

City of Summit Environmental Commission Minutes, March 17, 2025

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

Council Rep: Michelle Kalmanson

Guests: Fred Blau, Kathy Head, Chantal Landman, Jocelyn Modesto, Lauren Nelson

Donna Goggin Patel called the meeting to order at 8:02 PM. The Feb. 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 is meeting with Robert Bern this Friday, March 21, at 11:15, to walk the Union County sites. The following people have volunteered to supervise a site: Mimi (Martin's Brook); Francie (Martin's Brook or where needed); Lara (Briant Park); Kathy Head (Briant Park); Jeff (Morris Ave/Park Line); Dan (Oak Ridge or where needed); Helen/Donna (floating); Chris Sprague (Passaic River Trails) and Lauren Gonnella (Brayton). Lauren Nelson also can help. We will put the Lions Club in touch with Jeff to help with the Overlook Triangle and Morris Ave.

“Tiny Forest” Reforestation: Donna Goggin Patel

Donna, Francie, Lara and Mimi have been collaborating on the small, species identification signs for the Tiny Forest. Donna is in the process of getting a quote from Lark Signs. Donna is meeting a group from Merchantville at the Tiny Forest on Wednesday, April 2, at 11 am. If anyone else is available, please join us.

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. The Essex County chapter of the Native Plant Society is scheduled to visit the Tiny Forest on Saturday, October 4, in the morning. Please let Donna know if you are available to lead small group tours. The Union County chapter of the Native Plant Society is interested in touring this summer, too. They may plan a separate date in July or join one of the other scheduled events.

The Library has 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. We spoke with Tracey Woods and Mylena Guimaraes from Sustainable Jersey on March 5 about resources for solar and electric vehicles. Planning help from SJ.

Donna and Dan also had a call on March 7 with Jen Balson and Paul Formichelli from the Planning Board about the DRO update process. We discussed the suggested DRO edits already submitted to the Planning Board subcommittee related to solar and electric vehicles. In addition, we discussed resources for enhancements to stormwater management, potential efforts to minimize and repurpose demolition waste, and potential education around the negative aspects and preferred substitutes for vinyl siding.

In positive news, there are now four Community Solar projects available to JCP&L electricity customers in the territory with Summit. These expect to be operational in April and May 2025. The projects – by Solar Landscape – are located in Neptune, Old Bridge, Parsippany, and Washington. Residents are receiving flyers about these. Donna reached out to Roz Kendellen, Chair of Summit’s Housing Authority, to see if we can revive the talks about signing up the Senior Housing for Community Solar.

Environmental Resource Inventory: Chantal Landman

Summit is revising its Environmental Resource Inventory (“ERI”). Chantal received a status update on the second call with The Land Conservancy of New Jersey (TLC) on February 27. For much of the call, Chantal reviewed and provided feedback on draft maps that TLC created, including ones illustrating Summit’s topography, impervious surfaces, watershed areas and heat maps. Reeves-Reed Arboretum also provided images and information for the ERI. We will continue to meet periodically with TLC and expect a first draft of the ERI in early summer.

Shade Tree Advisory Committee: John Kilby

The STAC plans for this year include: an Arbor Day planting to be determined; 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. The City Forester is working to repel birds from roosting around the City Hall parking lots due to the amount of bird droppings. There is a need for tree replacement along the walk from City Hall to the Post Office after clearing out the dead trees there. In response to Mimi’s inquiry at last month’s meeting about plans to replace the Martin’s Brook ash trees that were removed, John Linson suggested an Eagle Scout examine that as a project because the city has no plans to replace those as of now.

John Linson mentioned the possibility of adding native plantings along the river to John Kilby. Mimi offered to walk the site with anyone who is available to point out the sections along Butler Parkway that need replenishment of larger tree species.

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 approved the submission at its March 4 meeting.

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 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). Donna, Mimi, Francie, Dan, Lara, Helen, Chantal and Melissa Spurr are all worked on action narratives with help from many city employees and community volunteers. Sustainable Jersey is reviewing our application over the next month. In looking at the dashboard, we already received approval for over 200 new points (we are at 290 total as of today) and have many more actions which are solid that are yet to be reviewed.

Recycling Advisory Committee: Mimi Zukoff

In terms of food waste composting, Green Bucket collected 3,500 lbs. in February. This was three full bins per week. RAC is developing an initiative for the SHS to train student volunteers (from SHS and LCJSMS) to canvass in neighborhoods in the spring to further spread the word about Food Waste Composting and why it is beneficial. RAC will hold a Spring tabling event at the Transfer Station on Saturday, May 10, from 9 am - 1pm. The rain date will be June 14. Please sign up for one- or two-hour shifts [here](#).

There are four Helpsy Bins installed at the Transfer Station and open to the public. All four bins are identical and take the same items. Summit will be paid a fee of \$0.10 per pound for what is collected. The Helpsy Bin accepts any kind of textiles in any condition. Also, accessories, footwear, stuffed animals (a big need), linens, towels, soft luggage, purses, and backpacks. RAC has completed many of the Recycle Coach updates and continues to review the app to keep it updated. BookSmiles picked up 3,200 lbs. of books on February 26, and Mimi has scheduled pickups on April 2 and May 7. After that, they will pick up every month on the Wednesday prior to the Saturday Free Market, since that is when the largest volume of books gets dropped

off. Mimi also received enthusiastic feedback about the signs inside the Book Barn asking people to place books on the appropriately labeled shelves, which will help keep everything organized.

RAC is working on a “Use This Not That” flyer presenting non-toxic alternatives to hazardous household products, especially cleaning products. These suggestions will be tested for efficacy prior to being promoted. RAC is also planning to create a series of 30 second videos, each of which focuses on a specific recycling issue. RAC is working with the City’s Communications Director on this project.

The next WasteWise Business Network webinar is on May 6 from 10-11:45 am. Details are [here](#). Chistine Lijoi will be talking about the Summit Free Market.

Dan asked if anyone knows if recyclable waste in Summit is ever used for found object art. Donna will forward Dan the contacts for Summit Public Art and the Visual Art Center. Lauren Nelson explained that she is an artist, and she has used some of the excess waste, especially cardboard, from GRACE when she volunteers there. Several attendees remember the Summit Public Art piece outside City Hall about a decade ago that was a car made from recycled plastic water bottles.

Summit Free Market: Mimi Zukoff

For 2025, residents should expect Summit Free Market events on the second Saturday of each month from 8AM-3PM and the fourth Friday of each month from 12-2PM. The next event is Friday, March 28.

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 Wednesday, March 19, about wild bees with Dr. Nick Dorian. The sale will be open on April 1 at noon [here](#). 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 orders collected in 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.

Green Schools: Donna Goggin Patel

The Green Schools parents will meet on Friday, March 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.

Donna will raise two ideas from the meeting tonight at the next meeting. The first is a suggestion from Chantal to recommend that the elementary schools hold stuffed animal drives now that the Helpsy bins are installed. The second suggestion relates to a conversation about school gardens. Lauren asked about the current status of gardens at the schools. Donna listed the ones that are in good shape across many of Summit's schools, but also explained some of the difficulties with maintenance. Paul suggested looking into an SEF grant to help fund maintenance that would run from the District or at least fund maintenance across the schools with gardens. Green Schools can brainstorm this idea and see who to approach with the suggestion.

Repair Café: Courtney Cordaro

Repair Cafe returns on Saturday, March 22, from 11 am - 3 pm at Christ Church (561 Springfield Ave.; Summit). You may bring up to two items per person for free repairs, including bicycles, lamps, electronics, wooden furniture, and clothing/textiles, plus knife sharpening. The last repair will be accepted at 2:30. For more info, go to www.repaircafegs.org. Mimi reported that there is always a need for help at 3 pm to clean up the event if anyone is free to swing by then.

New Business: Everyone

Helen reported that the “Climate Superfund Act” (S3545/A4696) is making its way through the committees at the state legislature. The bill is through the respective environmental subcommittee at both the State Senate (as of December 2024) and the Assembly (as of March 10).

Lauren mentioned that on several of her recent walks along Chatham Road approaching the bridge to Chatham, she smelled a strong odor similar to that of a permanent marker. Donna will make some inquiries about this.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 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:

April 21 (Large Conference Room)

May 19

June 16

No meetings in July or August

September 15

October 20

November 17

December 15