

City of Summit Environmental Commission Minutes, June 12, 2023

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

Guests: Fred Blau, Helen Campanha, Kathy Head, Sofia Mendenhall

Donna Goggin Patel called the meeting to order at 8:04 PM. The May minutes were approved.

“Tiny Forest” Reforestation: Donna Goggin Patel

Donna is working with Amy Cairns and Megan Trindell on the design of the larger, educational signage for the Tiny Forest. Donna, Mimi Zukoff and Irvy Pinzon helped supervise a group of approximately ten parents and 4th/5th grade students from St. Teresa’s on May 20. On June 10, ten volunteers weeded the Tiny Forest.

Update on Grants: Donna Goggin Patel

Sustainable Jersey granted Summit \$2,000 for on-going green team expenses. ANJEC awarded Summit \$1,500 through its Open Spaces grants to complete fencing and provide signage for the Butterfly Garden at the Park Line.

For the Community Energy Plan grant, Donna and Dan Crisafulli will attend a peer sharing session on June 13 to gather more ideas. Fred Blau attended a peer sharing session on June 8. He reported that there were attendees from Sustainable Jersey, the BPU, Orange, Atlantic City and Pleasantville and Highland Park. It was a very casual meeting. The most informative participant was Jim Rutala talking about what Atlantic City and Pleasantville have already done to equip their region with solar power.

Recycling Advisory Committee: Mimi Zukoff

RAC had a table at the Farmers Market on Sunday, June 4, which focused on publicizing the Food Waste Composting program at the Transfer Station. Many people stopped by the table, but only a small percentage were Summit residents. Many people asked and were given tips on how they could get a program like this set up in their town. Any Summit resident who was willing to be added to the city Composting advisory email list was eligible to receive a free 5-gallon bucket. RAC collected 10 names for the email list and gave away 7 buckets. RAC’s next tabling event will be at Community Night on July 18. There is now a “Notify Me” choice to get email alerts about food composting on the city website. You can sign up at <https://www.cityofsummit.org/List.aspx>.

There is a collection bin for stretched plastics at the Transfer Station for Summit residents with a permit located next to the comingled plastics dumpster. 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.) More info can be found at <https://ucnj.org/recycling/plastic-film/>.

Shade Tree Advisory Committee: John Kilby

STAC, along with the Summit Conservancy, is finalizing signage to be placed at notable trees around town. STAC also is considering what to do about a revised tree ordinance for Summit with the potential of state action. The next round of shade tree plantings will be approximately 50 trees in Fall 2023. STAC is meeting with Reeves-Reed Arboretum to plan the Fall in Love with Trees speaker series. The tentative dates for the Fall are 10/5, 10/19 and 11/2.

Summit Free Market: Mimi Zukoff

The Free Market held its June Saturday event on June 10 and will hold a weekday event on June 23 from 12-2PM. Mimi and Christine Lijoi completed weeding the Free Market gardens and DPW was kind enough to spread mulch both in the gardens and in all the unplanted areas around the Free Market improving the visual experience of shopping there.

Multi-Town Environmental Commission Meetings: Donna Goggin Patel

The Union County Hub is meeting via Zoom, at 7:30 pm on Monday, June 26. Donna plans to attend and will send around the Zoom link to the other Environmental Commission members.

Green Schools: Donna Goggin Patel

The next meeting of the Green Schools parents will be on Friday, September 15, at 9:30 am. Please contact Donna Goggin Patel at dgp212@gmail.com if you would like to join.

GreenFaith: Mimi Zukoff

The Residential Solar presentation on May 11 was sparsely attended. The original speaker could not present due to a family emergency. The substitute speaker was good, but not as good as Frank Curran. GreenFaith is exploring some Environmental Justice initiatives for the fall.

New Business: Everyone

Lara Mendenhall mentioned that Nautilus Solar presented to a group from Berkeley Heights schools about solar panel options today. There is an agreement to go forward with free proposals

for potential solar arrays at all of the schools in Berkeley Heights. These proposals will consider rooftops and some parking lot arrays with accompanying electric vehicle chargers.

Sofia Mendenhall updated the group on her conversations with SHS administration. Vice Principal Aaron has emailed the District Business Administrator regarding solar panels and has not yet heard back. Sofia is going to raise the idea of composting at least the food prep waste from SHS at the Transfer Station again. (This has been a successful element of Millburn High School's composting pilot with Java's Compost.) Chris Sprague mentioned that New York City recently mandated composting starting in 2024. More detail is found here: <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/06/08/nyregion/food-composting-nyc.html>.

Helen Campanha updated the group on the status of the proposed Keasbey natural gas power plant in Woodbridge. Charlie Kratovil from Food and Water Watch plans to speak during the public comments at a Common Council meeting about the project.

Those present discussed several potential projects that could be funded with the Sustainable Jersey grant. Mimi proposed an idea to help curb the invasives growing at Martin's Brook Park. In particular, she read about the successful elimination of garlic mustard by planting Golden Ragwort. We could get guidance on this from a couple from Morristown and/or Richard Leister (Chair of the Berkeley Heights EC) who attended a recent invasive clinic in Princeton. Mimi is going to research how much removal work and on-going maintenance work this would require to better plan for tackling this now or after the Tiny Forest is more self-sustaining.

Lara mentioned two additional ideas. One would be to have a coordinated speaker series across our neighboring towns on environmental topics. This would be similar to the Consortium speakers hosted by the neighboring schools on topics of interest to parents. The other idea is to entice people to our Community Night table with a tree give-away. Donna will check with STAC about this idea and to see if they are still seeking potential spots for city shade trees.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 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:

There are no meetings in July and August.

9/18

10/16

11/20

12/18