

## EAC MINUTES

### Dickinson Township Environmental Advisory Council

March 31, 2026, Dickinson Township Meeting Room

4:00 pm

#### Attendance

#### Council Members:

*Chairman Nate Merkel, Vice Chairperson Jennifer DeGaetano, Jared Abell*

#### Staff:

*Jill Lovett, Township Manager, Grace Hogue, Secretary/Treasurer, Glenn Kelso, Public Works Director, Ryan Hoover, Zoning/Codes Enforcement Officer, Matthew Boyer, Solicitor*

#### Visitors:

*Sara Miller – 289 N. Dickinson School Road  
Sandie Brandner – 50 Monstera Road  
Jennifer Zajac – 15 Barnitz Woods Drive  
Gary Zajac – 15 Barnitz Woods Drive  
Jonathan Danick – 1040 Myerstown Road  
Elizabeth Grant – 282 Stuart Road*

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#### Call to Order

Chairman Merkel called the meeting to order at 4:00 pm. followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

#### Opening Announcements

- a. Reminder that Dickinson Township is seeking volunteers for several open positions on various Boards and Committees. If interested, please contact Jill Lovett at [manager@dickinsontownship.org](mailto:manager@dickinsontownship.org) if you are interested.
- b. Dickinson Township is asking residents to sign up for its mass text alert system. This system is used to alert residents of things such as emergency situations, road closures, trash delays, etc. To sign up please go to the Township website and click on the image where it says Mass Text Alert Signup. Fill out the form online and hit submit.
- c. A reminder that more information about our community can be found on our website at [www.dickinsontownship.org](http://www.dickinsontownship.org)

#### Agenda Approval

A motion was made to approve the agenda for the March 31, 2026 meeting by Vice Chairperson DeGaetano. It was seconded by Jared Abell and unanimously passed.

#### Chairman's Report

Chairman Merkel welcomed the members and the public attendees with appreciation for the Environmental Advisory Council's (EAC) inaugural meeting. He outlined the primary business of the evening primarily setting the mission statement and discussion on the environmental issues within the Township.

Visitors/Public Comment - None

New Business

a. Mission & Objectives Discussion of the EAC

Vice Chairperson DeGaetano provided 4 draft mission statement options for consideration. Chairman Merkel presented the options for discussion.

**Option 1**

To promote environmental stewardship within our township by advising local leaders, engaging residents, and supporting sustainable practices that protect our natural resources for current and future generations.

**Option 2**

To provide informed guidance and practical solutions that enhance environmental quality, preserve open space, and foster a resilient, sustainable community.

**Option 3**

The Environmental Advisory Council advises township leadership on environmental matters, promotes conservation of farmland and natural resources, and supports sustainable practices that preserve the rural character and ecological health of our community.

**Option 4**

To protect our township's land, water, and rural character by providing guidance, supporting conservation, and engaging the community in sustainable practices.

The Council reviewed all four options for discussion. Jared Abell expressed a preference for Option 1, noting that he valued its use of the word "stewardship" and its explicit reference to current and future generations, which he felt conveyed the sense of responsibility appropriate to the Council's purpose. Chairman Merkel concurred, emphasizing that the EAC's central role is to take a forward-looking approach, protecting natural resources, farmland, and residential quality of life. Proactive stewardship is preferable to reactive regulation. Jared Abell added that Option 1 also accurately reflects the scope of what an EAC can realistically accomplish such as advise, engage, and support.

**A motion was made to approve the mission statement for the Environmental Advisory Council "To promote environmental stewardship within our township by advising local leaders, engaging residents, supporting sustainable practices that protect our natural resources for current and future generations" by Chairman Merkel. It was seconded by Vice Chairperson DeGaetano and unanimously passed.**

Chairman Merkel presented the proposed Vision Statement and its five associated Core Goals prepared by Vice Chairperson DeGaetano.

**Vision Statement:** A thriving rural community where farmland, natural resources, and open spaces are preserved and residents work together to ensure a healthy, sustainable environment for future generations.

**Core Goals:**

- Protect Natural Resources — Safeguard water quality, soil health, wildlife habitats, and open space.
- Preserve Farmland and Rural Character — Support local agriculture and maintain the township's scenic and rural identity.
- Advise Township Leadership — Provide thoughtful, research-based recommendations on land use, development, and environmental issues when applicable.
- Promote Sustainable Practices — Encourage responsible development, conservation efforts, and environmentally sound decision making.
- Engage and Educate the Community — Increase awareness and involvement through outreach, partnerships, and educational initiatives.

Jared Abell expressed his appreciation of the vision statement, for the inclusion of wildlife habitat and forest land under Core Goal 1, noting that the township contains significant forest lands and varied habitats beyond farmland alone.

**A motion was made to approve the vision statement and core goals listed for the Environmental Advisory Council by Chairman Merkel. It was seconded by Jared Abell and unanimously passed.**

*b. Current & Future Environmental Issues within the Township*

The Council discussed concerns about Food Processing Residuals (FPRs) being spread on agricultural fields in Dickinson Township, identifying the practice as a major environmental issue. Chairman Merkel noted that although FPR application is legal, there has been little research into its impact on local water quality, an important issue since about 95% of township residents rely on private wells. Public water service is limited to the business industrial with limited residential section of the Township. Vice Chairperson DeGaetano supported pursuing studies and testing through outside organizations, while Jared Abell suggested examining how other townships have addressed similar concerns.

Vice Chairperson DeGaetano also stressed the need for public education, noting that many residents mistake the odor from FPRs for manure and may not understand what materials are being spread or where they originate. She proposed creating informational materials for the Township newsletter and referenced a list of FPR application locations included in the meeting packet. Vice Chairperson DeGaetano further explained that pending state legislation could introduce testing requirements and transfer oversight of FPR applications from Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to county conservation districts. In the meantime, she encouraged residents to direct complaints to county conservation offices. She also suggested republishing a previously written article on the topic in the township newsletter to better inform residents, especially those not actively online. Finally, Vice Chairperson DeGaetano shared that a nearby township had some success reducing FPR applications by residents filing complaints on landowners to encourage good stewardship of the land.

Chairman Merkel discussed concerns about PFOS and PFOA contaminants associated with Food Processing Residuals (FPRs). Chairman Merkel explained that screening for these substances is common practice in water and wastewater management and suggested reviewing studies from states like Virginia and Maryland to guide local efforts. Vice Chairperson DeGaetano and Solicitor Boyer emphasized the need for additional research and testing on biosolids and FPRs.

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DICKINSON TOWNSHIP

Chairman Merkel requested authorization from the Board of Supervisors for the EAC to begin discussions with potential institutional partners, including Penn State Extension, Dickinson College, and Shippensburg University, to explore a comprehensive environmental study focused on water quality, air quality, soil health, and related concerns within the Township.

Solicitor Boyer shared findings from prior research conducted for another township matter, explaining that there is currently no direct method to identify FPR-specific contaminants in soil after application because the materials are absorbed within about 36 hours. However, he and Chairman Merkel agreed that testing for elevated concentrations of certain substances on or near known FPR sites could provide useful data and help identify patterns. Jared Abell suggested involving willing landowners in voluntary studies and noted that spill events could offer opportunities for time-sensitive sample collection before absorption occurs. He also stated that people need a factual baseline before they can effectively advocate.

The Council discussed possible health concerns related to FPR exposure, particularly reports of respiratory issues and asthma symptoms near Dickinson Elementary School during nearby FPR application activity. They agreed that any future environmental study should include air quality testing in addition to water and soil analysis. The Council also expressed confidence that partnerships with outside organizations could support testing efforts and future actions, and Vice Chairperson DeGaetano noted that funding opportunities for testing and related initiatives may be available.

**Chairperson Merkel motioned to request the Board of Supervisors to approve the EAC representatives to begin preliminary discussions with institutional partners such as Penn State Extension, Dickinson College, Shippensburg University, and any other entities identified for the purpose of scoping and initiating a comprehensive environmental study within the township covering water quality, air quality, soil health, and related environmental parameters. It was seconded by Vice Chairperson DeGaetano and unanimously passed.**

*c. Introductions of the Council Members*

Vice Chairperson DeGaetano invited Council members to briefly introduce themselves for the benefit of members of the public in attendance.

Jared Abell stated he has been a Dickinson Township resident for five years, having relocated from Gettysburg. He is a licensed real estate agent and serves full-time as the Mid-Atlantic Land Protection Project Manager for the Trust for Public Land, a national nonprofit organization dedicated to connecting people with the outdoors through land conservation, park design, trail development, and conservation finance. Prior to joining Trust for Public Land seven months ago, he served as Pennsylvania Department of Conservation & Natural Resources' (DCNR) statewide real estate specialist, managing land acquisitions for state parks and forests.

Vice Chairperson DeGaetano stated she serves on the Board of Supervisors who has been deeply involved with the FPR issues within the Township. She is working with state legislators to advance regulatory reform. She reported that her position serves as the liaison for the EAC and the Board of Supervisors.

Chairman Merkel said he has been a Dickinson Township resident for nearly ten years. His professional background includes several years with the Pennsylvania DEP assisting water utilities with source water protection planning and MS4 stormwater compliance for nutrient reduction to the Chesapeake Bay watershed. He currently works for a water, wastewater, and stormwater utility, and also serves as Vice Chair of the Dickinson Township Planning Commission and sits on the Authority Board for the Township.

**Old Business** - None

**Closing Announcements** –

Chairman Merkel encouraged residents to submit any environmental concerns to Manager Lovett to relay to the EAC. Vice Chairperson DeGaetano reiterated that the Council intends to expand its council members over time as the work of the body develops, with future additions guided by relevant areas of expertise. The Council confirmed that its next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, June 2, 2026, at 4:00 PM, to be held prior to the regularly scheduled Board of Supervisors meeting.

**Adjournment**

**A motion was made by Vice Chairperson DeGaetano and seconded by Chairman Merkel and passed unanimously to adjourn at 4:51 P.M.**

Respectfully submitted,



Grace Hogue  
Secretary/Treasurer

