

RECEIVED

By rilicatese at 8:27 am, 12/16/22

Environmental Commission Annual Report for 2022

Throughout 2022, 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. For most of 2022, Rich Fiore was the Planning Board representative to the EC (with Rick Bell replacing him at year-end), EC member Mimi Zukoff was the liaison to the Recycling Advisory Committee, and EC member John Kilby was chairperson of Summit's Shade Tree Advisory Committee.

All EC meetings are open to the public and generally several non-members attend meetings on a regular basis. In addition, Council liaison Marjorie Fox attended most of the EC meetings in 2022.

Many EC members are members of other groups interested in sustainability. Jeff Hankinson is on the Park Line board. Donna Goggin Patel is a trustee of Reeves-Reed Arboretum, a member of Green Summit NJ, and she is involved with the school parent green team. Mimi Zukoff is active in the Summit Area GreenFaith Circle. Rick Bell was on the Broad Street West Redevelopment Task Force prior to his appointment to the Planning Board.

2022 Projects

Annual Earth Day Clean-Up: EC members, particularly Kelly Moughalian and Donna Goggin Patel, organized and managed the annual Earth Day Clean-Up which took place on April 2 at eleven different spots in Summit. We had 220 participants who collected 640 lbs. of trash and 352 lbs. of recycling.

Sustainable Jersey Recertification: 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. Current EC members Donna Goggin Patel, Chris Sprague, and Mimi Zukoff and former EC members Beth Lovejoy and Melissa Spurr drafted the majority of the narratives. Summit submitted a strong application garnering 620 point for 50 actions (only 350 points were necessary for recertification).

Tiny Forest Reforestation: In 2021, NJ American Water awarded Summit a \$10,000 grant to complete a reforestation project at the Community Center (100 Morris Ave.). The ribbon-cutting for the 11,000 square foot "Tiny Forest" was held on April 2. The Tiny Forest now contains over 600 plantings of over 45 native species of trees, shrubs, and wildflowers. It was planted using the Miyawaki Method (developed by Dr. Akira Miyawaki in Japan). Summit's Tiny Forest is one of the first micro-forests in New Jersey. The Tiny Forest is a multi-layered forest of native plants that is designed to become self-sustaining after 2-3 years and to become a fully-developed forest in 20-30 years. During 2022, dozens of volunteers planted the 600+ plantings, watered and weeded as needed (as part of the maintenance required for the first 2-3 years), and performed other maintenance tasks, such as adding wood chips to the path and around the plantings. Former EC-member Dr. Marian Glenn, and current EC chair Donna Goggin Patel have taken the lead on this with assistance from EC members Jeff Hankinson, John Kilby, Lara Mendenhall, Chris Sprague, and Mimi Zukoff. Donna has led several tours of the Tiny Forest for neighboring Environmental Commissions, representatives from Groundwork Elizabeth, Kean University, Seton Hall University, the Rahway River Watershed Association, Union County and the Summit Garden Club. She also spoke about the project for the "Fall in Love with Trees" series at Reeves-Reed Arboretum on Oct. 6.

Green Investing Presentation: With coordination by EC member Mimi Zukoff, the EC, Summit Area GreenFaith Circle, and the Summit Free Public Library cosponsored a virtual talk by Peter Krull on April 5 entitled "SRI: Understanding Sustainable, Responsible and Impact Investing." The link to Mr. Krull's talk is available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8YjS7Nz-vHA>.

Membership in Union County Hub and the Northern Jersey Sustainable Municipal Alliance Group: The EC is in contact with the Environmental Commissions and Green Teams 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 (NJSMA). 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. Donna Goggin Patel routinely attends these meetings, along with others who have availability, and the EC shares these resources with RAC and other city boards. EC member Mimi Zukoff led Summit's coordination with NJSMA for the second year to hold an annual native plant sale in partnership with the Great Swamp Watershed Association that was a huge success and will be continued.

Community Energy Plan Grant: The BPU and Sustainable Jersey awarded Summit a \$10,000 planning grant to create a Community Energy Plan. EC members Donna Goggin Patel and Dan Crisafulli are leading this effort, and they have held several preliminary meetings with Aaron Schrager and Jin Blades from the city staff, Marjorie Fox, Jaime Levine, and Danny O'Sullivan from Council, and interested residents.

Review of Plans for the Planning and Zoning Boards: Throughout 2022, the EC 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. This work was done by EC member and New York City architect Rick Bell through August 2022, and by Donna Goggin Patel, Lara Mendenhall and Chris Sprague subsequently, on behalf of the EC.

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. Thanks to Amy Cairns for her substantial help in outreach.

Recognition: The EC received an Environmental Excellence Award from ANJEC (Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions) for the Tiny Forest at its Annual Congress on October 14.

Educational Tables at Events: Dan Crisafulli, John Kilby, Donna Goggin Patel, Chris Sprague manned a table for the EC and the Shade Tree Advisory Committee at Community Night on the Green in July.

Speaking Engagements: Donna Goggin Patel spoke about the Tiny Forest reforestation as part of the "Fall in Love with Trees" series at Reeves-Reed Arboretum on Oct. 6. She also spoke about this project to the Summit Garden Club on Nov. 17 and provided a tour to the group.

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 typically on the third Monday of the month at 8 PM in the Whitman Room; they generally last about an hour. A list of 2023 meeting dates appears below.

Respectfully submitted,
Donna Goggin Patel, 2022 Chairperson
City of Summit Environmental Commission

2023 EC meeting dates (8 PM in the Whitman Room at City Hall): 1/23 (4th Monday), 2/27 (4th Monday), 3/20, 4/17, 5/15, 6/12 (2nd Monday), 9/18, 10/16, 11/20, 12/18. There are no meetings in July and August.