

City of Summit Environmental Commission Minutes, January 23, 2023

Participating: Donna Goggin Patel, Rick Bell, Dan Crisafulli, John Kilby, Lara Mendenhall, Kelly Moughalian, Chris Sprague, Mimi Zukoff

Council Rep: Jaime Levine

Guests: Fred Blau, Courtney Cordaro, Susan Haig, Kathy Head

Donna Goggin Patel called the meeting to order at 8:03 PM. The Dec. minutes were approved.

Earth Day Clean-Up Planning: Donna Goggin Patel

Kelly Moughalian emailed a save the date to the past participants alerting them that the annual Earth Day Clean-Up is set for Saturday, April 22, with Sunday, April 23, as the alternate or rain date. Donna requested that the MS/HS Boy Scout troop to work at Martin's Brook Park rather than at the Passaic River Trails this year. Kelly suggested adding the Community Center as a site. Christina Amundson confirmed that the Garden Club can weed at Trailhead again this year.

"Tiny Forest" Reforestation: Donna Goggin Patel

The Tiny Forest is dormant for winter. Donna is working with Amy Cairns on the design of the larger, educational signage for the Tiny Forest. Donna and Marian Glenn are considering which replacement and/or enhancement plants, including bayberry, witch hazel and sassafras. Anecdotally, Kathy Head mentioned she has had a poor success rate with bayberry in her yard.

Sustainable Jersey Grant Applications: Donna Goggin Patel

The Environmental Commission plans to apply for a \$20,000 grant from Sustainable Jersey to install solar panels and a microgrid at City Hall. If this is not awarded, we plan to apply for a \$2,000 grant to cover on-going expenses. The grant applications are drafted for review by Common Council at its Feb. 7 meeting and would be submitted by Feb. 10. The \$2,000 grant could fund such items as future speakers, additional tools for the Tiny Forest and Earth Day Clean-Up, updated signage at Martin's Brook, and 5-gallon buckets to be used in a RAC giveaway to encourage residents to try out the food waste composting at the Transfer Station.

Recycling Advisory Committee: Mimi Zukoff

RAC held a meeting on January 12, 2023. Since the committee has not met for months, it reviewed the history and charge of RAC. RAC was established in 2005 "to assist the City of

Summit with its municipal recycling efforts to reach the goal of reducing the waste stream by 50%.” Current RAC initiatives include the food waste composting and the recycling collections for Legos, string lights, cellphones for soldiers, and tennis balls. Guests (including the EC) are always welcome. The meetings are on Zoom right now and the meeting dates this year are: Feb. 9; March 2; April 13; May 4; June 1; Sept. 7; Oct. 12; Nov. 2; and Dec. 7.

The food waste composting program with Green Bucket at the Transfer Station will continue through 2023. Any kind of food item, raw or cooked can be composted, including animal products. The collection containers are on the lower level of the Transfer Station, just past the garage. Residents with a Transfer Station permit can bring food waste any time the Transfer Station is open. There was 2,951 lbs. of food waste composted in December. RAC is going to focus its efforts this year on increasing residents’ participation in food composting. They are planning an education and awareness campaign about the composting option and how easy it can be to participate. They discussed the possibility of having the City’s Communications department develop a series of videos to share on social media to raise awareness. City Communications has already released a press release and some information on social media last week. RAC also considered having a table at the Farmer’s Market to educate residents and possibly giving away 5-gallon buckets with lids to encourage participation. RAC met with Aaron Schragger and Mike Caputo about ideas to increase awareness and coordinating with the schools.

Another goal for RAC this year is more community education to teach people that recycling is not the goal; the highest preference, especially with single use plastics, needs to be to refuse plastic at the source and not buy things like cases of plastic water bottles.

Union County began a new effort to collect stretched plastics (or plastic film). There is now a collection bin at the Transfer Station for Summit residents with a permit. The bin is located next to the comingled plastics dumpster to keep people from placing plastic bags in that dumpster. More info can be found at <https://ucnj.org/recycling/plastic-film/>. Since this is going to Trex, please continue to log any stretched plastics dropped off there for Brayton School’s collection toward its Trex bench: [Google form](#). (You do not need to have children in the schools to contribute to Brayton’s collection numbers.).

Shade Tree Advisory Committee: John Kilby

STAC is moving ahead with the revised tree ordinance for Summit.

Multi-Town Environmental Commission Meetings: Donna Goggin Patel

The NJSMA is working with the Great Swamp Watershed Association again to host a Native Plant sale. More info is available at <https://www.greatswamp.org/native-plant-sale/garden->

resources/. Summit will need many volunteers to assist in preparing, transporting, and handing out orders. The sale will be live from April 3-28. Assembling the orders will take place the first week in May, and the pick-up day for Summit will be on either Saturday, May 6, or Sunday, May 7. There are a series of free webinars leading up to the sale, including ones on 2/21 at 7PM (Wasps: The astonishing Diversity of a Misunderstood Insect with Eric Eaton); 3/21 at 7PM (What's the Buzz About Native Bees with Heather Holm); and 4/3 (GSWA's Hazel England will present the details of the plant sale).

Dan Crisafulli also participated in a webinar on January 20 about advancing New Jersey's climate goals with transportation infrastructure investments. The discussion focused on the approximately \$16.7 billion transportation funding for New Jersey from the Inflation Reduction Act. The panelists suggested that citizens need to advocate that this funding does not go to new highways, for example, where the end result may leave the state worse off in terms of the climate goals than without this funding. Some of the NJ departments that are tied to construction are not part of the climate conversations or incorporating the climate goals in decision-making as the panelists believe they need to for the success. Electrification of mid-level duty fleets, such as dump trucks, passenger buses, and school buses are areas where the state can have a large impact. Another suggested possibility for the funds is road renovations to make improve safety for bicycles and pedestrians. Sometimes these types of renovations require more effort and legwork as they are simply repeats of past repaving projects, but they have the potential for a lot of positive impact. One role of environmental commissions is to advocate for increased operating funds for mass transit. This is a key piece of increasing mass transit and often overlooked.

Summit Free Market: Mimi Zukoff

The Free Market will hold its third weekday event on Jan. 27 from 12-2PM. The Free Market will be held on its typical second Saturday from 8AM-3PM on February 11.

Repair Café: Courtney Cordaro

The next Repair Café is scheduled for Saturday, March 25, from 11 am - 3 pm, at Christ Church (561 Springfield Ave.). Current repairs available include sewing, bicycles, lamps and computers. If you are available to volunteer at the sign-in table, please email Courtney at summit@repaircafegs.org.

GreenFaith: Mimi Zukoff

Summit Area GreenFaith Circle is in the process of planning a spring event - hopefully an outdoor event in the woods. Some GreenFaith members are researching residential solar and will be planning a community education event and/or printed information.

In the local area, New Providence Library and the United Methodist Church of New Providence are co-hosting a film on March 12, 2023, about the lifecycle of the monarch butterfly called “Beauty on the Wing.” There will be a Q&A with the filmmaker at the end. Register at: <https://www.newprovidencelibrary.org/events/adult-events/icalrepeat.detail/2023/03/12/9779/-/beauty-on-the-wing-with-filmmaker-kim-smith>.

Green Schools: Donna Goggin Patel

If you would like to join the green parent group, please contact Donna Goggin Patel at dgp212@gmail.com.

New Business: Everyone

The next Consortium for Sustainable Urbanization Green Cities talk will be held on Thursday, Jan. 26, from 12-1pm and will discuss Amsterdam. Register at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/green-cities-2023-tickets-517113990867>.

This Friday, Jan. 27, from 12-1 pm, the Great Swamp Watershed is having a webinar about forever chemicals (PFAS). Register at: greatswamp.org/event/lunch-learn-pfas.

Susan Haig discussed her goal of spreading the word about microforests and sharing a blueprint of how to replicate the ones that have been successfully installed in Summit and Elizabeth. She is envisioning a one-page information piece that could go out through the press to spread information to other towns. She wondered if Summit would be able to leverage its knowledge to do some public relations advertising about the project. From Susan’s experience, the news media needs cheat sheets to best disseminate information. She wondered if the Summit Foundation or the Summit Conservancy has a designer on the board who could help with this. Donna will look into that idea. Another suggestion is spreading the word to more of the large corporations in the state, as many of the projects described in Hannah Lewis’ book, “Mini-Forest Revolution” are corporate projects. Lara Mendenhall mentioned that Berkeley Heights received a \$721,000 grant for reforestation to work on the area near Governor Livingston High School and may incorporate a microforest as part of the work.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted by Donna Goggin Patel.

Dates for the 2023 Environmental Commission Meetings

All meetings will be held in the Whitman Room in City Hall. These are typically the 3rd Monday of the month. Any changes to that schedule are noted:

2/27 (4th Monday)

3/20

4/17

5/15

6/12 (2nd Monday)

There are no meetings in July and August.

9/18

10/16

11/20

12/18