detailing (hours)	Fee (per hour)	Total estimated fees

In addition to the above items, please include fees for the following:

- 1 hour kick off meeting for the contactor to meet key township contacts,
- 1 hour progress meeting where the review and the proposed details and schedules will be discussed
- 1 hour meeting at the conclusion of the work.

# Composting Rebate Program Proposal

In light of the success of the Rain Barrel Rebate program, the EAC would like to propose a Composting Rebate Program.

- Currently and estimated  $\frac{1}{3}$  of food goes to waste<sup>1</sup> occupying about 25% of landfill space<sup>2</sup>
- Food deposited in landfills rots and turns into methane<sup>1</sup>
- Food waste is responsible for an estimated 6-8% of human-caused green house gas emissions<sup>1</sup>
- Composting lowers greenhouse gases by improving carbon sequestration in the soil and by preventing methane emissions through aerobic decomposition, as methane-producing microbes are not active in the presence of oxygen<sup>2</sup>

Encouraging composting at homes is an important way to address the food waste problem. Not only does it make us more aware of wasting food, but it also eliminates trucking the food waste to a composting facility and provides free fertilizer to those who compost. If done correctly, composting does not attract animals or produce foul odors.

We propose that Ross Township set aside \$1,000 annually to offer rebates of \$25 for homeowners when they purchase a composting bin. This would provide up to 40 rebates annually.

Those interested in the rebate would need to provide:

- Proof of residency.
- Receipt for purchase of composter (bin, tumbler, or
- Photo of composter installed at their residence.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: <https://www.worldwildlife.org/stories/fight-climate-change-by-preventing-food-waste>

<sup>2</sup> Source: <https://www.epa.gov/snep/composting-food-waste-keeping-good-thing-going>

# Invasive Species of Concern

There are many invasive species of concern in Allegheny County, there are a few that are poised to cause extensive damage currently:

- Spotted Lantern Fly
- Tree of Heaven
- Jumping Worms

## [Spotted Lantern Fly](#)<sup>3</sup>

These insects made it to our area last summer. They suck the sugars out of plants, notably grapes and other crops, and have no predators. They reproduce in large numbers. Their native host is Tree of Heaven.

## [Tree of Heaven](#)<sup>4</sup>

This invasive tree has been present in our area for many years and has been out-competing native trees such as Staghorn Sumac. Currently, as a host of the Spotted Lantern Fly, it is aiding their spread. One Tree of Heaven can produce many seedlings in a large area, enabling it and the Lantern fly to comfortably invade more space.

## [Jumping Worms](#)<sup>5</sup>

These worms are active in the top layers of soil. Rather than enhancing soil formation, they eat all the leaf litter in an area and leave castings the texture of coffee grounds. These castings deplete the soil of its humus layer, moisture and nutrients. Seedlings of many native, agricultural and landscaping species cannot grow in soils that have been depleted by jumping worms. These soils are also highly vulnerable to erosion.

## Proposal for Control of Invasive Species

1. Information about these species and their spread in our area should be posted on the EAC portion of the Township's website along with images and links to more information from the state extension offices.
2. Ross Township Public Works crews should be briefed on these species and should have identification information available to them on the job.
3. Tree of Heaven should be removed from Ross Township Public lands whenever it is identified. For example: there is a very large Tree of Heaven in Herge Park near the ballfield. It is blowing seed to the surrounding neighborhood as far as the Marion-Doulton Greenspace.
4. There is no control currently for Jumping Worms. Municipal compost and wood chip piles should be monitored for temperatures of 105°F, which kills the cocoons, and opened for distribution after that temperature has been reached.
5. [Posters about Spotted Lanternflies](#)<sup>6</sup> should be posted at all public parks.
6. All three species should be killed on sight.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/resources/pests-diseases/hungry-pests/slf/spotted-lanternfly>

<sup>4</sup> <https://extension.psu.edu/tree-of-heaven>

<sup>5</sup> <https://extension.psu.edu/look-out-for-jumping-earthworms>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.nj.gov/agriculture/divisions/pi/prog/pests-diseases/spotted-lanternfly/>