

Recurring Sustainable Community Day launched in Lemont

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by Sean Yoder

LEMONT — When talking about sustainability, Tom Meade would say you were right to think of the environment. But he would also say sustainability is about much more.

Meade, president of Room Doctor Furniture Co., is among those hoping to resurrect the idea using one day each month to recognize sustainability in local communities, an initiative that fell by the wayside in 2011.



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On May 22, Meade hosted the first open meeting at The Barn at Lemont for those interested in recognizing Sustainable Community Day.

Meade said the 22nd of each month from now on will be a day for acknowledging the importance of sustainability, since once per year on Earth Day is not enough.

Sustainability, Meade said, requires a scope far wider than green or environmental issues. It is about resilience, and creating robust institutions that are planning for the long term and can survive catastrophic events or disruptions in supply chains, while also promoting a healthy locale.

With only the first Sustainable Community Day in the books, Meade told the room that interested participants will in the future help to flesh out the projects and focus of the group. He hopes to gather people from different sectors to come together and create a network of sustainability-minded participants.

He identified five areas of society that need to be considered in a context of sustainability: food, energy, health, manufacturing and finance and local credit.

“There’s a growing consensus of interest in sustainability,” Meade said.

Back in 2009 and 2010, with the country still coming to grips with a severe recession, Meade said there was not as much interest in the topic. But now, he said he feels the time is ripe and that Central Pennsylvania could become “the Silicon Valley of sustainability.”

To actually accomplish the goals related to making an area more sustainable in the long term for future generations, Meade said he was looking to Burlington, Vt., as an example. In 2014, Burlington reportedly became the first city in the U.S. to produce more electricity than its citizens utilize, and accomplished it through a mix of energy production. Meade said Burlington got there by making small, incremental steps toward that goal and it was not accomplished all at one time. That, he said, is how a sustainability movement could eventually flourish.

The nine in attendance May 22 held a brief discussion after Meade’s presentation and brought up the fact that some of the topics related to the environment and sustainability could often be divisive. Meade said he wanted to focus on the areas that people agreed needed changes, and that as participation grew in Sustainable Community Day those shared interests could be identified.

Meade said he will soon be going to the county and local governments to seek support for declaring a monthly Sustainable Community Day.

For now, people can find information on future Sustainable Community Days at The Barn’s website, www.lemontbarn.com.

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