

City of Summit Environmental Commission Minutes, October 20, 2025

Participating: Donna Goggin Patel, Helen Campanha, Francie Cho, Dan Crisafulli, Jeff Hankinson, Mimi Zukoff

Council Liaison: Michelle Kalmanson

Guests: Mandana Arvandi, Rick Bell, Fred Blau, Sunil Garg, Kathy Head

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

“Tiny Forest” Reforestation: Donna Goggin Patel

The CBS News feature about Summit’s Tiny Forest aired on the local news this past weekend. The link is [here](#). There is also an article with the video from an affiliate station [here](#).

Donna led tours for the Essex County chapter of the Native Plant Society at the Tiny Forest on Saturday, October 4. About 45 people came through the tours. Thanks to Helen Campanha for assisting. Several communities around NJ have reached out for more information and with questions. Following the CBS piece, Donna received an inquiry from Grand Island, NY.

Mimi Zukoff has been collecting seeds from the wildflowers at the Tiny Forest. Between those and ones from her own native plant garden, she has two cartons full of seeds to drop off at the Library for sorting to restock the Native Seed Library.

Earth Day Clean-Up and Additional Clean-Ups: Donna Goggin Patel

We requested permission for the 2026 Annual City-Wide Earth Day Clean-Up on Saturday, April 18, 2026, with the rain date of April 19. Helen sent the letter requesting the dates to the city on October 10. Aaron Schrager is adding it to the Common Council agenda. The Summit Conservancy mentioned they have not been able to secure a Union County location that requires cleaning yet.

Another avenue for on-going cleaning is the Adopt a Drain program. This is available for Summit residents [here](#). The program allows residents to adopt a storm drain and periodically clean it to keep it free from debris.

Sustainable Jersey Certification: Donna Goggin Patel

Summit renewed its Sustainable Jersey certification this year. We earned 680 points for 54 actions in 15 categories, and we maintained our Silver certification. This is the highest level of general certification. The major categories in which Summit was awarded points

are: Waste Management (115 points), Land Use and Transportation (85 points), and Natural Resources (80 points). The additional 400 points were spread across 12 other categories, for a total of 680 points awarded for 54 different actions.

City staff and City volunteers perform the actions that make Summit a sustainable community. On the City staff side, the Departments of Public Works, Community Programs, Community Services, Parking, the Public Information Office, the Police Department, the Fire Department, the City Administrator, the Mayor, the Common Council, the Transfer Station team, and the Clerk's Office all work to make Summit sustainable and are diligent stewards of the City's various resources. Summit Downtown, Inc., with the popular Farmers Market and downtown events, helps keep our downtown vibrant. And the many members of the volunteer boards, committees and commissions earned points by working to inform, help, and educate residents.

In the preparation of the action narratives and documentation, the Environmental Commission had help from Mimi Zukoff, Chantal Landman, Francie Cho, Melissa Spurr, Dan Crisafulli, Lara Mendenhall, Helen Campanha, Jenny Hoff and Megan Trindell, John Linson, Rosie Licatese and Nicole Kotiga, Aaron Schrager, Augusto Dal'Maso, Rachel Rillo, Mike Caputo, Natasha Matisak, Stephanie Soulios, Nicole Sawicki, David Guida, Jr., Gretchen Masterfano, Fire Chief Eric Evers, Former Police Chief Steven Zagorski, Police Sergeant Kathleen Maggiulli, Amy Behr-Shields, Nancy Adams, Amanda Parrish Block, Sharon O'Sullivan, and Deb Grassier.

Environmental Resource Inventory: Chantal Landman

The final draft of The Land Conservancy ("TLC") Environmental Resource Inventory ("ERI") is available [here](#). Barbara Davis from TLC will present the ERI to the Planning Board soon. The public is welcome to attend.

Community Energy Plan: Donna Goggin Patel

Donna and Dan continue to gather information and support the city staff in implementing the steps for various Community Energy Plan ("CEP") action items. In positive news, there are now several Community Solar projects available to JCP&L electricity customers in Summit. The projects are coordinated by Solar Landscape and EverSolar. Residents are receiving flyers about these. More information and a searchable database of options is available [here](#).

Shade Tree Advisory Committee: John Kilby

STAC is working on providing increased information through pamphlets for residents. STAC is partnering with The Summit Conservancy. The first piece of the collaboration will include a

poster on the benefits of trees to be displayed Downtown. There are plans to add 50 shade trees, and an additional 10 trees near Tatlock along Butler Parkway.

Recycling Advisory Committee: Mimi Zukoff

Recycling Facility Tour Follow-Up Inquiries: Mimi and George Drossinos spoke with Maplewood's mayor and city engineer to discuss Maplewood's experience in moving back to dual stream recycling with an alternate week schedule. The amount they were paid for clean paper/fiber recycling almost covered their 2024 recycling costs. Mimi and Michelle Kalmanson met with DCS staff to inform them of the potential benefits of making a change back to dual stream. DCS explained the complexities of this type of change, but they will examine it. RAC is not involved in the recycling bidding process. But RAC suggested that the city consider separating the hauling and processing bids for the recycling, which would increase the likelihood of multiple bidders. The city only received one bid the last several times. In the next months, Mimi and George are planning to tour the Giordano facility where they take the Transfer Station recycling. Mimi will let the EC know if there are any spots left after RAC gets a chance to attend.

Transfer Station Operations: Green Bucket continues to collect a consistent amount of food waste from the Transfer Station. In September, they collected 3,460 lbs. BookSmiles ended its relationship with us after the August 29 pickup due to the distance and book quality not being cost effective. A new company, Book Drop, will take over collecting the Book Barn's excess books. This continues to keep them out of the trash stream. There are now Helpsy bins with a larger opening for donations. The full list of accepted items for Helpsy is [here](#).

New Transfer Station Education: Nickel Cadmium (“Ni-Cd”) and Lithium batteries – which include rechargeable batteries in toys/bikes/scooters – are a fire hazard and must be recycled on the upper level. They must be removed from anything that is disposed of in the trash. These batteries have caused fires at many trash collection locations and recycling facilities, and they likely were responsible for a fire at our Transfer Station. The DPW has asked RAC to publicize this issue, and RAC is going to work with City Communications on working up a flyer. At the Transfer Station, residents should place these by the E-Waste and the workers will take them from there to a secure area. And according to the Beyond the Basics [flyer](#), these batteries also are accepted at Staples, Home Depot and Batteries Plus in Springfield.

RAC Educational Outreach: City Communications and RAC created four “quick tip” recycling [videos](#) with RAC members that each promote Recycle Coach at the end. (There also is now a more prominent button on the city’s website for Recycle Coach.) Mimi suggested that the city do a PR blitz for Recycle Coach once the next recycling contract is finalized. Some of the other upcoming potential video topics may include: pizza boxes; beverage cartons; stretched plastics;

batteries; and spiral notebooks/ stapled paper. RAC will ask the City to re-run “[Think Before You Buy](#)” for the holiday season.

Additional Research: Karen Venturella researched options to recycle water filters (like those in refrigerators and under sinks) learned that free options are limited to Brita filters. They will supply a postage paid label under an arrangement with Terracycle. Otherwise, individuals can purchase boxes from Terracycle that are returned to them for recycling. However, they are expensive, and RAC does not know their recycling process or end market.

NJ Legislation: Mimi mentioned a piece of legislation currently in the NJ Senate Committee for Environment and Energy. The Beverage Container Deposit legislation ([S3147](#)/A4379) requires the use of returnable beverage containers in NJ and establishes deposit and refund system to facilitate return of such containers to manufacturers for reuse or proper disposal. Our Senator and Assemblypersons are not on the relevant committees, but anyone can call the legislators in charge of the committees to encourage voting this legislation out of the committee.

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 October date is Friday, October 24, from 12-2PM.

Green Schools: Donna Goggin Patel

The Green Schools parents will meet next on Friday, October 31, at 8:30 am. If you would like to join the green parent group, please email greensummitnj@gmail.com. There is currently a drive across the District to collect reusable bags for GRACE. Throughout September, the primary centers and elementary schools collected 1,000 bags. The collection at LCJSMS is running throughout October. SHS is collecting bags next month. Other Green Schools initiatives for the year include a stuffed animal drive (likely winter), the Earth in the Classroom lessons (April), and a Walk/Bike/Carpool initiative (May).

The SHS Eco Club and the Thrift and Sustainability Club are holding a sweatshirt swap. SHS students can drop off SHS-branded clothing in the fashion design room this week. The thrift shop is open every Friday. They also held a Halloween costume drive. The Eco Club is advocating proper recycling for the Ni-Cd batteries, pizza boxes and spiral notebooks.

Repair Café: Courtney Cordaro

The Repair Cafe on Saturday, September 27, was very successful. The event diverted over 400 pounds from the landfill by being repaired. There were 108 repairs requested from 79 patrons,

and 86 items were fully repaired. These included 36 sharpening, 17 sewing, 11 bikes, 10 lamps, 6 electronics, 5 wooden, 1 miscellaneous repair. For more info, go to www.repaircafegs.org.

GreenFaith: Karen Venturella

The GreenFaith global organization teamed up with 350.org and Third Act for *SUN Day* on September 21, 2025. Several local congregations held events. On a larger scale in NJ, GreenFaith is advocating for support for the Climate Superfund Act and opposition to the NESE (North East Supply Enhancement) Pipeline Project.

New Business: Everyone

Following last month's meeting, the Environmental Commission provided comments to the Planning Board as part of a Courtesy Review of the Tatlock Lighting Project.

Sunil Garg reported on an event focused on the Nature Conservancy's work in India. The main areas of focus for the Nature Conservancy in India include: regenerative agriculture, healthy cities, resilient freshwater, renewable energy, and tackling climate change. They are working on rewilding a corridor that had been deforested to provide firewood. Learn more [here](#).

Rick Bell mentioned that there are two fundraising galas this week. The Consortium for Sustainable Urbanization is having its gala in NYC this Wednesday. Register [here](#). And the Great Swamp Watershed Association is holding its in Florham Park on Thursday. Register [here](#).

The meeting was adjourned at 9:23 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:

November 17 (Large Conference Room)
December 15 (Large Conference Room)