

DEP NORTHCENTRAL REGIONAL CITIZENS ROUNDTABLE
30th Anniversary Meeting of April 21, 2014
Summary of Meeting Minutes

Chairperson Megan Lehman called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and had everyone present introduce themselves.

The minutes of the Jan. 27, 2014 meeting were unanimously approved, on a motion by Nate Campbell, seconded by Katie Ombalski.

DEP Regional Director Marcus Kohl introduced special guests DEP Secretary Chris Abruzzo and DEP Executive Deputy Secretary Dana Aunkst.

Secretary Abruzzo began by congratulating the roundtable on 30 years of service. He noted that many such groups around the Commonwealth are really important to DEP's mission.

Abruzzo explained that DEP's three main functions involve permitting, compliance and enforcement. He said every region of the state has its own unique environmental issues.

Abruzzo explained that DEP needs feedback from this group. He said when he became Secretary about a year ago, he wanted to open the agency up as much as possible. This has been done in a number of ways. For example, DEP invited a number of environmental groups to tour our laboratory last year for a full day. That led to quarterly meetings with these groups and our Oil and Gas program staff. He also said that the DEP website is improving, and we have made it easier for people to navigate. He said the department wants public comment on proposed regulations.

Secretary Abruzzo then spoke about DEP's development of a pre-application consultation tool and implementation of the Permit Decision Guarantee (PDG) program to reduce the backlog of permit applications. He said DEP has reduced that backlog by 95 percent, and 75 percent of the applications have a decision made within 30 days.

Abruzzo said the proposed Chapter 78 oil and gas regulations had nine public hearings across the state and 22,000 comments have been received. He noted that Gov. Corbett's proposed budget for next fiscal year includes a \$10 million increase for DEP's general fund that will allow us to hire more staff. He said the Oil and Gas Program has more inspectors than Texas, the top producing state in the country, and that DEP will continue to regulate the industry properly.

Abruzzo emphasized that there is no lack of commitment on the part of DEP, and his job is to make sure we continue to evolve. He said DEP has the best collection of men and women running the six regional offices, and there is a trusting relationship between the regional office staff and central office staff in Harrisburg.

Following his remarks, Secretary Abruzzo had a question and answer session with the members of the roundtable.

Before Secretary Abruzzo and Executive Deputy Secretary Aunkst departed, the roundtable took a group picture.

Chairperson Lehman then presented CRC Dan Spadoni with special gifts for his work as DEP liaison to the roundtable during the past 30 years. These gifts included a beautifully engraved wooden plaque/clock and gift cards for two local restaurants. Spadoni expressed his surprise and appreciation of the gifts, and thanked the members for their generosity. He said he would treasure the plaque/clock for the rest of his life.

Following this presentation, Lehman cut the 30th anniversary cake and everyone enjoyed a piece of the marble cake with white icing and blue trim. An inscription on the cake read, "Happy 30th Anniversary Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection North-central Regional Roundtable."

When the meeting resumed, Spadoni recognized John Abromitis as the longest serving current roundtable member, going back to at least the winter of 1988 and perhaps even longer. Abromitis is a former roundtable chairperson and has been a steering committee member multiple times. Spadoni also distributed a 30th anniversary certificate to each member of the roundtable.

Spadoni told the members that April 22 marks the 44th anniversary of Earth Day. Each member received a fact sheet about the history of Earth Day, first held in 1970. He noted that DEP employees participated in their quarterly "Adopt-A-Highway" litter pickup earlier today along a stretch of Lycoming Creek Road north of Williamsport. The regional office joined the PennDOT program many years ago. Spadoni also said that DEP was a partner in the official theme for Earth Month, which is "Pick It Up PA," encouraging residents to take time to pick up litter around their homes and in public areas. Cleanup events statewide are listed by county on the Great American Cleanup of Pa.'s website at www.gacofpa.org.

The next item on the agenda was "Bylaws/New Members." Lehman presented three recommendations for action based on the roundtable survey and discussion at the Jan. 27 meeting. The first was to permanently move the start time of meetings to 6:30 p.m. This was unanimously approved via voice vote. The second was if a member misses four consecutive meetings, he/she will be dropped from the roster. This was unanimously approved via voice vote. The third was that the membership roster should be periodically reviewed and discussed by the membership to ensure balanced representation from the four identified sectors. Suggestions for new members will be discussed at roundtable meetings and voted on. The chairperson will be responsible for contacting that person (or organization) to formally invite the new member's participation. This was unanimously approved via voice vote.

Regarding new members, Lehman said the roundtable survey results revealed seven votes for a gas industry representative; six votes for other environmental organizations; and five votes for business or industry in general. She presented several names for discussion, including Rich Adams of Chief Oil and Gas or Mary Wolfe of Anadarko as a gas industry representative; Laura Templeton of Rettew, a consulting firm; Eric Moore of West Branch Regional Authority; Harvey Katz, a retired fisheries biologist; and Ted Barbour, a farmer and biology teacher. Lehman noted all of these people were from Lycoming County and were merely suggested to open the discussion. She suggested that other members may know individuals from other counties in the region who could represent similar organizations. Spadoni said that Steve Fisher of Geisinger Health System had recently expressed an interest in joining the roundtable and he was waiting for final approval from his employer to do so. Daria Fish of Chief Oil and Gas also was mentioned as a possible member. Lehman said survey comments included contacting Merck and Co. in Riverside as they had been represented on the roundtable for many years by the late Dave Unger. Another comment was to find someone from Centre County government, and possibly the Centre Region Council of Governments (COG). DEP Local Government Liaison Dan Vilello said he had a contact at the COG and roundtable member Dave Gilbert said he did as well. Lehman indicated that she will follow-up with invitations.

The next item on the agenda was a discussion of possible locations for the annual group dinner/field trip meeting on July 21. Spadoni mentioned a tour of the DEP's lab in Harrisburg as a possibility although it is a significant distance for most members to travel. Dr. Mel Zimmerman suggested the East Lycoming School District's green initiatives, including solar panels, a biomass unit and geothermal heating. Vilello suggested the Seewald Laboratory in Williamsport, which is fairly new. Curt Reed suggested wind turbines near Altoona. Lehman told the members to send suggestions to Spadoni and he would compile them for a vote by the steering committee.

DEP Regional Director Kohl then spoke about the state's new mileage reimbursement policy for non-state agency employees. He distributed information to the members explaining the new requirements, which include either using a rental car to come to the roundtable meetings, attempting to justify reimbursement at a rate of 56 cents per mile in lieu of a rental car, or accepting 23 cents per mile reimbursement for using their personal vehicle. There was a short question and answer session after Kohl's presentation.

The final agenda item was the nomination and election of a new chairperson and steering committee for a two year term running from July 2014 to July 2016. Spadoni said it was permissible for a steering committee member or chairperson to serve two consecutive terms. The following were elected or re-elected by unanimous voice vote: Chairperson, Megan Lehman; Business and Industry representative, Dave Gilbert; Government representative, Nate Campbell; Academic and Other representative, Dr. Mel Zimmerman; and Environmental and Public Interest Groups representative, Katie Ombalski. Spadoni congratulated all the winners.

The meeting was adjourned at about 8:37 p.m.