

City of Summit Environmental Commission Minutes, October 15, 2018

Present: Donna Patel, Marian Glenn, Rick Bell, Kelly Moughalian, Chris Sprague, Jeff Hankinson, Marjorie Fox, Greg Vartan

Guests: Patricia Palermo, Christina Amundson, Susan Haig, Daniela Gioseffi

Donna Patel called the meeting to order at 8:00 PM.

The September meeting minutes were approved.

Action items in red.

Earth Day Clean-Up: Kelly Moughalian

Kelly sent the formal letter to Paul Cascais on October 6 requesting that Saturday, April 27, 2019, be set as the date of the City's Earth Day Clean-Up (with Sunday, April 28, available for groups not able to work on Saturday and as a rain date for the 27th). Marjorie Fox asked Kelly to forward the letter to her, as well.

Questions from EC for the League of Women Voters Candidate Forum: Donna Patel

The League of Women Voters is holding a Candidate Forum on Saturday, October 27, from 9:30-11:30 am at Summit High School. The EC has historically submitted questions for the candidates, and we discussed submitting questions along these lines for this year's event:

1. If you could choose a city-wide environmental initiative that you'd like to see in Summit, what would you pick?
2. In terms of the Broad Street Redevelopment, what is the top environmental feature that you would like to see incorporated into the final design?

Park Line: Jeff Hankinson

Jeff explained that signing the Memorandum of Understanding with the city is an important first step for the Park Line. The Park Line Foundation wants to take additional steps to introduce its ideas and plans to the city. They are hoping to have a public forum in November. Jeff is working to clear and clean the site. He and others are cutting down invasive plants and removing trash and concrete. He also mentioned there is uneven earth along certain parts that he thinks need to be graded, levelled and eventually seeded. Jeff offered to give a tour of the current Park Line to anyone who is interested.

The Park Line Foundation is looking at other communities' success with introducing Northern Bobwhite Quail to combat ticks. The EC members had a number of questions including whether or not this is a native species to NJ. Would we see the quails at the Watchung Reservation or either of the Arboretums? **Donna will forward around Jeff's email and the Wikipedia link regarding the quails.**

Green Summit NJ: Donna Patel

Green Summit hosted a successful Repair Cafe at St. John's Lutheran Church (587 Springfield Ave) on Saturday, September 22. This free event included repairs to bicycles, small motors, wood/furniture, clothing/textiles, and small electronics. Knife sharpening and tips on plants and gardening were also provided at the event. A steady stream of people attended the event. There were over 70 repairs (not counting each knife as a separate repair). Green Summit plans to hold another Repair Café in 2019 – possibly in March. Donna Patel and Melissa Spurr spoke at the monthly meeting of Summit's Junior Fortnightly Club on October 10, about Green Summit's work. The audience asked many questions specifically about plastics and recycling practices. On Friday, October 12, Green Summit joined with The Film Society of Summit to promote the showing of "Bag It." Mandana Arvandi, Lauren Gonnella and Laura Hughes all participated in a Q&A session following the movie. Susan Haig and Marian Glenn also attended the movie and would like to see it reach a wider audience. The Film Society is considering a screening at the High School. The Summit Free Public Library was also mentioned as a possible screening location.

In November, Green Summit is partnering with Reeves-Reed Arboretum for a showing of the documentary "Before the Flood" at 2:00 pm on Saturday, November 3, at the Arboretum. The event is free but registration is required at www.reeves-reedarboretum.org On Thursday, November 15, Sean Frusco, a Project Manager at Public Service Solar, will speak about solar panel options currently available to homeowners in New Jersey. The presentation will take place from 7:00-8:00 pm at Barnwell Hall at Christ Church (561 Springfield Ave., Summit, NJ). This event is cosponsored by Green Summit and the Summit Area GreenFaith Circle. RSVP to greensummitnj@gmail.com.

Summit Schools: Donna Patel

Karin Pittle-Gale is holding a meeting on November 15 at 9:30 am with parents from the various Summit school green teams to share ideas and discuss plans for district-wide initiatives (such as the walk/bike/carpool to school event) for this year. If you are interested in being part of this effort, please contact karin.pittle.gale@gmail.com. Marjorie recommended that Donna reach out to Patti Schneider Smith as she ran a similar group in the past.

Recycling Advisory Committee: Karen Raihofer/Chris Sprague

RAC is expecting to launch the following programs in the upcoming weeks: (1) the Skip the Straw campaign across Summit restaurants (joint program with the EC and Green Summit); (2) establishing a permanent Trex plastic bag collection site at the Transfer Station, and (3) expanding the tennis ball recycling program to Tatlock Field (these go to RecycleBalls). RAC members and Paul Cascais will attend a demonstration on October 16 of the Rocket composter at Merck in Kenilworth. RAC is also reaching out to the custodial staff and PTOs in each Summit school specifically about the recycling practices in place. The SHS students described room for improvement in the recycling practices at the High School. Summit's recycling contract goes through December 2019, so there is no expectation of a change to the recycling of plastics in 2019.

Union County EC Hub Update: Marian Glenn

The Springfield Environmental Commission reached out to Summit about forming a Union County Hub. Springfield invited individuals from ECs and Green Teams around Union County to its October meeting at 7:00 pm on October 15. Marian Glenn and Melissa Spurr both attended. There also was a Sustainable Jersey representative at the meeting, as well as representatives from Springfield, Berkeley Heights, Rahway and Westfield. There was a decision to form a Union County Hub at the meeting. Some of the topics discussed include permeable asphalt purchasing at better price, plastic recycling through Trex (Berkeley Heights has collected about 1,500 lbs through 5-6 depots with the EC Commissioners collecting the bags), stormwater action plans, hosting a county-wide Green Fair, trans-town bike routes and composting/digestible recycling. Sustainable Jersey also provides small grants to County Hubs to promote their activities. More outreach will be done to reach the other towns of Union County to participate.

GreenFaith/Bags to Benches: Marian Glenn

GreenFaith held a picnic lunch and hike along the Passaic River in Chatham on Sunday, October 14. The Summit Area GreenFaith Circle is currently running its Bags to Benches campaign. Various houses of worship in Summit are collecting clean plastic bags and stretchable plastic film products to support the recycling of plastic into lumber by Trex, which awards each 500 lb. donation with a bench made of recycled plastic. Trex accepts these types of clean and dry stretched plastics: grocery bags, bread bags, case overwrap, dry cleaning bags, newspaper sleeves, ice bags, Ziploc baggies, produce bags, bubble wrap, salt and cereal bags. The public outdoor collection bin is outside the Church Office in the driveway off Deforest Ave. at the Summit United Methodist Church. The United Methodist Church is halfway to its goal. The public bin will be moving to Congregation Ohr Shalom (the JCC) on the corner of Morris Ave. and Kent Place Boulevard next.

Stormwater Updates: Marian Glenn

Marian attended two workshops in September led by Dr. Christopher Obropta, Director of Water Resources Program at Rutgers Cooperative Extension. Summit is Tier A municipality for purposes of its Stormwater MS4 permit renewal. According to ANJEC's Report for Autumn 2018, the 2018 MS4 permit renewal now requires "all local officials and staff who review or make decisions on stormwater plans" to take a training in "Asking the right questions in stormwater review." Marian believes this training would apply to all members of the Planning Board, Zoning Board, EC and Municipal Engineers. Aaron Schragar has conducted sessions with Common Council and the Planning Board. There is also an online tool about stormwater management that completes the training.

Marian suggested that the EC host the online portion of the training at the next EC meeting (and invite the Planning Board and Zoning Board members who have not yet completed the online portion). **Marian will send around the link to the online tool.**

ANJEC Congress: Marian Glenn

Marian attended the ANJEC Congress on Friday, October 12, and heard about a new community solar energy program. Starting in January 2019, the Board of Public Utilities would allow individuals to purchase shares in a solar grid. The pilot allows for up to a 5 megawatt system (equivalent to a 30 acre solar farm) that would provide power for approximately 800 houses. At the end of 3 years, the program would become permanent. The site of the solar farm and the subscribers must be physically within the service area of one electric provider (but the solar farm could be in another state). The program requires 40% of the subscribers to be low-to-medium income households. It is expected subscribers would save approx. 10% with a subscription. The preference is for the solar farms to be located on landfills, transfer stations, brownfields, commercial building rooftops, etc. The solar developer would connect the city with the solar grid.

Renewable Energy Group: Marian Glenn

The Renewable Energy group will hold its first meeting on Monday, October 29, from 8:00-9:00 pm in the Large Conference Room at City Hall. Daniela Gioseffi provided an update about the Essex County energy aggregation. Maplewood is the lead town for this alliance of approximately 119,000 residents launching in December. Each municipality adopted its own ordinance and resolution to join this. Tracey Woods, Chair of Maplewood's Green Team, is the point person for the Essex County group and will attend the October 29 meeting.

Other News:

Daniela Gioseffi shared a radio news story about the volume of microplastics in NJ and the Greenpeace list of the top 5 corporate plastic polluters.

Marjorie informed us that the Transfer Station Task Force is planning to meet next week.

Marjorie informed us that the city received the conceptual plans for Broad Street redevelopment recently. There is not a short list yet. The City is talking to everyone and developing a redevelopment plan – there will be a public comment for that (where we can share our ideas for green aspects). Then they will select the developer(s) for negotiations.

Susan Haig told us about a “drawdown” speech she heard at a climate event in New York City. This program is focused on solutions with the goal to draw down the carbon in the atmosphere.

Donna Patel called the meeting to a close at 9:25.