

City of Summit Environmental Commission Minutes, April 21, 2025

Participating: Donna Goggin Patel, Paul Formichelli, John Kilby, Lara Mendenhall, Mimi Zukoff

Council Rep: Michelle Kalmanson

Guests: Fred Blau, Kathy Head, Chantal Landman, Jocelyn Modesto

Donna Goggin Patel called the meeting to order at 8:07 PM. The March minutes were approved.

Earth Day Clean-Up: Helen Campanha

The city held a successful Earth Day Clean-Up on March 29. Over 210 people volunteered at 10 sites around town, picking up 540 lbs of trash and adding 2 yards of wood chips to trails. We appreciate the support of several members of Common Council and the help of Cub Scout Packs 301 and 360, Boy Scout Troop 67, the Summit High School Environmental Club, the Summit Garden Club, the Summit Lions Club, the PEP Program and the Summit Area YMCA. Special thanks to those who supervised sites: Helen Campanha, Francie Cho, Dan Crisafulli, George Drossinos, Lauren Gonnella, Jeff Hankinson, Kathy Head, Lara Mendendall, Chris Sprague and Mimi Zukoff.

There are three more clean-ups shortly. Mandana Arvandi is organizing an Earth Day Clean-Up at Clearwater Swim Club's nature trails on Sunday, April 27, from 10 am – 12 noon. Donna is assisting the 4th and 5th grade Faith Formation students from St. Teresa of Avila with a clean-up on Saturday, April 26. And there is a group of volunteers from Temple Ohr Shalom cleaning on Sunday, May 4.

“Tiny Forest” Reforestation: Donna Goggin Patel

Donna, Francie, Lara and Mimi have been collaborating on the small, species identification signs for the Tiny Forest. Donna ordered the signs from Lark Signs. Donna met a group of four Green Team and Shade Tree members from Merchantville at the Tiny Forest on Wednesday, April 2. Donna, Francie and Mimi met a group of four people from Hackensack on Friday, April 18.

Rahway River Watershed Association will be hosting an event at the Tiny Forest on Saturday, June 14. Donna and others will be leading tours from 9-10 am and 10:15-11:15 am. If you want to join, register [here](#). The Essex County chapter of the Native Plant Society is scheduled to visit the Tiny Forest on Saturday, October 4, in the morning. Please let Donna know if you are available to lead small group tours. The Union County chapter of the Native Plant Society is

interested in touring this summer, too. They may plan a separate date in July or join one of the other scheduled events.

The Library has an upcoming talk scheduled, including Carol Deminski from the Union County Native Plant Society discussing “Creating a Beautiful Home Garden with Native Plants” in person on April 22 at 7 pm. Register [here](#).

There has been discussion of a potential disease with the redbuds. As we have up to ten in the Tiny Forest, Mimi will reach out to Tekla Pontius-Courney for advice on next steps.

Community Energy Plan: Donna Goggin Patel

Donna and Dan Crisafulli continue to gather information and support the city staff in implementing the steps for various Community Energy Plan (“CEP”) action items. In positive news, there are now 5 Community Solar projects available to JCP&L electricity customers in Summit. The projects are coordinated by Solar Landscape and EverSolar. Residents are receiving flyers about these. Donna is in touch with the Housing Authority, to see if we can revive the talks about signing up the Senior Housing for Community Solar.

Environmental Resource Inventory: Chantal Landman

Summit is revising its Environmental Resource Inventory (“ERI”). Chantal and Donna are holding another call with The Land Conservancy of New Jersey (TLC) on April 24. We will continue to meet periodically with TLC and expect a first draft of the ERI in early summer.

Shade Tree Advisory Committee: John Kilby

The STAC plans for this year include: an Arbor Day planting on April 24 at 4 pm. They are planning a joint talk with Reeves-Reed Arboretum in the Fall. There will be increased information on the city’s website. They have a new group for the Summit Suckers volunteer program.

Update on Grants: Donna Goggin Patel

Summit applied for a \$2,000 grant to go toward a solar array at the DPW Sheds (41 Chatham Road). Jeff added the grant funding recognition plaque to the new sign at Martin’s Brook Park.

Sustainable Jersey Certification: Donna Goggin Patel

In 2025, Summit is due to renew its Sustainable Jersey certification. The remaining Sustainable Jersey certification cycle dates are May 16 and July 31. We applied for over 700 points, and we

already qualify for Silver certification (as we were approved for 475 points from the first round). Donna, Mimi, Francie, Dan, Lara, Helen, Chantal and Melissa Spurr are all worked on action narratives with help from many city employees and community volunteers. We are working on revisions from those comments.

Recycling Advisory Committee: Mimi Zukoff

The city published both the “[Think Before You Buy](#)” and the “[Recycling Beyond the Basics](#)” flyers on its website and Facebook. And Mimi asked the city to expand the search criteria so that this can be found with many different search terms. Recycle Coach has been updated by George Drossinos. Once it is updated, the city will publicize the app. BookSmiles collected 3,560 lbs. of books in early April. RAC is still trying to arrange a “field trip” to the end point recycling processor Bayshore Recycling in Keansby, NJ.

In terms of food waste composting, Green Bucket continues to collect food waste from the Transfer Station. In March, they collected 3 buckets each week for a total of 3,190 lbs. RAC is developing an initiative for the SHS and, also, at LCJSMS to train student volunteers to canvass in neighborhoods in the spring to further spread the word about Food Waste Composting. RAC will hold a Spring tabling event at the Transfer Station on Saturday, May 10, from 9 am - 1pm. The rain date will be June 14. Please sign up for one- or two-hour shifts [here](#).

The new Helpsy Bins are installed at the Transfer Station and open to the public. It is a county-wide program, provided to Summit at no charge. In fact, Summit will be paid a fee of \$0.10 per pound for what is collected. The Helpsy Bins accept any kind of textiles in any condition. Also, accessories, footwear, stuffed animals (a big need), linens, towels, soft luggage, purses, and backpacks. They are emptied each week.

Adam Selig has been working with Jenny Hoff on the first in a series of “quick tip” recycling videos. It covered the types of plastic accepted for recycling, and they have plans for several additional videos. RAC is testing the non-toxic suggestions for a “Use This Not That” flyer presenting non-toxic alternatives to hazardous household products, especially cleaning products.

A RAC attendee has advocated for a local showing of the “Plastic People” movie. Mimi thinks that it may be shown at the Library in the Fall.

Summit Free Market: Mimi Zukoff

For 2025, residents should expect Summit Free Market events on the second Saturday of each month from 8AM-3PM and the fourth Friday of each month from 12-2PM. The next event is Friday, April 25. Bristol-Myers Squibb volunteers are helping with the gardens there on April

25. The next WasteWise Business Network webinar is on May 6 from 10-11:45 am. Details are [here](#). Chistine Lijoi will be talking about the Summit Free Market.

The Virtual Summit Free Market Facebook group now exceeds 5,000 participants, and it has been working well for the most part. They are successfully removing non-residents from the group. Some other Summit FB group admins send messages from time to time with information about members that are either influencers or not Summit residents. Mimi also sends reminders when she sees items that have been picked up but not removed from the group to delete them.

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. Summit needs volunteers to assist in preparing orders at the GSWA Headquarters from April 28-May 2. The Sign-Up Genius is [here](#). And we will need volunteers to transport the orders from GSWA headquarters to Summit on May 3 in the morning, probably around 10 am. The pick-up day for orders collected in Summit will be on Saturday, May 3, from 12:30-2:30 pm. Francie Cho graciously offered her home as the Summit pick-up site this year.

Green Schools: Donna Goggin Patel

The Green Schools parents will meet on Friday, May 2, at 8:45 am. If you would like to join the green parent group, please email greensummitnj@gmail.com. Green Schools held a drive across all five elementary schools for used stuffed animals the first week of April and brought them to the Helpsy bins at the Transfer Station. (They collected over 1,000 stuffed animals.) The Earth in the Classroom lessons will be taught across all 5 elementary schools by parents on April 25. There is a Walk/Bike/Carpool Week planned for May 12-16. Also, please note that Washington School has several recycling opportunities available to the community. There are bins for sneakers (in any condition) and reusable bags outside the entrance to the school under the awning.

We also discussed the idea of requesting funds for school garden maintenance, and we are thinking through the best options. Lara wondered how to build off of the success of the stuffed animal drive to change behaviors. One idea is a “How to Green a Birthday Party” brochure/flyer. This could provide tips on alternatives to physical gifts. Donna will raise the idea with the group on May 2.

Repair Café: Courtney Cordaro

The March 22 Repair Café was successful. There were 120 repair requests from 92 patrons, with 91 items fully repaired by 25 volunteers. For more info, go to www.repaircafegs.org.

GreenFaith: Mimi Zukoff

The GreenFaith global organization is encouraging a Day of Action worldwide on September 20, 2025. They are encouraging individual GreenFaith chapters to hold events the weekend of September 20-21, 2025.

New Business: Everyone

Mimi raised the issue of the Martin's Brook Park invasive species and whether or not we can get Union County to help us evaluate the invasives and prioritize how to attack the invasives. Donna will reach out to Aaron and possibly Union County for advice on next steps.

Lara mentioned the realtor packet new homeowners receive and wondered whether or not we can get environmental resources included. She recalls receiving a lead paint brochure, but that may have been a state mandate. She will speak with a realtor and report back.

Dr. Fred Blau mentioned that he hopes the acoustics in the Whitman Room are improved with the renovation. He also questioned why the DPW sheds are the location being explored for solar panels. Based on the priorities for an eventual microgrid, he believes the priorities should be City Hall and new Fire Headquarters.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted by Donna Goggin Patel.

Dates for the 2025 Environmental Commission Meetings

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

May 12 (Large Conference Room) (2nd Monday due to delays with Whitman Room renovation)

June 16

No meetings in July or August

September 15

October 20

November 17

December 15