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Easton seeks \$4M grant to build new Nurture Nature Center on Bushkill Drive

Matt DeBlass
Jan 12, 2022



Photo: The Nurture Nature Facebook page

EASTON, Pa. – The City of Easton will apply for a \$4 million federal grant to help build a new home for a science center on Bushkill Drive, at the site of the former Easton Iron & Metal scrapyard.

City Council voted at its meeting Wednesday night to seek the grant, which would help Easton's **Nurture Nature Center** build a new facility with educational space, nature trails and a planetarium on the site.

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Mayor Sal Panto said that getting the grant money would "be step one of probably 100," but "this is truly an Easton project, and should it come to fruition, it will be good for our young people."

The grant would come through the U.S. Economic Development Administration. The mayor said the new facility would promote ecotourism as well as education, potentially seeing hundreds of thousands of visitors each year.

Rachel Hogan Carr, executive director of the Nurture Nature Center, said one of the goals of the project would be to create a destination for school field trips.

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The center's current Northampton Street location, which was built as an Odd Fellows hall in 1914, is just not large enough to host large school groups.



Nurture Nature Executive Director Rachel Hogan Carr presents to Easton City Council the need for a new home for the science center.

Matt DeBlass | 69 News

"The building was simply not designed for this," Hogan Carr said. "We've outgrown ourselves."

She said that she and other Nurture Nature board members recently met with representatives of the city, as well as superintendents from school districts throughout the Lehigh Valley and Warren, Hunterdon and Morris counties in New Jersey. She added that many people she met were "ready to write letters of support on the spot."

Two of the superintendents – David Piperato from Easton Area School District and Sarah Bilotti from North Warren Regional School District – were present at Wednesday's meeting.

"The amount of programming Nurture Nature is already doing is amazing," Bilotti said.

She said she believes a lot of schools on both sides of the Delaware River would be happy to plan field trips to Easton rather than bus students to Newark or Philadelphia.

Residential parking permits

Also at the meeting, Panto announced that council is considering changes to the residential permit parking program. There will be a public hearing on the proposed change, which could halt the sale of new permits in some cases, at the Jan. 26 council meeting.

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Fourth Street closures

City officials also announced that, starting next week, they will be periodically closing the southbound lane of Fourth Street due to the construction of the new parking garage being built across from the police station, between Church and Bank streets.

The closures will only happen at times when the construction crews are moving materials that are too wide to allow for two-way traffic to pass by safely and will not require any business closures. The project is expected to last up to 13 weeks.

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Easton's Nurture Nature Center has vision for the former Easton Iron & Metal site

Easton City Council wraps up meeting in 10 minutes; mayor discusses parking

Easton council approves projects, negotiations with developers to start

Easton holds session for public feedback, the public stays home

Easton City Council approves plan to buy Iron & Metal site

City of Easton set to undergo more renovations in 2022

Easton OKs \$3M sale of Pine Street garage to City Center

Easton's Panto plans summit on the 'P' word: parking

Easton parking audit finds 100 permits expired or ineligible

Construction on new downtown Easton parking garage to begin June 1

Easton council OKs plans for new North Fourth Street parking garage

Single lane traffic pattern proposed around Easton's Centre Square

Matt DeBlass

WFMZ.com Reporter

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