

City of Summit Environmental Commission Minutes, February 24, 2025

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

Council Rep: Michelle Kalmanson

Guests: Rick Bell, Kathy Head, Jocelyn Modesto

Donna Goggin Patel called the meeting to order at 8:00 PM. The Jan. 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. Donna revised the flyer. The following people have volunteered to supervise a site: Mimi (Martin's Brook); Francie (Martin's Brook or where needed); Jeff (Morris Ave/Park Line); Dan (Oak Ridge or where needed); Helen/Donna (floating); and Lauren Gonnella (Brayton).

“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. Mimi and Francie spread the partridge pea seeds on January 29 at the Tiny Forest to allow them to cold stratify. Mimi is also interested in planting edible fruit trees along the perimeter and is researching possible species. Jeff mentioned that he helps maintain 4 paw paw trees and some persimmons, American pears and mulberries behind Clearwater.

The Native Seed Library is restocked thanks to Mimi's trainings and the help of the 8th grade Girl Scouts. They added a [page](#) about it to the Services on its website. And they have a few upcoming talks scheduled, including Doug Tallamy (virtually) speaking about the Homegrown National Park on March 19 at 7 pm. Register [here](#). Another talk is Carol Deminski from the Union County Native Plant Society discussing “Creating a Beautiful Home Garden with Native Plants” in person on April 22 at 7 pm. Register [here](#).

Community Energy Plan: Donna Goggin Patel

Donna and Dan Crisafulli continue to gather information and support the city staff in implementing the steps for various Community Energy Plan (“CEP”) action items.

Environmental Resource Inventory: Chantal Landman

Summit is revising its Environmental Resource Inventory (“ERI”). We have our second call with The Land Conservancy of New Jersey (TLC), scheduled for February 27. We will continue to meet periodically with TLC as they work on the ERI and expect a first draft in early summer. Donna will be submitting an interim grant report to Sustainable Jersey this week to update it on our progress on the \$10,000 grant we received for the ERI revision.

Update on Grants: Donna Goggin Patel

Donna submitted the final grant report for the Sustainable Jersey \$2,000 grant from 2023 on January 31. Summit applied for a \$2,000 grant this month to go toward a solar array at the DPW Sheds (41 Chatham Road). We submitted the grant application on February 14. Common Council is set to approve the submission at its March 4 meeting, and the permission can be submitted to Sustainable Jersey then.

Sustainable Jersey Certification: Donna Goggin Patel

In 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, Francie, Dan, Lara, Helen, Chantal and Melissa Spurr are all wrote or researched action narratives with help from many city employees and community volunteers. Donna submitted the certification application for its first round of review on February 23. We submitted evidence for 56 actions worth 755 points, and we should qualify for Silver certification (which requires 350 points).

As part of this work, Lara created the framework for a subpage to the Environmental Commission website for the municipal rain gardens. Check it out [here](#).

Shade Tree Advisory Committee: John Kilby

The STAC plans for this year include: an Arbor Day planting (potentially at Weaver St); a joint talk with Reeves-Reed Arboretum in the Fall; increased information on the city’s website; and more outreach and education about the Summit Suckers volunteer program.

Mimi mentioned that the city removed about 22-23 trees along Martin’s Brook Park, likely ash trees. John explained the city will be planting 50 trees this Spring, and that replacements to Martin’s Brook may be among the 50 shade trees planned for the Fall. John will check with John Linson. We can always tell John Kilby if we see trees coming down for him to check the removal is permitted and being conducted by a company registered to do this work.

Recycling Advisory Committee: Mimi Zukoff

In terms of food waste composting, Green Bucket collected 2,760 lbs. in January. We are not aware of any capacity issues currently. RAC is developing an initiative for the SHS and, also, at LCJSMS to train student volunteers to canvass in neighborhoods in the spring to further spread the word about Food Waste Composting.

The new Helpsy Bin is installed at the Transfer Station and open to the public. It is a county-wide program, provided to Summit at no charge. In fact, Summit will be paid \$0.10 per pound for what is collected. Anyone in Union County can come to the Transfer Station to deposit donations in the Helpsy Bin. Anyone not a Summit resident with a permit is accompanied by Transfer Station staff directly to the bin and then escorted out of the facility. The Helpsy Bin accepts any kind of textiles in any condition. Also, accessories, footwear, stuffed animals (a big need), linens, towels, soft luggage, purses, backpacks.

The SHS Reps will begin canvassing restaurants regarding interest in Skip the Stuff initiative once a script has been developed for them. They will try to enlist other members of the Eco Club in this endeavor.

Summit Free Market: Mimi Zukoff

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. The next dates are Friday, February 28, from 12-2 PM, and Saturday, March 8, from 8 AM – 3 PM.

Green Schools: Donna Goggin Patel

The Green Schools parents will meet 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.

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. They are hosting a series of four webinars about native plants leading up to the sale. The next one is on Thursday, Feb. 27, with Bianca Wright. The sale will be open on April 1 at noon. <https://www.greatswamp.org/native-plant-sale/>. Summit needs volunteers to assist in preparing orders at the GSWA Headquarters from April 28-May 2. And we will need volunteers to transport the orders from GSWA headquarters to Summit on May 3 in the morning, probably

around 10 am. The pick-up day for Summit will be on Saturday, May 3, from 12:30-2:30 pm. Francie Cho graciously offered her home as the Summit pick-up site this year.

Repair Café: Courtney Cordaro

Repair Café returns on Saturday, March 22, from 11 am - 3 pm at Christ Church (561 Springfield Ave.; Summit). Bring up to two items per person for free repairs, including bicycles, lamps, electronics, wooden furniture, and clothing/textiles, plus knife sharpening. For more info, go to www.repaircafegs.org.

New Business: Everyone

Jeff Hankinson reported on the progress of the Park Line. The next Phase, running from Morris Ave to Russell Place, has had the engineering drawings in hand for about a year. Then the Park Line secured the necessary grants, and after the required steps, Aaron submitted the documents to NJ DOT for review. Jeff is hopeful the approval will be received shortly and that this Phase can go out to bid in the next month.

Donna reported that Union County is hosting a thank you dinner for its frequent Adopt-A-Park and Invasive Species Strike Force volunteers. Anyone interested should RSVP by Thursday, Feb 27. The event is at 6:30 pm on March 4.

The city shared the Westfield Regional Health Department tips on the safe disposal of dead birds to avoid potentially contracting bird flu. It is recommended you wear a mask and gloves (and suggested you also wear goggles). Use tongs or a shovel to handle the bird. You should place the bird in two plastic bags that are tied securely and then placed in the trash. You should thoroughly sanitize your hands after removing the gloves.

The Summit New Providence Rotary lunch on Monday, March 3, at 12:15, at Christ Church, will feature Deb Ellis from the Native Plant Society of Essex County. You are invited to attend as Donna's guest.

Mimi registered her yard at Jersey Friendly Yards. She reported it to be a simple, straightforward process. The resident certification application is [here](#). She brought the 12" x 16" sign.

Rick Bell reported that the next Green Cities talk will be in April.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:07 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:

March 17 (Large Conference Room)

April 21 (Large Conference Room)

May 19

June 16

No meetings in July or August

September 15

October 20

November 17

December 15