

Environmental Commission Annual Report for 2019

Throughout 2019, the City of Summit Environmental Commission (EC) worked to promote sustainability efforts in Summit through community projects, outreach and events, as well as by coordination of activities with community organizations.

As dictated by state law, the EC has seven appointed commissioners and two alternates. Donna Goggin Patel is the appointed chairperson. In 2019, Rich Fiore was the Planning Board representative to the EC, EC member Chris Sprague was the liaison to the Recycling Advisory Committee, and EC member John Kilby was chairperson of Summit's Shade Tree Advisory Committee.

Two long-standing members of the EC retired at the end of 2019. Marian Glenn joined the EC in 2002, and she chaired the EC from 2004-2010. Beth Lovejoy joined the EC in 2013, and she chaired it from 2014-2018. Melissa Spurr and Mimi Zukoff have been appointed to take their spots.

All EC meetings are open to the public and generally several non-members attend meetings on a regular basis. In addition, Council liaison David Naidu attended several EC meetings in 2019.

Many EC members are members of other groups interested in sustainability. Rick Bell is on the Broad Street West Redevelopment Task Force. Jeff Hankinson is on the board of the Park Line Foundation and on the Transfer Station Task Force. Donna Goggin Patel is involved with the school parent green teams. Donna and Melissa Spurr are both trustees of Reeves-Reed Arboretum and members of Green Summit NJ. (They presented results of Green Summit's resident survey to Council in May.) Mimi Zukoff is active in the GreenFaith Circle.

2019 Projects

Annual Earth Day Clean-Up: The EC members organized and managed the annual Earth Day Clean-Up, which took place in April at seven different spots in Summit. Overall, over 200 volunteers of all ages collected almost 3 tons (5,900 lbs) of trash and recyclables, removed invasive plants, and cleaned and woodchipped trails.

Sustainable Jersey Recertification and Sustainability Champion Award: The EC was responsible for preparing the application for Summit's re-certification with Sustainable Jersey with input from all City departments, the Recycling Advisory Committee, the Shade Tree Advisory Committee, Summit Downtown, Inc., and others. Beth Lovejoy and Donna Goggin Patel drafted the majority of the application. For specific Sustainable Jersey actions, the EC also had the help of two interns, a graduate student, Claire Cummins, and City of Summit intern, Claire Goudreau. Summit submitted a strong application garnering 640 points (only 350 points were necessary for recertification), and – for the sixth time – was named the Sustainability Champion in the mid-size municipality category for having been awarded more points than any other mid-size NJ municipality.

The EC also received a \$2,000 grant from Sustainable Jersey for on-going projects. This grant has been used to fund the carbon footprint analysis in the Sustainable Jersey application, as well as on-going expenses related to Earth Day clean-up and trail work.

Membership in Union County Hub and the Northern Jersey Sustainable Municipal Alliance Group: The Environmental Commission is in contact with the Environmental Commissions of neighboring towns to share resources and information about successful initiatives. This includes a Union County Hub supported by Sustainable Jersey and a group of towns in our geographic area self-titled the Northern Jersey Sustainable Municipal Alliance Group. Collectively, we are in touch with members from Berkeley Heights, Chatham Borough, Chatham Township, Cranford, Livingston, Madison, Millburn, Morris Township, Rahway, Roselle Park, Springfield and Westfield. The Union County Hub towns are now holding regular quarterly meetings. Summit hosted one in July featuring a panel discussion on New Jersey's community solar pilot program. Other

Hub meetings have focused on single-use plastics pollution, energy aggregation and creative solutions for organic food waste. Donna Goggin Patel routinely attends these meetings, along with Marian Glenn and others who have availability, and the EC shares these resources with RAC and other city boards.

Renewable Energy Subcommittee: Marian Glenn and Donna Goggin Patel have organized a small group of people interested in researching renewable energy and its potential for municipal and residential use in Summit. The subcommittee kept abreast of the community solar pilot in New Jersey through webinars and a panel discussion. Dr. Frederick P. Blau, a retired physicist and Summit resident also presented about micro-grids at the May EC meeting. Micro-grids are a self-contained, smaller-scale electric grid with its own power generation.

Organic Green Space Management Research: On behalf of the EC, Beth Lovejoy prepared a memo (sent to Paul Cascais in July for discussion with the Department of Public Works and Council) summarizing current research on the health and environmental effects of synthetic pesticides and recommending a switch to fully organic management of Summit's green spaces.

Passaic River Trails: Jeff Hankinson worked to clear a new footpath along the Passaic River from Chatham Road (near the DPW shed) toward Route 124. Jeff, along with Chris Sprague and several members of Council, also worked as part of the Earth Day Clean-Up to remove trash from this area in preparation for Jeff's work.

Review of Plans for the Planning and Zoning Boards: EC member and New York City architect Rick Bell, on behalf of the EC, has reviewed more than 40 plans under review by the Planning and Zoning Boards, and has provided suggestions, which usually relate to planting native species, addressing storm water runoff, and green building practices. His main comment relates to the lack of a landscape plan in the applications, specifically to address what trees and other landscaping will be removed and what will be added to make up for the removals.

Community Outreach

Communications: Many green-related posts have been made to the EC's [Summit NJ Environmental Commission Facebook group](#), and the [Recycling Advisory Committee's Facebook page](#), as well as the [City of Summit Facebook page](#) and local newspapers. The EC also authored an article on greening the holidays for the Summit Living magazine. Thanks to Amy Cairns and Meredith Hendra for their substantial help in outreach.

Educational Tables at Events: The EC hosted a table at the City's Local Government Open House event in April. Celgene invited the EC to have informational tables at their Earth Day Fairs at both of their locations in April, which were manned by Jeff Hankinson, Beth Lovejoy and Donna Goggin Patel. There were about 150 visitors to the EC tables at those events. John Kilby, Kelly Moughalian, Donna Goggin Patel and Chris Sprague manned a table for the EC and the Shade Tree Advisory Committee at Community Night on the Green in July.

Please join the Summit NJ Environmental Commission Facebook open group at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/184758811555182/>.

The EC welcomes suggestions and comments from the Mayor, members of Common Council, City staff and the community. EC meetings are open to everyone and take place in the Whitman Room, except as noted below, at 8 PM; they generally last about an hour. A list of 2020 meeting dates appears below.

Respectfully submitted,
Donna Goggin Patel, 2019 Chairperson
City of Summit Environmental Commission

2020 EC meeting dates (8 PM in the Whitman Room at City Hall): 1/21 (Tues), 2/10 (2nd Mon), 3/16, 4/20, 5/11 (2nd Mon), 6/15, 9/21, 10/19, 11/17 (Tues), 12/14 (2nd Mon). There are no meetings in July and August.