

Environmental Commission Annual Report for 2018

Throughout 2018, the City of Summit Environmental Commission (EC) worked to promote sustainability efforts in Summit through community projects, outreach and events, as well as by coordination of activities with community organizations.

As dictated by state law, the EC has seven appointed commissioners and two alternates. Beth Lovejoy stepped down as chairperson at the end of December, and Donna Patel was appointed as the new chairperson. Beth will stay on the EC for 2019. Greg Vartan (Planning Board representative to the EC) resigned due to being elected as a Council member. State law requires that there be a liaison from the Planning Board on the Environmental Commission, so the Planning Board will need to decide who will fill that role on the EC in 2019. EC member Chris Sprague is the liaison to the Recycling Advisory Committee, and EC member John Kilby is chairperson of Summit's Shade Tree Advisory Committee.

All EC meetings are open to the public and generally several non-members attend meetings on a regular basis. In addition, Council liaison Marjorie Fox attended most EC meetings in 2018.

Several EC members are members of other groups interested in sustainability. Jeff Hankinson is on the board of the Park Line Foundation. Donna Patel is a member of Green Summit NJ and is involved with Summit's public school green teams. She has also joined the board of Reeves-Reed Arboretum. Marian Glenn is a member of GreenFaith Circle and is on the board of the Rahway River Watershed Association.

2018 Projects

Annual Earth Day Clean-Up: The EC members organized and managed the annual Earth Day Clean-Up, which took place in April at a number of different spots in Summit. Overall, 200 volunteers of all ages collected 1660 lbs of trash and recyclables, removed invasive plants, and cleaned and woodchipped trails in six Summit locations.

Work with Planning Board: EC members and friends made a presentation about the EC to the Planning Board in January, which included presenting EC recommendations on sustainability issues based on the City's Master Plan ReVision. The EC is also involved on an ongoing basis in reviewing and commenting on the revisions to the Development Regulations. The EC has also made suggestions on sustainability related topics for the new Broad Street Redevelopment Project.

Skip the Straw Campaign: The EC worked with the Department of Community Services, Recycling Advisory Committee and Green Summit on the new *Skip the Straw* initiative, a community partnership that brings together residents, businesses and organizations with the goal of reducing plastic waste and protecting the environment through education and community outreach. The group is engaging local businesses and residents to stop creating excess plastic trash at its source. Businesses will make a voluntary commitment to serve straws by request only or switch to an alternative to plastic straws. Residents are encouraged to order drinks without a straw or carry a reusable straw.

Renewable Energy Sub-committee: Marian Glenn and Donna Patel have organized a small group of people interested in researching renewable energy and its potential for municipal and residential use in Summit. Among the subjects discussed at its first meeting were energy aggregation, community solar, and innovative projects in other communities.

Membership in Union County Hub: The Springfield Environmental Commission reached out to Summit about joining a Union County Hub to share ideas and information. Members and friends of the EC attended the first meeting in October and representatives from the EC will attend future meetings.

Passaic River Trails: The EC was awarded a small grant (about \$1000) in 2017 by the Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions (ANJEC) for the extension and refurbishing of a steep set of steps along the Passaic River trails. EC member Jeff Hankinson prepared the plan and has done the bulk of the work. The steps were finished in the spring of 2018. Jeff also worked with groups as part of the Earth Day Clean-Up to clean up parts of the Passaic River trails, and did extensive repair work on the trails after several storms.

Review of Plans for the Planning and Zoning Boards: EC member and architect Rick Bell, on behalf of the EC, has reviewed more than 30 plans brought before the Planning and Zoning Boards, and has provided suggestions, which usually relate to planting native species, addressing storm water runoff, and green building practices. The main comment he made relates to the lack of a landscape plan in the applications, specifically to address what trees and other landscaping will be removed and what will be added to make up for the removals.

Community Outreach

Communications: Many green-related posts have been made to the EC's [Summit, NJ: Talking Green. Living Green Facebook page](#), and the [Recycling Advisory Committee's Facebook page](#), as well as the [City of Summit Facebook page](#) and local newspapers. Thanks to Amy Cairns and Meredith Hendra for their substantial help in outreach endeavors.

Educational Tables at Events: Celgene invited the EC to have informational tables at their Earth Day Fairs at both of their locations in April, which were manned by Beth Lovejoy and Patti Schneider Smith. There were about 150 visitors to the EC tables at those events. John Kilby, Donna Patel and Beth Lovejoy manned a table for the EC and the Shade Tree Advisory Committee at Community Night on the Green in July. Jeff Hankinson and Beth Lovejoy hosted an educational table for the EC at Union County's National Trail Day event (June 2).

Recognition: EC member Jeff Hankinson received the Union County Environmental Hero award at the Union County EarthFest in April for his efforts on Summit's Environmental Commission, particularly for his work done on the Passaic River trails.

Please join the Summit, NJ: Talking Green, Living Green Facebook open group page at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/184758811555182/>.

The EC welcomes suggestions and comments from the Mayor, members of Common Council, City staff and the community. EC meetings are open to everyone and take place in the Whitman Room, except as noted below, at 8 PM; they generally last about an hour. A list of 2019 meeting dates appears below.

Respectfully submitted,
Beth Lovejoy, 2018 Chairperson
City of Summit Environmental Commission

2019 EC meeting dates: 1/22 (Tues), 2/11 (2nd Mon), 3/18, 4/22 (4th Mon), 5/13 (2nd Mon), 6/17, 9/16, 10/21, 11/19 (Tues), 12/16. No meetings in July and August.