

City of Summit Environmental Commission Minutes, March 20, 2023

Participating: Donna Goggin Patel, Rick Bell, Jeff Hankinson, John Kilby, Lara Mendenhall, Chris Sprague, Mimi Zukoff

Guests: Fred Blau, George Drossinos, Kathy Head, Sofia Mendenhall, Scott Schoeb

Donna Goggin Patel called the meeting to order at 8:02 PM. The Feb. minutes were approved.

Earth Day Clean-Up Planning: Donna Goggin Patel

The Earth Day Clean-Up will be held on Saturday, April 22, from 9 am – 12 noon (with Sunday, April 23, as a rain date or alternate date for those who do not wish to work on Saturday). Several of the past educators and group coordinators have reached out to plan for their Earth Day volunteering. In the afternoon of April 22 from 3-4:40 pm, there will be a ribbon cutting for the Park Line's pedestrian bridge. Jeff Hankinson will share more information as he gets it.

"Tiny Forest" Reforestation: Donna Goggin Patel

The Tiny Forest is dormant for winter. Donna is working with Amy Cairns and Megan Trindell on the design of the larger, educational signage for the Tiny Forest. Donna spoke about the Tiny Forest at the Mar. 14 meeting of the Millburn Environmental Commission.

Recycling Advisory Committee: Mimi Zukoff

With regards to the food waste program, RAC submitted a marketing plan to the City Communications department to promote higher resident participation. RAC requested that the program name be changed to Summit Food Waste Recycling Program since it is not traditional composting. RAC expects to do a number of tabling events over the spring and summer (including June 4 and July 23 at the Farmer's Market and July 18 at Community Night), and EC volunteers are welcome. The food waste collected in February 2023 weighed 2,869.3 lbs. (The capacity is 6900 lbs/month.) The city communications office is on board and will work with RAC to develop a multi-media coordinated campaign. Green Bucket brings the waste to Trenton Renewables that utilizes anaerobic digestion to recycle food waste into organic compost, fertilizer, and renewable energy. At the end of the process, the digested can be used as a soil amendment.

The tennis ball recycling bins are cleaned, and the collection bins at Memorial Field and Tatlock should be ready to go for spring. RAC is also overseeing the Cellphones for Soldiers and LEGO collections.

There is a collection bin for stretched plastics at the Transfer Station for Summit residents with a permit (as part of a Union County effort). The bin is located next to the comingled plastics dumpster to keep people from placing plastic bags in that dumpster. More info can be found at <https://ucnj.org/recycling/plastic-film/>. Since this is going to Trex, please continue to log any stretched plastics dropped off there for Brayton School's collection toward its Trex bench: [Google form](#). (You do not need to have children in the schools to contribute to Brayton's collection numbers.)

#### Update on Grants: Donna Goggin Patel

The Environmental Commission plans to apply for the ANJEC Open Spaces grant in the amount of \$1,500 to complete fencing and provide signage for the Butterfly Garden at the Park Line. Common Council will consider the draft application as part of its April 4 meeting. For the Community Energy Plan grant, Sustainable Jersey released the template plan on its site this month, so Donna Goggin Patel and Dan Crisafulli are drafting Summit's Plan.

#### Shade Tree Advisory Committee: John Kilby

STAC is moving ahead with the revised tree ordinance for Summit and coordinating with the city. The next round of shade tree plantings will be approximately 80 trees in Fall 2023. STAC is meeting with Reeves-Reed Arboretum this month to plan the Fall in Love with Trees speaker series. The Summit Conservancy and STAC are close to agreeing on signs to identify downtown trees. Several longer-term Summit Sucker volunteers (who remove unwanted subsidiary growths – or suckers – from the city's shade trees) are “retiring” and being replaced with new volunteers.

#### Multi-Town Environmental Commission Meetings: Donna Goggin Patel

The NJSMA is working with the Great Swamp Watershed Association again to host a Native Plant sale. More info is available at <https://www.greatswamp.org/native-plant-sale/garden-resources/>. Summit will need many volunteers to assist in preparing, transporting, and handing out orders. The sale will be live from April 3-28. The pick-up day for Summit will be on Saturday, May 6. Please save time the week of May 1 to help us pack orders and mark Saturday May 6 to help with the Summit distribution from Mimi Zukoff's house. We will need people to pick up the Summit orders at the GSWA headquarters in Harding and bring them to Summit. Also, we need help organizing the orders and giving them out from 12:30 – 2:30 pm on May 6.

The next free webinars are on 3/21 at 7PM (What's the Buzz About Native Bees with Heather Holm) and 4/3 (GSWA's Hazel England will present the details of the plant sale).

Summit Free Market: Mimi Zukoff

The Free Market will hold a weekday event on March 24 from 12-2PM. The rest of the 2023 dates for these weekday events have been posted. They are April 28, May 26, June 23, July 21, August 25, September 22, October 27, and December 1 (there is none in November). The next weekend Free Market will be held on Saturday, April 15, from 8AM-3PM. (This is a change from the typical second Saturday – the rest of the year will be the second Saturday.)

Repair Café: Courtney Cordaro

The next Repair Café is scheduled for Saturday, March 25, from 11 am - 3 pm, at Christ Church (561 Springfield Ave.). Repairs include lamps, electronics, computers, bicycles, clocks, wooden furniture, sewing/textiles and knife sharpening.

GreenFaith: Mimi Zukoff

Summit Area GreenFaith Circle has developed a community education seminar on residential solar and partnered with the Environmental Commission and Summit Public Library to present it in a hybrid format on May 11 at 7 pm at the Library. Frank Curran of Green House Solar will present information on costs and payback periods, federal and NJ tax credits, and battery backup for energy independence—and how it compares to a traditional generator.

Register at <https://summitlibrary.libcal.com/event/10332703>.

There will be two free screenings (9:30 am and 7 pm) of “The Letter” - a new documentary about how spiritual values unite us in caring for our earth - on April 13 at Memorial Hall at St. Teresa of Avila. Click to RSVP for the [9:30 am showing](#), or for the [7 pm showing](#).

GreenFaith is encouraging everyone to educate yourself about the Mt. Kimble affordable housing development proposed adjacent to the painstakingly restored GSWA Conservation management area. See <https://www.greatswamp.org/take-action/mt-kemble-condo-plan/>. Reach out to Mimi Zukoff ([morah.zukoff@gmail.com](mailto:morah.zukoff@gmail.com)) with questions or for more details.

Green Schools: Donna Goggin Patel

The Green Schools parents are creating lesson plans for each elementary school grade to be taught by parent volunteers on Friday, April 21. If you would like to join the green parent group, please contact Donna Goggin Patel at [dgp212@gmail.com](mailto:dgp212@gmail.com).

New Business: Everyone

Jeff Hankinson asked for advice on procuring green electricity in anticipation of charging an electric truck he should receive in a few months. Based on the surrounding tree coverage, his

house is not an option for solar without removing trees. His research led him to the JCP&L website where one can select a green plan (that includes wind and solar, but not nuclear), lock in a price per KWh, and receive a corresponding renewable energy certificate. Mimi Zukoff mentioned some potential community solar projects which may be eligible to Summit residents. (Donna is looking into these further.) These would still not incorporate nuclear, which would be Jeff's preference.

Scott Schoeb reiterated that the Summit school roofs – particularly the High School – are well-suited for solar panels. The District Business Administrator, Derek Jess, was receptive to the conversation about solar a year ago, but we have not heard any updates since then. Sofia Mendenhall may approach the SHS Eco Club and then to Principal Grimaldi to learn the best steps to take to advocate for solar panels (petition, speaking to the Board of Ed, etc.).

Jeff also informed the group that according to Garden State Water there is now water testing available that will detect PFAS, or forever chemicals. Donna will ask Aaron Schrager to ask NJ American Water if they are incorporating this testing into our drinking water or to add it if they have not planned to yet. Donna will also check in again about getting an environmental impact statement or similar analysis about the floating solar arrays in the reservoirs.

Lara Mendenhall updated the group about the proposed second Keasbey power plant in Woodbridge Township. Lara, Fred Blau and Helen Campanha participated in a virtual townhall on February 28. Summit is about 20 miles from the proposed plant. If you want to write an individual response to the NJ DEP, the Governor and/or the power plant operating company, you can access a form to make a public comment by March 31 at <https://dontgasmiddlesex.wordpress.com/>.

Kathy Head shared that the number to cancel the Thursday circulars that arrive on the driveway is 1-800-376-6222. If you provide your address, you can be removed from the list.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted by Donna Goggin Patel.

### **Dates for the 2023 Environmental Commission Meetings**

All meetings will be held in the Whitman Room in City Hall. These are typically the 3rd Monday of the month. Any changes to that schedule are noted:

4/17

5/15

6/12 (2nd Monday)

There are no meetings in July and August.

9/18

10/16

11/20

12/18