



# WEST CHESTER BOROUGH 2020 SUSTAINABILITY REPORT

*PREPARED FEBRUARY 2021*



## **Overview**

In a year defined by unanticipated challenges and a requisite reshuffling of priorities, the Borough’s sustainability efforts and initiatives largely continued or were, by necessity, reinvented to better align with the unprecedented challenges our community faced in 2020.

The Sustainability Advisory Committee (SAC) saw continued, dedicated participation and all four members with expiring terms in December were reappointed for additional two-year terms. In a year when collaboration was very difficult the committee managed to work together and advance many sustainability initiatives through monthly Web-Ex meetings and outdoor, socially-distant meetings in Borough parks.

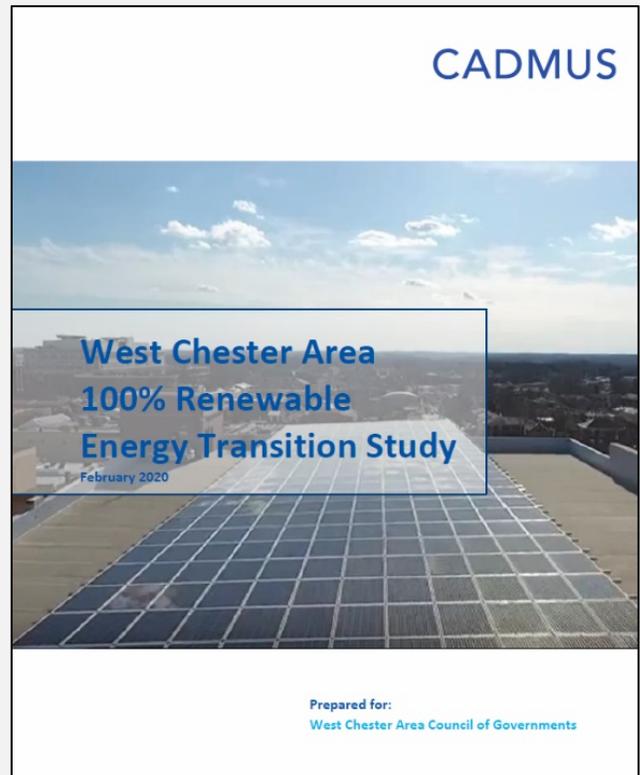
The Sustainability Director role continued to evolve, yet remains responsible for creating programs that promote broadly-defined sustainability goals, assisting departments in the reduction of environmental and financial impacts of natural resource utilization, and advising Borough Council on sustainability-related initiatives and opportunities. Some of the initiatives and accomplishments of the SAC and Sustainability Department are outlined in more detail below.

## **West Chester Area Energy Transition Plan**

In early 2020 the Borough and accepted the Energy Transition Plan study published by Cadmus, which set out a broad, regional energy strategy for achieving the aggressive, community-wide goals adopted by Borough Council in 2017 – 100% clean energy for electricity by 2035 and heat and transportation by 2050.

The plan highlighted 18 critical strategies to help the community conserve energy, fuel switch to electricity, and to source that electricity through clean, renewable energy sources. Though the report acknowledged the difficulty local government has in asserting these choices for the entire community, the participating municipalities received a valuable roadmap to achieving their goals internally, educating the community, and illuminating the path forward, particularly for other large energy users in the community.

The project’s advisory group continues to meet regularly, focusing on community engagement through the newly established Clean Energy Future campaign, and exploring a Power Purchase Agreement or “PPA” to replace the current energy procurement strategy of the participating municipalities. The Advisory Group anticipates securing PPA terms in 2021 that will achieve the ambitious energy goals internally while saving money for each municipality.



## Single Use Plastic Ordinance

Unfortunately, the rollout and enforcement of the Borough's single-use plastic ordinance, passed in July 2019 and set to begin July 2020, was postponed indefinitely by language inserted into the COVID-19 state of emergency orders issued in April. The ordinance remains in-place, and enforcement will proceed as soon as the Borough is permitted and an abbreviated education and communications campaign can be completed.

In the interim, the SAC created an opt-in recognition program for shops, bars, restaurants, or cafes making tangible efforts to reduce single-use waste in December. The Sustainable Storefronts initiative is a fun and flexible program that, besides acknowledging leadership of participating businesses, also documents the support for waste-curbing efforts by the local business community. Despite the challenging landscape for businesses and the difficulty in doing in-person outreach to businesses in 2020 many Borough establishments have already signed up and been recognized and thanked on Borough social media.

JOIN THE BOROUGH'S NEW RECOGNITION PROGRAM

# WEST CHESTER SUSTAINABLE STOREFRONTS



**BENEFITS**

- Help address single-use waste in our community!
- Save money on single-use items!
- Get recognized for environmental leadership!
- Attract eco-conscious customers!

SIGN UP TODAY AT [WEST-CHESTER.COM/SINGLEUSE](https://www.west-chester.com/singleuse)



## Energy Management

Thanks to energy benchmarking completed in 2019 and updated on a monthly basis many opportunities to save energy and dollars were identified. The Sustainability Director completed the below energy management projects and initiatives:

- 21% reduction in energy usage at Chestnut Street Garage by creating a “deadband” between facility-wide heating and ventilation setpoints
- 6% increase in production by the Borough's solar PV array on Chestnut Street Garage achieved by identifying and correcting inverter faults following power outages
- Retrocommissioning of Borough Hall HVAC controls, setpoints, and scheduling with the Borough's new HVAC contractor and building management system
- A large billing error was identified on the Goose Creek WTP PECO bill in late 2020, which was doubling the facilities energy expenses due to incorrect meter readings
- Aggressive HVAC setbacks for areas of Borough Hall that are not being used due to COVID-19 restrictions



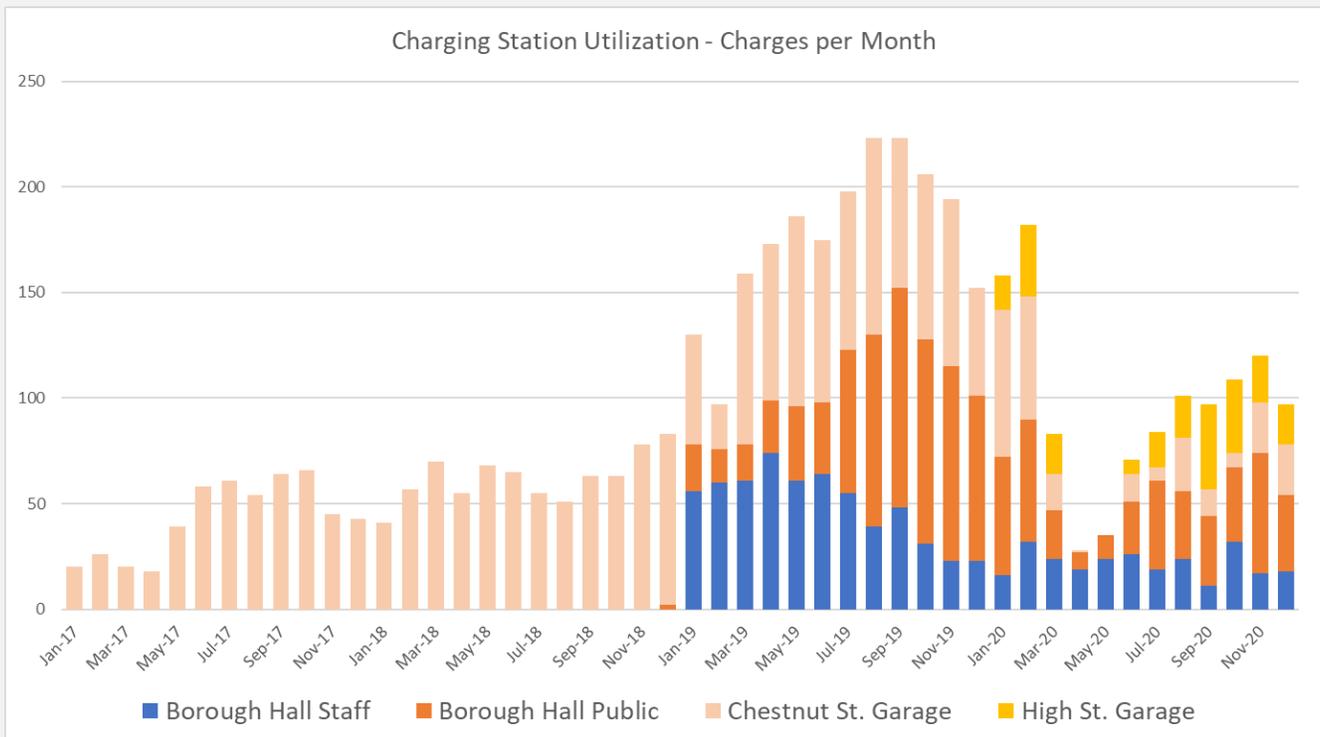
## Electric Vehicles

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the anticipated purchase and implementation of several additional EVs and Plug-in EVs was postponed for budgetary reasons. Hopefully these efforts and the associated reductions in costs, fuel consumptions, and emissions will proceed in 2022 when vehicles in the Borough's parking enforcement and Building & Housing departments require capital replacement.

Following the installation of a new dual-port charger in Bicentennial Garage in January Borough Council agreed to implement a \$.50 per hour charging fee to cover the cost of electricity dispensed and generate roughly \$.05 per hour to cover administrative and maintenance costs. The fee also encourages the movement of "idling" or fully charged vehicles, ensuring that the charging stations are available as often as possible. In 2020 the charging fee generated \$1,129 in revenue to support this public resource.



Not surprisingly the utilization of the charging stations dropped precipitously with the onset of COVID-19 and subsequent lockdowns, especially at the Chestnut Street Garage. However the electric vehicle market continued to expand in 2020, and although charging station utilization fell, 2020 saw more unique users of the Borough's public charging stations than in any prior year, suggesting that demand for this resource will continue to increase and rebound strongly when transportation patterns return to pre-pandemic levels.



## Grant Opportunities

This year a DEP 904 Recycling Performance grant application was successfully submitted in December, obtaining \$55,134 in funding to support the Borough's recycling program. The grant award increased more than \$20,000 versus prior years.

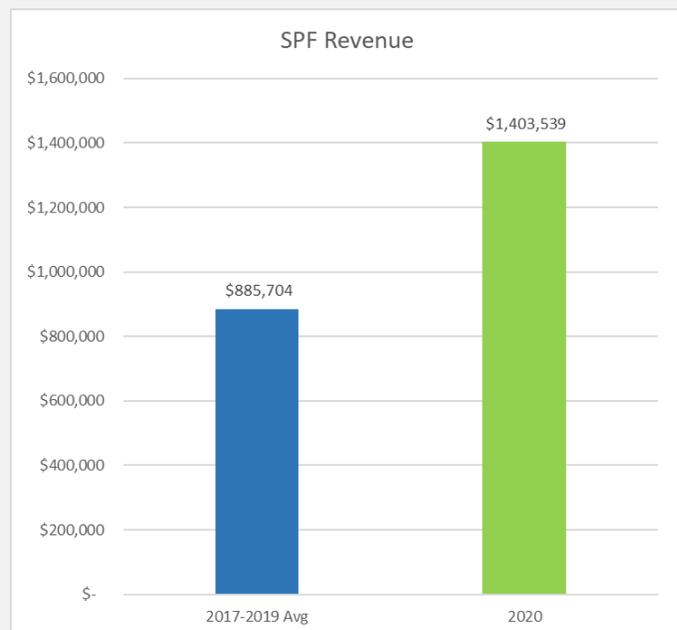
A \$10,000 grant to support 2021 street tree planting efforts in the northwest and southeast corners of the Borough (both DEP-designated Environmental Justice Areas due to poor environmental conditions and high proportions of low-income residents) was also resubmitted to the Natural Land Trust and PECO Green Region grant.



## Stream Protection Fee

In 2020 the Borough's Stream Protection Fee program transitioned under the umbrella of sustainability and the revenue side of the program is now managed by the Sustainability Director. Despite the economic headwinds in 2020 SPF collections increased 58% versus the average for 2017-2019, providing an additional \$518,000 for stormwater management in 2021.

This progress was achieved by working to update and the SPF billing database, contacting delinquent property owners, and making changes to the billing program to facilitate property owners paying their entire fee in a timely manner. Because of these efforts we anticipate a much higher rate of collections moving forward, and in fact \$674,553 was collected in January 2021 alone.



## ***2021 and Beyond***

In January 2021 the Sustainability Advisory Committee and Sustainability Director met to revisit and revise the strategic planning completed in early 2020. High-level initiatives and opportunities to be pursued next year include:

- Continue to implement the West Chester Area Energy Transition Plan, working with townships in the West Chester Area Council of Governments where beneficial
- Engage residents and business in community-wide energy goals, including energy procurement, C-PACE, utility incentives, etc., through the Clean Energy Future campaign.
- Update the West Chester Sustainable! Building Certification program to address new green building best practices and updated building and energy codes
- Evaluate off-site clean energy procurement through a power purchase agreement (PPA)
- Continue planning fleet optimization and procurement of low or no emission vehicles for 2022 and beyond
- Expand cost-neutral, public EV charging infrastructure for visitors and “garage orphans”
- Support and expand the Sustainable Storefronts initiative, and if permitted successfully implement single-use plastic ordinance
- Seek public funding for sustainability initiatives including EV infrastructure, tree-planting, bike and pedestrian safety and infrastructure, etc.
- Continue robust management of the Stream Protection Fee billing program to maximize available capital for sustainable stormwater management infrastructure

**Respectfully Submitted**

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**Will Williams – Sustainability Director**