

Environmental Commission Annual Report for 2014

Throughout 2014, the City of Summit Environmental Commission (EC) worked to promote sustainability efforts in Summit through education, outreach and events, as well as by coordination of activities with other community organizations.

In 2014, the EC met 10 times, once each month with the exception of July and August. As dictated by state law, the EC has seven appointed commissioners and two alternates. At the beginning of 2014, there were two vacant spots due to the resignation of Amy Cairns Harrison (who was EC Chairperson) and Chris Lijoi. Beth Lovejoy was appointed Chairperson, and one commissioner position was filled by Rick Bell, who is an architect in NYC specializing in sustainable building. Rick assumes the job of reviewing plans before the Planning Board when the EC is asked to comment. David Naidu resigned from the EC effective December 31, 2014, and Summit resident Kelly Moughalian will be appointed in January. There is still one open position.

In addition to the EC commissioners, there is an additional group called the Green Team, which is comprised of Summit residents interested in participating on occasional projects, getting the monthly updates, and attending some meetings. The Green Team currently has twenty members and includes Mayor Ellen Dickson, Council members Patrick Hurley (EC liaison) and Sandra Lizza, City staffers Beth Kinney and Amy Cairns Harrison, and Shade Tree Advisory Committee Chairperson Christina Amundson.

Sustainable Jersey

Beth Lovejoy prepared the application for Summit's recertification with Sustainable Jersey. With help from EC members Marian Glenn (community garden) and Marjorie Fox (Recycling Advisory Committee liaison), from City staff including Paul Cascais, Aaron Schrage and Rick Matias, Beth Kinney, Judith Josephs, Amy Cairns Harrison, and Rosemary Licatase, and Shade Tree Advisory Committee Chairperson Christina Amundson, as well as Summit Downtown Inc. (SDI) Director Marin Mixon, and Summit Schools personnel Karen Greco (Communications) and Paul Sears (SHS principal), Summit was able to submit a strong application, and was named a Sustainability Champion for having been awarded more points than any other mid-size NJ municipality. Summit was also recertified at the silver level (no gold level exists yet).

Community Outreach

Communications: Many green-related posts have been made to the EC's [Summit, NJ: Talking Green. Living Green Facebook page](#), and the [Recycling Advisory Committee's Facebook page](#), as well as the [City of Summit Facebook page](#). In addition to green tips and advice, there was substantial publicity about the Summit Free Market spring and fall events, and the Eighth Annual Earth Day Clean Up (April 26 and 27), including newspapers (online and print), Facebook and Twitter. The EC emailed information about the events via its own gogreen email list and via the Department of Community Programs email list.

The EC prepared a calendar of spring and summer outdoor and green events and published it via the City website and Facebook.

The EC maintains pdf flyers on various topics available via the [Environment tab](#) on the City of Summit website. Among the topics covered are recycling, stormwater management, and tree regulations and information.

Marian Glenn, Marjorie Fox, Patti Schneider Smith (Green Team member), and Beth Lovejoy manned at table for the EC at Community Night on the Green in July. Beth Lovejoy also manned an EC table at the YMCA's Health Fair in September, and Ruth Gais manned a table at the green fair accompanying the

Interfaith Thanksgiving Service in November. Beth Lovejoy also gave a presentation to the Rotary Club on the EC, sat on a panel about sustainability for the City Democrats, and presented at the Sustainable Jersey panel of award winners in Atlantic City during the NJLM conference.

Summit Free Market: Summit Free Market had very successful spring and fall events on April 26, May 3, October 11, and October 18. Former EC Commissioners Amy Cairns and Christine Lijoi served as adult mentors for the student-run committee, and several EC commissioners volunteered their time.

Community Garden: The second year for the community garden was a great success. Environmental Commissioner Marian Glenn has continued to have a significant role in managing the garden, and EC member Ruth Gais was also involved.

Annual and Ongoing Projects

Annual Earth Day Clean Up: EC Chair Beth Lovejoy with support from Commissioners and Green Team members Marjorie Fox, Priya Kubair, Marian Glenn, John Kilby, David Naidu, Patti Schneider Smith, and Polly Thomas organized the annual Earth Day Clean Up, which took place on April 26 and 27. Volunteers of all ages collected 1.23 tons of trash and recyclables, removed invasive plants, and cleaned and woodchipped trails in five Summit locations.

Passaic River Trails: Commissioners Judith Mandelbaum and David Naidu have managed this project in collaboration with Rick Matias and Aaron Schragger in the City's Engineering Department and Union County Environmental Specialist Betty Ann Kelly. With direction and assistance from the EC, City employees and Ms. Kelly, three Eagle Scouts finished projects along the trail, which included trail maintenance and blazing, building steps on a steep part, installing stairs down to the Passaic River in one area and replacing a decaying staircase in another section with a switchback trail, and building benches at overlook points.

In August, the Overlook Healthy Neighborhoods Initiative awarded The Summit Conservancy a \$10,000 grant to create an attractive and informational trail head on New Providence Avenue for the trails that run along the Passaic River. The Conservancy is managing the funds, and the project is being done by the EC and a large group of volunteers. With the assistance of Union County and City staff, Judith Mandelbaum has been organizing efforts to remove invasive species (primarily knotweed), prepare a plan for the area, and organize volunteers to help with the ground preparation, planting, building a kiosk, and clearing and marking the trails. The project should be completed by late 2015.

Review of Plans before the Planning Board

EC members David Naidu and Judith Mandelbaum reviewed plans going before the Planning Board, when asked to provide suggestions, which usually relate to planting native species and green building practices.

Looking Forward

The EC has begun discussions and preliminary work on several projects:

Green Business Recognition: Working with the Recycling Advisory Committee, SDI and several business owners, the EC is developing a program to recognize local businesses for green activities that they undertake, and to develop a list of "best practices" that can be shared among merchants to educate and inspire more green practices.

Preparation of a Green Booklet: The EC is interested in preparing a "green" booklet for Summit to post on the City website (as a link to a pdf), and to offer to realtors for distribution to home buyers. Topics suggested for the booklet include recycling dates, location and materials that can be recycled and donated;

detailed information about the Transfer Station; Home Performance with Energy Star and Direct Install; Summit Free Market; Annual Earth Day Clean Up; information about trees in Summit; volunteer possibilities; list of trails and locations of trailheads; recreation routes; and community garden information.

Biking Project: Several EC members have expressed an interest in working with Common Council, police, schools and local bike shops to promote safe bike riding. Various strategies discussed include promoting a healthy bike culture through education on bike safety for both drivers and pedestrians, making a safe bikeway through Summit, and adding more bike racks around town.

Summit Free Market: The EC will continue to encourage support for the Summit Free Market permanent building via its Community Outreach efforts.

The EC welcomes suggestions and comments from all members of Common Council and the community. Please join the Summit, NJ: Talking Green, Living Green Facebook open group page at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/184758811555182/>.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Lovejoy, Chairperson
City of Summit Environmental Commission

All EC meetings are open to the public. Please join us at any EC meeting in 2015 in the Whitman Room (unless noted otherwise) at 8 PM. The dates are:

1/19, 2/9, 3/16, 4/20, 5/18 (large conference room), 6/15, 9/21, 10/19, 11/16 (employee lunchroom),
12/14