

City of Summit Environmental Commission Minutes, November 17, 2025

Participating: Donna Goggin Patel, Helen Campanha, Francie Cho, Jeff Hankinson, John Kilby, Mimi Zukoff

Guests: Rick Bell, Sunil Garg, Kathy Head, Juliette Maria

Donna Goggin Patel called the meeting to order at 8:05 PM. The Oct. minutes were approved.

“Tiny Forest” Reforestation: Donna Goggin Patel

Mimi Zukoff answered questions about the Tiny Forest for the Caldwell Environmental Commission via Zoom on November 6. Donna is scheduled to speak to the Native Habitat Collective (a group of interested Mercer County residents) about the Tiny Forest on two Zooms on November 20.

In addition, the Summit Conservancy would like to install 3 metal bird nests in the vicinity but outside of the Tiny Forest. (The nests need to be 10 feet from existing trees or fences and approximately 100 feet apart.) The bird nests would attract three different species (Eastern Screech Owl, Northern Flicker, Black-capped Chickadee). The nests would be approximately 8-10 feet off the ground. (There is annual cleaning of the nests, so they do not want them substantially over 10'.) Donna met Irvy Pinzon and Christina Perez at the site on November 10. They are meeting Mark Ozoroski on November 18 to go over potential sites for the nests.

Mimi collected four cartons of seeds from the Tiny Forest to supply the Native Seed Library. The group of Girl Scouts who sorted and labelled the seeds last year have accomplished the badge or project they were working on with the seeds, so we are not sure if there are volunteers in line to sort these.

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. Approval of the dates is on the agenda for the November 17 Common Council meeting.

The Summit Conservancy held a successful clean-up at the Passaic River Trails on November 15. About a dozen people collected a large pile of trash and a number of metal pieces (that appeared to have been dumped a while ago but recently uncovered after storms).

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. The importance of keeping the storm drains clear became

evident on October 30 when SPD reported that multiple streets in Summit were flooded due to blockages in storm drains.

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. Summit will be recognized for its Silver certification at the Sustainable Jersey luncheon at the League of Municipalities Conference on November 18.

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 at a meeting to be determined. 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

The Fall shade tree planting is underway. Plantings of note are 12 Norway Spruce planting on Butler Parkway in the gap with 6 on the Butler side and 6 on the Tatlock side. STAC is currently recruiting at least two new participants in the “Summit Sucker Group.” You can volunteer (and be trained) to help remove small offshoots lower to the ground from the shade trees (along the street) in your neighborhood.

Recycling Advisory Committee: Mimi Zukoff

A huge congratulations to Mimi Zukoff on her receipt of the 2025 NJ Department of Environmental Protection Recycling Award in the category of Volunteer Citizen. She received

the award on October 22. Mimi volunteers on several environmental committees for the city, including the Environmental Commission (since 2020) and RAC and the Summit Free Market Advisory Committee (both since 2021). Mimi became Chair of RAC in 2023. This Recycling Award is primarily for Mimi's work setting up and implementing the BookSmiles program to recycle and reuse all of the excess books collected at the Book Barn. (The success in keeping unwanted books out of the waste stream now continues with Book Drop.) You can read more about this well-deserved award from the [NJ DEP](#), local news in the [TAP](#) and [Patch](#); and a shout-out at the November 4 Common Council meeting as summarized in the [TAP](#).

Transfer Station Operations: The food waste composting collection quantity from the Transfer Station remains static. Mimi reported that 3,420 lbs. of books were picked up on October 23 by Book Drop. Approximately 41,400 lbs. have been picked up since inception of the pickup program in March 2024. In addition to keeping nearly 21 tons of books out of landfills, the program has saved the city approximately \$1,800. There is an effort to educate the different treatment for donations of lightly-used, current books that others would like to read (which should go to the Book Barn) and donations of old, poor-condition, or specialized textbook or office volumes that will not be reused (which should go near the door to the garage labelled for "Book Drop").

New Transfer Station Education: Mimi is working with Megan Trindell on an educational flyer explaining that rechargeable batteries such as Lithium-Ion and Nickel Cadmium ("NiCad") must never go into the trash or directly into the pit at the Transfer Station. Following up on our conversation last month, 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.

"Plastic People" Screening: The screening of "[Plastic People](#)" will be at the Summit Free Public Library on Jan. 13, 2026, at 7 pm. Lois Kraus from Beyond Plastics will be present to answer questions.

NJ Legislation: RAC continues to monitor 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.

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 November dates are Saturday, November 8, and Friday, November 21 (a week early due to Thanksgiving). As the Summit Free Market is often short of volunteers in the summer, please feel free to volunteer if you are available. You can simply show up, and you will be told what you can do to help.

Green Schools: Donna Goggin Patel

The Green Schools parents will meet next on Friday, December 5, at 8:45 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 and October, the primary centers, elementary schools and LCJSMS collected over 2,000 bags. The collection is now running through November at SHS. Other Green Schools initiatives for the year include a stuffed animal drive (likely Jan/Feb), the Earth in the Classroom lessons (April), and a Walk/Bike/Carpool initiative (May). There are book swap drives/“shopping” in the next few weeks at Lincoln-Hubbard and Washington. There is also a drive for donated YA/middle-grade books at LCJSMS that can augment the offerings at the Santa Claus Shop.

The SHS Eco Club and the Thrift and Sustainability Club are planning to hold a sweatshirt swap on November 17. The thrift shop is open every Friday. They also held a Halloween costume drive. The SHS Eco Club also is educating about proper recycling for the Ni-Cd batteries, pizza boxes and spiral notebooks.

New Business: Everyone

Jeff Hankinson reported that the next Phase of the Summit Park Line has stalled because the eleven requests for bids came back with no bids. This has been disheartening. For the two bridges located in the next Phase, it is not clear if they should be repaired or demolished and replaced with drop-in bridges (like the one over Morris Ave).

Mimi recommends this webinar for anyone seeking to learn more about toxic chemicals in plastics. The Beyond Plastics webinar can be viewed [here](#). Donna reported that the Rutgers Green Infrastructure Champions program will begin in January with free, virtual classes covering different topics. More information is found [here](#).

We also brainstormed about potential projects for 2026. These included increased stormwater measures (Rick Bell is working on community engagement for such projects in Queens); EV charging (Donna reengaged Sustainable Jersey about the potential for City Hall light pole EV charging); cycling/Complete Streets; potential spot for a pollinator garden near new Fire Station (Mimi noticed a prime spot to the left of building); query whether the EC should be recommending resolutions in support of various measures that Common Council may not want to implement, but where they could express support for state-level action (such as Skip the Stuff, the Package and Paper Product Stewardship Act, etc.).

Donna also mentioned that ANJEC has emailed recommended legislative actions for the lame duck session: Food Waste Reduction Law ([S2426/A2090](#)) (ANJEC recommends asking your Senator to vote “yes” and calling Senate President Nicholas Scuturi and ask him to post this bill for a vote at 732-827-7480); Open Space Conservation Tax Incentive Act ([S3287/A197](#)) (ANJEC recommends reaching out the two Assembly members to vote “yes”); and Clean Energy Act ([S237/A140](#)) (ANJEC recommends reaching out the two Assembly members to vote “yes” and provided a link to an NJLCV Petition <https://shorturl.at/Qj4D3>).

The meeting was adjourned at 8:57 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:

December 15 (Large Conference Room)

For the 2026 meetings, Donna sent potential meeting dates to the City Clerk’s office and will share the dates when they are scheduled