

City of Summit Environmental Commission Minutes, May 16, 2022  
(VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE)

Participating: Donna Goggin Patel, Rick Bell, Dan Crisafulli, Rich Fiore, Jeff Hankinson, Kelly Moughalian, Chris Sprague, Mimi Zukoff

Council Liaison: Marjorie Fox

Guests: Fred Blau, Courtney Cordaro, Marian Glenn, Kathy Head, Julie Lister, Sarah Meiring

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

“Tiny Forest” Reforestation: Donna Goggin Patel

Since the last Environmental Commission meeting, volunteers planted over 250 additional trees, shrubs and understory species from Pinelands Nursery on April 23. Another 60 plants from the Great Swamp Watershed native plant sale were planted on April 30. There are now over 500 plantings. Anne Berman, Marian Glenn and students from Seton Hall’s Ecology Club dug a trench for the sweetgrass in the indigenous Medicine Garden and planted several species in the medicine garden. Special thanks to Common Council President Marjorie Fox and Members Lisa Allen and Danny O’Sullivan for helping with the plantings, and to John Kilby and Jay Cho for their help digging holes with augers for all the plantings. With the help of Millennium, we applied for a \$1,500 grant from ANJEC to fund the signage at the Tiny Forest. On Friday, May 20, Marian and Donna will be meeting with representatives of Berkeley Heights’ Environmental Commission, Groundwork Elizabeth, and Union County to tour the Tiny Forest and discuss its methodology. Our next steps are signage, establishing a volunteer system for forest watering and maintenance and how to handle the grass patches within the fence.

Sustainable Jersey: Donna Goggin Patel

Donna, Chris Sprague, Melissa Spurr and Mimi Zukoff are finalizing their pieces of the Sustainable Jersey certification that is due May 22. The Environmental Commission could not do this without the help of the Mayor and that of many city employees, including Jin Blades, Amy Cairns, Mike Caputo, Chief Evers, David Guida, Jr., Chris Holenstein, Rosie Licatese, Detective Kathleen Maggiulli, Rita McNany, Captain Ryan Peters, Aaron Schrager and Megan Trindell. Nancy Adams from SDI, Megan Avallone from the Board of Health, Beth Lovejoy, Deb Graisser at the Summit Area YMCA, Stuart Newman from Union County, Christina Perez from Seton Hall, and Candace Wicke from Continuo Arts Foundation also assisted with actions

Recycling Advisory Committee: Mimi Zukoff

The food composting pilot program for Summit will begin on June 1 in conjunction with Green Bucket. Any kind of food item, raw or cooked can be composted, including animal products. There will be 4 collection containers on the lower level of the Transfer Station, likely near the garage. Residents with a Transfer Station permit can bring food waste any time the Transfer Station is open. The bins will be brought inside the garage each night.

Once the city provides publicity materials, please help circulate both to your email lists and on your social media pages. The cost for Green Bucket to remove the food waste every Monday will be around \$4000/6 months. This expense will essentially be balanced out by the reductions in tipping fees. RAC will be asking for volunteers to stand by the bins at the transfer station in June to supervise and educate residents about what can and cannot be put into the composting collection bins.

The Deliver Zero company is revamping their program, so they were not ready for the Zoom introductory meeting with our restaurateurs. They said they will be ready to discuss in late May. We hope to set up the info meetings in June.

Marjorie Fox noted that Council is considering the single bid the city received for its new curbside recycling contract at the May 17 meeting. This bid is from Grand Recycling and would be single stream recycling that would be picked up on a residents' trash day (as opposed to the current arrangement of Thursday city-wide). If accepted, there will be a new flyer going out with details ahead of the July 1 switch to this vendor. Kathy Head mentioned that she sees aspirational recycling in people's bins when she walks around her neighborhood. She recommended that the flyer contain the message, "when in doubt, throw it out" and reiterate that plastic bags and Styrofoam are not recyclable.

Shade Tree Advisory Committee: John Kilby

STAC is moving ahead with work on a revised tree ordinance for Summit. The city is planting 125 shade trees this Spring. The Arbor Day event was held on April 29 with a weeping cherry being planted at SHS. STAC is meeting with Reeves-Reed Arboretum to plan the Fall in Love with Trees lecture series for the Fall with tentative dates of events on 9/22, 10/6, and 10/20. We discussed two recent examples of large-scale tree removal in connection with demolitions. Under the current ordinance, there is little or no ability for the City Forester to stop these removals or to ensure that replacement trees are more equivalent to the mature, cornerstone species often being removed. The revised tree ordinance would alleviate these issues. Anyone looking for a stronger tree ordinance should convey their support to their Council Members.

### 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. The Great Swamp Watershed Association's Native Plant sale was a huge success (as discussed in the GreenFaith update below). NJSMA hopes to hold an educational presentation on residential solar in June.

### Union County Hub: Donna Goggin Patel

Donna attended the Union County Hub meeting held on April 27 in Rahway. Clea Carchia, Executive Director of the Rahway River Watershed Association, presented about their work and outreach opportunities. Cranford described a seed library they have created at their public library. Rahway is reforming its Shade Tree Committee. The next meeting likely will be in Sept.

### GreenFaith: Mimi Zukoff

A number of GreenFaith members helped out with both assembling plant orders, transporting plants and the Summit distribution site for the GSWA Native Plant Sale. The sale was a resounding success. We sold over 23,000 native plants to 600 customers. The Summit site had 40 customers, double the number from last year and the majority of our customers were not repeat customers from last year. This shows a true uptake of interest and commitment to planting natives and to extend the pollinator pathway. Thank you to Mimi Zukoff for coordinating Summit's efforts and for all the volunteers from Summit who helped at the Great Swamp, transporting the plants and distributing the plants.

Jen Milnes spoke about "Sustainable Living" on April 26 at St. Teresa's Memorial Hall. Her slide deck presentation may be viewed here:

<https://1drv.ms/b/s!AohupYnd2EZQi1sNvDw7GrUEXThL?e=YsO3Ik>.

### Green Schools: Donna Goggin Patel

If you would like to join the green parent group, please contact [karin.pittle.gale@gmail.com](mailto:karin.pittle.gale@gmail.com). The next meeting will be next school year. We will be promoting a Walk/Bike/Carpool to School week during May 23-27. Washington School currently has collection bins outside the front entrance for discarded sneakers, markers and printer cartridges. Franklin School and LCJSMS have collection bins to recycle used disposable face masks.

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/1FAIpQLSfWI8Llc5tTmwXb8SmOFzy5oBa5YwU9IeNAL>)

w9GBHoc7Q8xkw/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) are the most receptive to taking collections of these plastics.

#### Summit's Greenhouse Gas Emissions: Dan Crisafulli

Dan Crisafulli began utilizing historic data from Summit and Sustainable Jersey resources to create a snapshot of the city's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. This snapshot includes carbon dioxide emissions (or carbon equivalents for categories like solid waste). New Jersey's goal is to decrease GHGs by 50-55% by 2030. To think about this, we need to analyze where we are now and then strategize about how to get to the goal. Looking at the 2019 data, the primary culprits for Summit's emissions are residential vehicles, the commercial/industrial use of natural gas and electricity and residential use of natural gas. The municipal emissions appear to be about 1% of the city's GHGs (with city vehicles being the top offender). Dan mentioned that electric vehicle awareness and education appeared worthwhile based on the contribution of residential vehicles to Summit's numbers and that significant opportunities lie in improving the energy efficiency of buildings. He welcomes help in strategizing next steps and effectuating them. Please email [dan.crisafulli@gmail.com](mailto:dan.crisafulli@gmail.com) if you have suggestions or if you want to join the effort.

Rich Fiore asked how diets, including the GHG emissions from eating meat and dairy, factor into the analysis. Dan responded that an estimate for solid waste figures in the analysis, but that upstream food waste or external agricultural practices were beyond the scope of his analysis. In terms of city sewage, Marjorie Fox mentioned that she understands methane is captured at the sewage treatment plant in a co-generation process. Jeff Hankinson expressed concern that electrifying, whether appliances or cars, is not a solution without de-carbonizing the power generation.

#### Geothermal Heat Pumps: Dr. Frederick Blau

Dr. Fred Blau discussed the potential for using heat pumps for the heating of the Broad Street West proposal. He believes we should examine using geothermal heat pumps for the heating and cooling of the building. These are more expensive up front but save money over the long term. (There are federal subsidies for geothermal.) Retrofitting a building is much harder to do and costs a lot more. Currently most of the buildings in New Jersey are heated with fossil fuels. And 53% of the energy consumption in New Jersey is attributable to buildings. An electric heat pump (that's not geothermal) is a better alternative than fossil fuel. Fred also shared a quick video from the non-profit, Heet.org, about GeoGrids – infrastructure to provide geothermal heating to a neighborhood block of buildings. The link is [www.youtube.com/watch?v=fXAumlrXdks](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fXAumlrXdks).

New Business: Everyone

Jeff Hankinson shared statistics about the pollution from 2-cycle gas-powered leaf blowers. In his recent experience, the battery-powered hedge clipper is equivalent to a gas-powered one. For leaf blowers, gas-powered leaf blowers are still stronger but the battery-powered one is getting better. We understand that the legislature is considering state-wide restrictions on gas-powered leaf blowers. Individuals can contact state legislatures about the restrictions.

Rick Bell mentioned that the next Green Cities lecture will be held on Thursday, June 2, at 12 noon. The guest speaker will be from Mexico. The Consortium for Sustainable Urbanization also will be hosting a webinar on Climate Change and the Role of Cities at the United Nations on May 18 from 10 am – 1 pm.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:32 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:

6/20

No meetings in July and August

9/19

10/17

11/21

12/19