

City of Summit Environmental Commission Minutes, January 24, 2022
(VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE)

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

Council Representative: Marjorie Fox

Guests: Anne Berman, Fred Blau, Helen Campanha, Courtney Cordaro, Scott Clark-Schoeb, Lena Schultz

Donna Goggin Patel called the meeting to order at 8:01 PM. The December minutes were approved.

“Tiny Forest” Reforestation: Donna Goggin Patel/Marian Glenn

The Tiny Forest is fenced and dormant for the winter. In November and December, dozens of volunteers assisted Marian Glenn and Environmental Commission Members Jeff Hankinson, John Kilby, Donna Goggin Patel, Chris Sprague, Melissa Spurr and Mimi Zukoff at the site, including, among others, City Forester John Linson, Council Members Danny O’Sullivan and David Naidu, a team from Bristol Myers Squibb, and volunteers from The Summit Conservancy and the Rahway River Watershed Association. The volunteers laid out the biochar, spread topsoil, laid out newspapers and cardboard, spread mulch, spread sand to prepare the ground for planting and planted 34 red oak tubelings donated by Pinelands Nursery. Summit’s Department of Public Works provided materials and labor. Specifically, the city provided 80 cubic yards of topsoil, 80 cubic yards of mulch (double-ground wood chips) from the Transfer Station, and provided the use of a digger (and the operator’s time) for several hours to help spread the topsoil and create smaller mulch piles along the perimeter of the Tiny Forest. The Summit Conservancy agreed to pay the labor costs for the professional installation of the deer fence. Aries Clean Technologies donated four cubic yards of Aries Green biochar for the project (the grant paid the shipping). The Great Swamp Watershed Association and the Rahway River Watershed Association have provided advice, guidance and labor. GM Fence installed the fence.

Earth Day Clean-Up: Donna Goggin Patel

Common Council approved Saturday, April 2, 2022, for the next city-wide Earth Day Clean-Up, with Sunday, April 3, as the rain date and alternate date for those who cannot work on Saturday. Kelly Moughalian emailed out a Save the Date on December 13. We are considering adjusting the times to 10 am – 12 noon in case we are able to hold the ribbon-cutting for the Tiny Forest at 9 am on April 2. Donna and Kelly will reach out to Dan Bernier about Union County’s sites.

Recycling Advisory Committee: Mimi Zukoff

Karen Raihofer submitted 3 proposals for a food waste municipal drop off composting pilot project to Department of Community Services. The three are from Java's Compost, Community Compost and Green Bucket.

RAC and Summit Downtown, Inc. continue to explore the possibility of a reusable takeout container initiative. Over 600 people responded to the survey created by Lena Schulz. Tito's received the highest number of mentions in the survey. Adam Fabiarz, the owner of DeliverZero, spoke to Karen Raihofer and confirmed that he is ready to move into NJ and just needs 6-8 restaurants to commit to try it. Nancy Adams sent a brief email to all Summit Downtown restaurants introducing the program and asking if they would be interested in attending a call or Zoom with the owner to learn about the program. Lena is preparing a brochure to take to restaurants if she needs to go door-to-door to get participants for the call with DeliverZero.

Shade Tree Advisory Committee: John Kilby

STAC is moving ahead with work on a revised tree ordinance for Summit, including bamboo. The city plans to plant 125 shade trees next Spring. STAC is working with The Summit Conservancy on a project to highlight the Landmark Trees throughout town. STAC's forestry intern is working on the street tree inventory. She also helped a lot at the plantings at the Tiny Forest.

Multi-Town Environmental Commission Meetings: Donna Goggin Patel

The NJSMA working group topics are energy aggregation; stormwater; climate action plans; green transportation/green fleets; green building and energy efficiency; pollinators/pesticides; environmental justice and zero waste initiatives. GSWA will host the Native Plant sale, and the group expects to sell 21,000 plants this year. We will need many volunteers to assist in preparing, transporting, and handing out orders. The sale will be live from April 1-22. Assembling the orders will take place the last week in April and the pick-up days will be either April 30 or May 1. Mimi Zukoff and Marjorie Fox will inquire about using the Summit Family Aquatic Center parking lot for Summit's pick-up location. On Tuesday, January 25, 2022, the Great Swamp Watershed Association is hosting a free Jersey-Friendly Yards Webinar at 7 PM via Zoom. You can register at: <https://www.greatswamp.org/event/landscaping-for-a-healthy-environment/>.

Chris Sprague drafted pieces of a Climate Action Plan template on resiliency. New Jersey's 80x50 goal (an 80% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050) has been the inspiration for

the Climate Action Plan template. This template includes municipal-level and individual-level. Resiliency and adapting to climate change is also part of the template. The key suggestion is to reduce the burning of fossil fuels and electrify as much as possible with clean electricity. This is a long document with many initiatives and ideas. Some examples of concrete steps are to provide shuttle service to train stations, incentivize working from home, potential disincentivize residential gas back-up generators, install rain gardens and bioswales. One issue is the funding sources for the green actions. The committee created a resolution, but it is more ceremonial. Interested members of the Environmental Commission will meet once the template is finalized to see how to proceed with it in Summit.

Union County Hub: Donna Goggin Patel

The next Union County Hub meeting will be held on Tues., Feb. 8, at 7 PM via Zoom. The Hub is also looking for new co-chairs if anyone is interested in taking a more active role within Union County. If anyone else wants to join Donna on the call, please let her know.

GreenFaith: Mimi Zukoff

Summit Area GreenFaith Circle is hosting a webinar on Sustainable, Responsible and Impact Investing on April 5 at 7 pm through the Summit Public Library. The speaker is Peter Krull, CEO of Earth Equity Advisors, Asheville NC. (<https://www.earthequityadvisors.com>.) The link is to register is available at: <https://summitlibrary.libcal.com/event/8709337>.

Mimi also attended a statewide GreenFaith meeting. The topics included one by Food and Water Action for the Gibbstown project. New Fortress Energy (a Pennsylvania company) wants to transport liquified natural gas to a dock in Gibbstown (South Jersey). Read about this here: <https://www.delawareriverkeeper.org/sites/default/files/Fact%20Sheet%20Gibbstown%20LNG%202022.pdf>. There is a petition for those who may want to sign here: <https://secure.foodandwateraction.org/act/stop-gibbstown-fracked-gas-export-terminal>.

Green Schools: Donna Goggin Patel

We will be meeting via Zoom on Friday, March 4, at 9 AM. If you are interested in being part of this green parent group, please contact karin.pittle.gale@gmail.com. Washington School continues to collect sneakers for recycling outside its front entrance.

Brayton School is collecting stretched plastic for a Trex collection on a DIY basis. Weigh your plastics, drop them off at a store and then complete this Google form to record their total weight. (<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfWI8Llc5tTmwXb8SmOFzy5oBa5YwU9IeNALw9GBHoc7Q8xkw/viewform?gxids=7628>) You do not need to be a Brayton School family to participate. The schools rotate to receive benches. When they have an active collection, the

following stores participate in the Trex program: ACME; Home Depot; Kohl's; King's; Stop & Shop; Wegmans; and Whole Foods. COVID has halted collections at many of these. From recent experience, Home Depot (Vauxhaul) and Stop & Shop (Madison), King's (Short Hills) and Taylor Rental (Berkeley Heights) are the most receptive to taking collections of these plastics.

New Business: Everyone

Rick wanted to raise attention to a New York Times article that described how Princeton is changing its DRO to allow for accessory buildings on the site of single-family homes. This change touches on environmental, historic preservation and affordable housing issues. (Link to the article: <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/12/10/realestate/the-adu-experiment.html?searchResultPosition=1>). Rick and Donna also wanted to call attention to a request for a steep slope variance at 119 Hobart Ave. Multiple participants expressed concern about removing large trees both for hydrologic reasons and for their ability to capture carbon.

Rick Bell mentioned that the first Green Cities webinar of 2022 will be held on Thursday, March 3 at noon, featuring Sam Assefa, former Environmental Planner in several cities, and the recently- appointed Director of California's Governor's Office of Planning and Research.

Marjorie Fox reminded everyone that there will be a public meeting regarding the current Broad Street West redevelopment on February 9 at 7 pm at the Community Center (100 Morris Avenue). She also mentioned that the current plan now includes solar panels on the roof, as opposed to just being solar ready.

Courtney Cordaro reported that Repair Café may return in the second half of March (3/19 or 3/26) at Christ Church. She is awaiting responses from the various volunteer repairers as to their availability.

Dr. Fred Blau researched how Summit could purchase electric vehicles. He communicated with the City Administrator Michael Rogers. There are federal funds that get funneled through the states. Marjorie Fox mentioned these may be funded through the Infrastructure Bill and not yet available. Summit purchases through municipal purchasing co-ops, and hybrids and electrics are starting to appear on the lists. On an individual level, the BPU has money for individuals to purchase EVs. Scott Clark-Schoeb mentioned that if the city could arrange for solar panels on a municipal building, it could request an EV charger be installed in connection with the solar panel installation.

Donna mentioned that she had an introductory call with Dan Crisafulli, Chris Sprague, Melissa Spurr, and Mimi Zukoff about Summit's Sustainable Jersey certification for 2022. The first round is due to be uploaded by May 22.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted by Donna Goggin Patel.

2022 Meeting Dates. For the present time, these meetings will be held via Zoom. These are typically the 3rd Monday of the month. Any changes to that schedule are noted:

2/28 (4th Monday because of President's Day)

3/21

4/18

5/16

6/20

No meetings in July and August

9/19

10/17

11/21

12/19