

City of Summit Environmental Commission Minutes, February 27, 2023
VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

Participating: Donna Goggin Patel, Dan Crisafulli, Jeff Hankinson, John Kilby, Lara Mendenhall, Chris Sprague, Mimi Zukoff

Council Rep: Jaime Levine

Guests: Fred Blau, Helen Campanha, George Drossinos, Kathy Head, Diego Hoic, Sofia Mendenhall, Melissa Miles, Aaron Schragger

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

Earth Day Clean-Up Planning: Donna Goggin Patel

Donna Goggin Patel revised the flyer for the city-wide Earth Day Clean-Up on Saturday, April 22, from 9 am – 12 noon (with Sunday, April 23, as a rain date or alternate date for those who do not wish to work on Saturday). Kelly requested 15-20 grabbers to borrow from Union County. Several of the past educators and group coordinators have reached out to plan for their Earth Day volunteering. Donna and Mimi Zukoff met Stella Shen at Martin's Brook on Wednesday, February 15, to discuss the Boy Scout troops' helping with that site. Helen Campanha offered to help with the Overlook triangle again if it needs another cleaning. Jeff Hankinson asked that we find two adults to help with the steep slope from the Parkline down to Morris Ave on the Overlook side of the street.

"Tiny Forest" Reforestation: Donna Goggin Patel

The Tiny Forest is dormant for winter. Donna is working with Amy Cairns and Megan Trindell on the design of the larger, educational signage for the Tiny Forest. Donna provided a tour of the Tiny Forest to Jennifer Duckworth (Millburn Environmental Commission), Stacie Phelps (Millburn Forester) and Walter Clark (South Orange) on February 9. Donna also spoke about the Tiny Forest at the Feb. 27 meeting of the Summit/New Providence Rotary Club.

Recycling Advisory Committee: Mimi Zukoff

RAC has been diligently working on creating a marketing plan to promote higher resident participation with the food composting program at the Transfer Station. January 2023 had the highest amount of food composted to date with 3,621 lbs. The city communications office is on board and will work with RAC to develop a multi-media coordinated campaign. Some of RAC's ideas include tabling at the Farmers Market and at other locations around Summit that attract a

lot of foot traffic. Also, some videos posted on social media breaking down how easy it is to compost and why it is important. DPW has also started conversation with the Summit schools to see if they are willing to do food composting in the schools. George Drossinos recently began attending RAC meetings and is focused on expanding the municipal composting. He explained that he would like to see participation in the food waste composting from everyone on the Environmental Commission and RAC and suggested that those of us who already compost at home look at the Transfer Station program as a place to bring waste that may not be accepted in our backyards or subscription services.

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. The next round of shade tree plantings will be in Fall 2023. STAC is meeting with Reeves-Reed Arboretum this month to plan the Fall in Love with Trees speaker series. Megan Trindell (City Communications Office) redesigned the "Recommended Tree, Shrub and Plant List" from a few years ago into a new "Plant This/Not That" format. (The original list was created with input from the City Forester, STAC, the EC and the Summit Garden Club.) Is there a way to include this in a welcome wagon packet or with a Green Development Checklist? John Kilby spoke about STAC at the Feb. 6 meeting of the Summit/New Providence Rotary Club.

Multi-Town Environmental Commission Meetings: Mimi Zukoff

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 Saturday, May 6. Please save time the week of May 1 to help us pack orders and mark Saturday May 6 to help with the Summit distribution from Mimi Zukoff's house. We will need people to pick up the Summit orders at the GSWA headquarters in Harding and bring them to Summit. Also, we need help organizing the orders and giving them out from 12:30 – 2:30 pm on May 6.

There are a series of free webinars leading up to the sale, including ones on 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).

Summit Free Market: Mimi Zukoff

The Free Market held a weekday event on Feb. 24 from 12-2PM. The Free Market will be held on its typical second Saturday from 8AM-3PM on March 11. At its last meeting, the last Free Market Steering Committee discussed creating a checklist to help our student volunteers know what to do when there is not a car to unload. The Free Market has the unusual problem of having too many volunteers at the Saturday Free Market events and discussed asking some of our regulars to only volunteer for a half day to make room for other volunteers.

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 has developed a community education seminar on residential solar and partnered with the Environmental Commission and Summit Public Library to present it in a hybrid format on May 11 at 7 pm at the Library. Frank Curran of Green House Solar will present information on costs and payback periods, federal and NJ tax credits, and battery backup for energy independence—and how it compares to a traditional generator. Register at <https://summitlibrary.libcal.com/event/10332703>.

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>.

There will be two free screenings (9:30 am and 7 pm) of “The Letter” - a new documentary about how spiritual values unite us in caring for our earth - on April 13 at Memorial Hall at St. Teresa of Avila. To RSVP for the 9:30 am showing, go to <https://actionnetwork.org/events/st-teresa-of-avila-embraces-the-letter-a-message-for-our-earth>. To RSVP for the 7 pm showing, go to <https://actionnetwork.org/events/st-teresa-of-avila-embraces-the-letter-a-message-for-our-earth-2>.

Green Schools: Donna Goggin Patel

The Green Schools parents are creating lesson plans for each elementary school grade to be taught by parent volunteers on Friday, April 21. If you would like to join the green parent group, please contact Donna Goggin Patel at dgp212@gmail.com.

New Business: Everyone

Donna mentioned that the grant cycle for the ANJEC Open Space Stewardship Projects is open. The Environmental Commission intends to apply for one of these grants of up to \$1,500, and will brainstorm potential ideas.

Kathy Head mentioned the “No Mow May” campaign to encourage lawns to be less maintained in May to allow clover and other plants to grow for pollinator populations. One of her friends in Summit stopped mowing completely last May (as opposed to keeping the grass at 5” or so) and received a notice of noncompliance with an ordinance. The Environmental Commission discussed the possibility for a communication campaign about the benefits of practices like “No Mow May” and also ways to encourage these practices without running afoul of existing ordinances. Jaime Levine mentioned that backyards are distinct from front yards in terms of maintenance requirements. She also raised the idea that the ordinance(s) may need to be examined in light of the movement toward less lawn and more natives and meadows.

The next Consortium for Sustainable Urbanization Green Cities talk will be held on Tuesday, Feb. 28, from 12-1pm and will discuss walkable density. Register at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/green-cities-2023-walking-densities-tickets-551683418957>.

Donna mentioned two nearby developments that are drawing attention regionally. One is the potential sale of mixed woodlands off of JFK Parkway owned by NJ American Water. Aaron Schragar is meeting with a representative from NJ American Water in the next few weeks and will ask about potential implications on the reservoirs containing our drinking water from this land and from the existing floating solar arrays placed on the reservoir. The second is a condo development neighboring the Great Swamp Watershed. Mimi attended a webinar about this if anyone wants to learn more.

Helen Campanha shared information about a proposed gas power plant in Woodbridge. There are seven proposed new natural gas-powered power plants around the state, one of which would be located in Woodbridge. There are concerns about construction of these new plants, the transportation of the natural gas, and the siting of the plants in already-burdened communities in terms of air pollution. These concerns are arguably at odds with the new clean energy goals for the state and the Environmental Justice law. There is a public meeting on Tuesday, February 28, from 6-8 pm with the project owner of the proposed Keasbey plant in Woodbridge, Competitive Power Ventures. (The sign-up is at: <https://www.mobilize.us/mobilize/event/548352/>.) Melissa

Miles shared an online mapping tool from the NJDEP that displays the various air quality permitted facilities. (The link is found at: <https://njdep.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=76194937cbbe46b1ab9a9ec37c7d709b>)

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 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:

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