

City of Summit Environmental Commission Minutes, January 21, 2025

Participating: Donna Goggin Patel, Francie Cho, Dan Crisafulli, Jeff Hankison, John Kilby, Lara Mendenhall, Mimi Zukoff

Guests: Mandana Arvandi, Rick Bell, Fred Blau, Kathy Head, Jocelyn Modesto

Donna Goggin Patel called the meeting to order at 8:02 PM. The Dec. minutes were approved.

Earth Day Clean-Up: Helen Campanha

The approved dates for the Earth Day Clean-Up in 2025 are March 29, with March 30 as the rain date or alternate date for those who cannot work on Saturday. Helen sent a Save the Date email.

“Tiny Forest” Reforestation: Donna Goggin Patel

Donna, Francie, Lara and Mimi have been collaborating on the small, species identification signs for the Tiny Forest. Rahway River Watershed Association will be hosting an event at the Tiny Forest on Saturday, June 14. Donna will be leading tours from 9-10 am and 10:15-11:15 am.

Donna spoke to EC members in Cranford last week and will be talking to representatives from Yonkers this Thursday about microforests. Irvy Pinzon, along with Marian Glenn and Christina Perez, are looking to increase bird monitoring at the Tiny Forest with additional equipment.

While at the Martin Luther King, Jr. activities at CPC this weekend, Mimi thought that a seed sorting table could be a welcome addition to the activities. Pastor Deborah Huggins and the Library’s Executive Director, Amy Behr-Shields, are on board with the idea for the future.

Environmental Resource Inventory: Chantal Landman

As mentioned at the last meeting, we received a Sustainable Jersey and PSEG Foundation grant in the amount of \$10,000 to revise the Environmental Resource Inventory (“ERI”). Chantal Landman is spearheading this project. An ERI is a compilation of text and visual information about the capacity, characteristics, and features of the municipality’s natural resources. Summit’s current ERI is from 2011. We kicked off the project last week with The Land Conservancy of New Jersey, Aaron Schrager, Augusto Dal’Maso, Donna and Chantal. The Land Conservancy is working with us to collect relevant information that will guide their project, including areas of focus like the Tiny Forest, Salt Brook, Reeves-Reed Arboretum and studies about invasive species and impervious coverage. We will continue to meet periodically with TLC as they work on the ERI and expect a first draft in early summer.

Community Energy Plan: Donna Goggin Patel

Donna and Dan Crisafulli met with Aaron Schrager and Augusto Dal'Maso to discuss status of the various Community Energy Plan ("CEP") action items. We continue to gather information and support the city staff in implementing the steps.

Update on Grants: Donna Goggin Patel

Donna is working on the final grant report for the Sustainable Jersey \$2,000 grant from 2023.

Sustainable Jersey Certification: Donna Goggin Patel

For 2025, Summit is due to renew its Sustainable Jersey certification. The Sustainable Jersey certification cycle dates are February 23, May 16, and July 31. Donna, Mimi, Dan, Lara, Helen, Chantal and Melissa Spurr are all working on action narratives.

Shade Tree Advisory Committee: John Kilby

The street tree inventory is complete. Fifty shade trees were planted in the Fall. Residents will receive the tags and watering instructions in the Spring.

Summit Free Market: Mimi Zukoff

The first Summit Free Market in-person event of the year was held on January 11 and was incredibly busy following the holidays. The next weekday in-person event will be on Friday, January 24, from 12-2 PM. For 2025, residents should expect events on the second Saturday of each month from 8AM-3PM and the fourth Friday of each month from 12-2PM. Mimi will be attending the Summit Free Market Steering Committee meeting on January 23 for the Environmental Commission.

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. RAC sent the first batch of Recycle Coach updates to the Department of Public Works and hopes to have permission to update Recycle Coach by the end of the month.

In 2024, BookSmiles picked up overflow books seven times, removing approximately 21,000 lbs. of books. This translates to approximately 25,000 books, many of which would otherwise have become trash. This saved the city money in tipping fees. Not a single book goes into trash at BookSmiles. Any completely unusable book goes to a recycling plant that turns them into new

paper products. The first 2025 pick-up was on Jan. 9 and the exact poundage was 3,060 lbs. The truck is now being weighed before and after pickup.

In terms of food waste composting, Green Bucket is now weighing the weekly pickup weight. For December the city had 4,360 lbs and 16 bins picked up. It appears there is currently unused capacity of one bin per week.

Union County Hub: Donna Goggin Patel

Donna and Helen attended the Union County Hub meeting on January 13 from 7-8:30 pm in Berkeley Heights. Representatives from 9 different Union County towns attended and there was a lively discussion of many topics, including Skip the Stuff, gas leaf blower restrictions, [Direct Pay](#) tax incentives for municipalities and other tax-exempt organizations, Environmental Resource Inventories, clean-ups, rails-to-trails projects, artificial turf resistance, food waste composting, other potential tiny forests, and how to recycle hard-to-recycle items. Sustainable Jersey is launching a [purchasing center](#) to help municipalities purchase EVs and EV chargers. The Hub hopes to meet at least twice a year.

GreenFaith: Mimi Zukoff

There will be a regional event at Drew University in April or May for the cross-sharing of ideas.

Green Schools: Donna Goggin Patel

The Green Schools parents met on Friday, January 17, at 8:45 am. There are three Composting 101 videos created by Green Schools Parents available on its Instagram account (@greensummitnj) to encourage families to utilize the Transfer Station program. The next meeting will be on Friday, February 28, at 8:45 am. If you would like to join the green parent group, please email greensummitnj@gmail.com.

Also, please note that Washington School has several recycling opportunities available to the community. There are bins for the following items outside the entrance to the school under the awning: sneakers (in any condition), Legos, markers and reusable bags.

New Business: Everyone

Dr. Frederick Blau presented slides he created about the feasibility and potential energy generation of installing solar canopies on the Broad Street parking garage structure and all the public parking lots in Summit. The new Fire Station can receive power from solar panels of the Broad Street garage that is located 0.2 miles away. The cost to run wiring that distance would cost approximately \$110K (based on San Diego). It will take a few months to gauge the electricity usage for the new Fire Station. A solar panel with 20% efficient would produce 0.789 kWh/day/m². Fred estimated the Fire Station's electricity usage is about 10x that of a private

home, which is 300 kWh/day or 380 m². With these calculations, he estimates a savings of over \$13K if the electricity still costs 12.5 cents/kWh. There are six other parking lots/garages in the downtown area. Note that Fred's numbers do not include the price of the solar arrays which would be a substantial up-front cost. Solar arrays are getting cheaper and more efficient. Dan found estimated costs for carport arrays which he will send to Fred.

Many people reported seeing parking solar canopies at private facilities, John Kilby mentioned seeing one behind Union High School near the soccer and football fields. You can read about this project [here](#).

Lara Mendenhall mentioned that Berkeley Heights is in the process of being designated a Bee City USA (which is overseen by Xerces). Summit has not yet looked into getting this designation, but it is on our radar now.

Mimi registered her yard at Jersey Friendly Yards. She reported it to be a simple, straightforward process. The resident certification application is [here](#).

Rick Bell reported that the next Green Cities talk is on Wednesday, February 5, at 12 noon. The topic is traffic congestion and health in Cali, Colombia. You can find more information [here](#).

The meeting was adjourned at 9:12 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:

February 24 (4th Monday because of Presidents' Day) (in Large Conference Room)

March 17

April 21

May 19

June 16

No meetings in July or August

September 15

October 20

November 17

December 15