

**MINUTES OF
CITIZENS ADVISORY COUNCIL
July 8, 2025**

CALL TO ORDER:

Bob Barkanic, CAC Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 12:36 PM.

CITIZENS ADVISORY COUNCIL (CAC) MEMBERS PRESENT:

Robert Barkanic, Chairperson	Dwayne Mowry
Trisha Salvia, Vice-Chairperson	Jerome Shabazz
George Ambrose	Thaddeus Stevens
Jacquelyn Bonomo	James Welty
Carol Collier	Timothy Weston
William Fink	Jessica Shirley, Secretary, DEP
Katherine Heatherington Cunfer	

DEP STAFF PRESENT:

Ian Irvin, Executive Director
Casey Damicantonio, Policy Office
Joshua Neyhart, Policy Office

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES:

Chairman Barkanic solicited additions or corrections to the June 10, 2025, Minutes. Hearing none,

Tim Weston moved to approve the Minutes of the June 10, 2025, meeting with two corrections. George Ambrose seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

DEP UPDATE:

Secretary Jessica Shirley gave an update on current PA Budget. The House, Senate, and Governor's office are diligently working on coming to an agreement for the Budget.

A DEP Hotline for Citizens is to be established to address questions or complaints where these topics can be answered by staff in a reasonable manner.

In the last budget, DEP was given permission to create a streamlined permitting process for economic expansion, known as Streamlining Permits for Economic Expansion and Development (SPEED). As part of this process, a permit tracker was established in January 2025. DEP is also moving forward with IT Modernization and internal processes. Currently, SPEED is only open to Chapter 102 General Permits but will expand to other permits as well. The goal is to open a fast-

track option using qualified professionals to review the permit before it goes to DEP, which will accelerate the permitting process. However, the applicant will have to pay for the professionals' work and time. Currently, DEP does not have exact costs because the applicant pays for this cost. However, the applicant would also need to pay for the application fees once it comes to the Department for review. County Conservation districts are required to go through this process as well, but DEP will help the Conservation Districts standardize this process so there are not 67 different processes. DEP has a list of over 100 qualified professionals for Chapter 102 and 105 permits. However, there are fewer qualified professionals for more technical areas such as air quality and dam safety. With DEP receiving 40,000-50,000 permits a year, this program would help expedite the approval process so that an applicant can bypass the queue.

Governor Shapiro's energy plan has about 6 different pieces of legislation, including Community Energy Bill and Edge Tax Credit, which have passed the House with some bipartisan support. Alternative Energy Portfolio Standards has made it through the House Committee, and the RESET Board and actively being considered in their respective committees. However, PACER has not yet been considered by the Committee

Questions:

How do SPEED applications move up the list without leap-frogging the work on other regular applications?

DEP will not be reviewing the applications using SPEED but will be consulting with the outside qualified professional. The SPEED Program is not utilizing additional staff resources. Permitting section chiefs will be dealing with applications using SPEED, which frees up time for staff. The Department will be selecting the qualified professionals that are able to review, making permit reviews faster and focusing on key items like common deficiencies. A qualified professional with concerns or questions can work with Section Chiefs at DEP.

Seeing what recently happened in Texas, we live in a flood prone state and have flash flood issues. Is the Department cooperating with agencies like Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency, Susquehanna River Basin Commission, Delaware River Basin Commission, and United States Geologic Survey? How are we situated to deal with flooding conditions? How good are our warning system, and what should we learn before a tragedy?

Flooding is seen in many places of the Commonwealth, even in areas that have never flooded before. In conversations in legislative districts and with leaders about flooding, every situation is unique. There is a need to educate Pennsylvania residents of the necessity to move away from the danger and go to higher ground. Additionally, there is need to educate communities and their leaders about available resources to prevent or lessen flooding. Creating an education toolbox for communities and the 2,500 municipalities, which range in resource ability, is a goal. DEP would like to help navigate what resources are out there and what they

should be doing or planning for. DEP would also like to get together with other agencies and get perspectives and discuss strategic goals.

PRESENTATION:

Adam Browning- President-Elect of the PA Association of Sewage Enforcement Officers (PASEO) update on Chapter 71, 72 and 73

Mr. Browning covered major changes in the Chapter 71, 72, and 73 rulemaking and its economic effect on housing developments and the ongoing work with DEP on the rulemaking.

Questions:

While much of the discussion on the Chapter 71, 72, and 73 rulemaking focused on costs, would the proposed updated requirement be rational even though they are costly? Or is there recommended alternative?

The update to the official plan every 10 years is costly but necessary. As for the other items, they may be necessary. However, these proposed requirements should not apply to repair or replacements of existing malfunctioning systems. The proposed requirements will apply to new land development. Municipalities will have a municipal wide sewage management program and will have the ability to manage these systems.

Has the Department offered a rationale for the increase in review time and machinations that a developer or homeowner may have to go through?

PASEO was unaware of any specific rationale other than the Department is tasked with providing clean water and protecting the water of the Commonwealth.

Does the Department intend to monitor similar, conventional systems to determine what level of treatment they are affording us right now?

There are alternate technologies have been in place and operating for more than 20 years, which the Department wants to monitor. However, PASEO has not heard from the Department on specific problems with these technologies. Therefore, there seems to be a disparity between the treatment of conventional and some alternative systems. PASEO has no information of historic malfunctions or issues with any alternative systems. Every system could have an issue, but these issues are mostly related to installation practices. Some studies have conversely said some conventional systems have more of a detrimental effect on the environment than alternate systems.

Dr. Diana Oviedo Vargas- Assistant Research Scientist Stoud Water Research Center and an overview of PFAS.

The mission of the Stroud Center is to advance knowledge and stewardship of freshwater systems through global research, education, watershed restoration. Stroud Center is a nonprofit, non-advocacy organization located in Avondale, PA and has three sections: Freshwater Research, Environmental Education, and Watershed Restoration.

The Watershed Restoration group tries to do watershed scale implementation of best management practices to help improve local and regional water quality. Environmental Education programs include working with kids and adults. And then the Freshwater Research group has basically six scientists. Dr. Oviedo Vargas leads the biogeochemistry section. However, Stroud also has a fluvial geomorphologist, an entomologist, a microbiologist, and an ecosystem ecologist. The team at Stroud collaboratively looks at different water related questions from different perspectives.

Dr. Oviedo Vargas's research is from a 2020 grant of the Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research and focuses on PFAS in biosolids that is being applied to farmlands. PFAS is a class of 12,000 anthropogenic chemicals that began to be produced in the early 1940's. PFAS can move through the environment to soil and water and may be introduced and found in solid waste from industrial or residential systems that end up in landfill systems. Additionally, through non-peer reviewed research of the last couple of years, PFAS can migrate to eventually build up in biosolids and can be a source of contamination to farming soils, adjacent surface waters, and local drinking water supplies.

Questions:

Was Dr. Oviedo Vargas able to identify the private applicator for each of those farms?

The identity of applicator is public information, and the main applicator in researched region is Synagro. However, the origin of the biosolids is hard to tell because there is a mixture of different wastewater treatment facilities.

The information in the presentation is part of a public, a scientific publication that some may have seen; however, that publication has not published yet. The information is not fully ready for wide-spread dissemination because Stroud has not conducted a proper hydrogeologic study to be able to tell the connection between the soil and the well water from the different farms. Nevertheless, Stroud found that in five of the farms where biosolids had been used, the concentrations in their well water were detectable, higher than the maximum contaminant level, and no other source for the PFAS contamination could be identified.

Do you have both upstream and downstream water samples?

Because the same farm occupies the entire watershed (i.e., upstream and downstream) - no.

When we talk about biosolids in the land, and application of biosolids on farms, these are a carrier not a creator?

Biosolids does not create PFAS; biosolids is a carrier of PFAS. PFAS in biosolids point to the presence of PFAS in either the landfill leachate or wastewater treatment system. Stroud is trying to have conversations with folks that are regulating this issue considering the policy implications.

Public Participation Comment

Trudy Johnston with Material Matters asked questions regarding Stroud Research's presentation vis-à-vis the other studies at the University of Arizona and Purdue. Ms. Johnston asked about another paper about the systematic screening of PFAS in biosolids at the source and how this wastewater can be used by farmers without the risk of PFAS contamination.

Emily Little, with Solar United Neighbors Action. Pennsylvania was awarded \$156 million from the Solar for All funding by the federal government to install solar on income limited single family and multifamily homes. The Solar for All program will install solar on 14,000 households over a five-year period, which will help households save \$192 million on electric bills over the next 20 years and increase grid resiliency for everyone. In addition, the program will bring much needed jobs, training, and opportunity for these neighborhoods. Solar United Neighbors Action is asking the General Assembly to pass the budget prior to deadline so that the program can be implemented. Solar United Neighbors Action is also calling on Pennsylvania residents to contact their representative to request they prioritize the authorization during budget negotiations.

Committee Reports:

Legislative committee discussed different bills such as Senate Bill 681, which would eliminate EQB, Lighting Bills and see what further changes will happen. The Legislative Committee is also watching and discussing Chapters 71, 72, and 73. However, because of the earlier presentations, further discussions were tabled. Additionally, there were discussions on how to get involved earlier in the legislative process on bills that impact DEP. Executive Director Irvin is developing correspondence, asking for participation in the CAC meetings that could impact DEP.

The Department is putting together a biosolids working group. Would there be space for CAC members to be at the table to that stakeholder group?

ADJOURNMENT:

George Ambrose moved to adjourn the meeting. Jerome Shabazz seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

The July 8th, 2025, meeting of the CAC was adjourned at 3:10 pm.