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Environmental Commission Annual Report for 2021

Throughout 2021, 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. Donna Goggin Patel is the appointed chairperson. In 2021, Rich Fiore was the Planning Board representative to the EC, EC member Mimi Zukoff was the liaison to the Recycling Advisory Committee, and EC member John Kilby was 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 the majority of the EC meetings in 2021.

Many EC members are members of other groups interested in sustainability. Rick Bell is on the Broad Street West Redevelopment Task Force. Jeff Hankinson is on the board of the Park Line. Donna Goggin Patel is involved with the school parent green teams. Donna and Melissa Spurr are both trustees of Reeves-Reed Arboretum and members of Green Summit NJ. Mimi Zukoff is active in the Summit Area GreenFaith Circle.

2021 Projects

Annual Earth Day Clean-Up: EC members, particularly Kelly Moughalian and Donna Goggin Patel, organized and managed the annual Earth Day Clean-Up which took place on April 10 at eleven different spots in Summit. We had 159 people at sites around Summit and collected more than 800 pounds of trash.

Tiny Forest Reforestation: NJ American Water awarded Summit a \$10,000 grant to complete a reforestation project at the Community Center (100 Morris Ave.). We decided to plant an 11,000 square foot "Tiny Forest" using the Miyawaki Method (developed by Dr. Akira Miyawaki in Japan) as popularized by Shubhendu Sharma in India and now being planted around the world. We believe this will be the first such forest in New Jersey. The Tiny Forest is a multi-layered forest of native plants that is designed to become self-sustaining after 2-3 years to become a fully-developed forest in 20-30 years. During 2021, the EC conducted site analyses (including soil testing), consulted with experts and compiled the list of native species to plant, designed our planting grids, and performed the numerous necessary steps to prepare the site for the eventual planting, including creating the planting mix and fencing the Tiny Forest. The Tiny Forest will have a gated entrance with a path and bench to allow the public to immerse themselves in the forest. We expect to hold an event on April 2, 2022, to formally unveil the Tiny Forest and plant several trees. Former EC-member Dr. Marian Glenn, and current EC members Jeff Hankinson and Donna Goggin Patel have taken the lead on this with assistance from EC members John Kilby, Chris Sprague, Melissa Spurr and Mimi Zukoff.

Importance of Native Plants Presentation: With coordination by EC member Mimi Zukoff, the EC, Summit Area GreenFaith Circle, Interfaith Council and the Summit Free Public Library cosponsored a virtual talk by Doug Tallamy on April 26. Dr. Tallamy is a well-known advocate for native species from his book "Nature's Best Hope." The link to Dr. Tallamy's talk is available here: <https://youtu.be/IrDastDPm0>. The EC's contribution to this speaking engagement came out of the \$2,000 grant the EC received from Sustainable Jersey in 2019 for on-going projects and completed the spending of that grant.

Membership in Union County Hub and the Northern Jersey Sustainable Municipal Alliance Group: The EC is in contact with the Environmental Commissions and Green Teams of neighboring towns to share resources and information about successful initiatives. This includes a Union County Hub supported by Sustainable Jersey and a group of towns in our geographic area self-titled the Northern Jersey Sustainable Municipal Alliance Group (NJSMA). Collectively, we are in touch with members from Berkeley Heights, Chatham Borough,

Chatham Township, Cranford, Livingston, Madison, Millburn, Morris Township, Rahway, Roselle Park, Springfield and Westfield. Donna Goggin Patel routinely attends these meetings, along with others who have availability, and the EC shares these resources with RAC and other city boards. EC member Chris Sprague assisted in drafting a Climate Action Plan template with NJSMA. EC member Mimi Zukoff led Summit's coordination with NJSMA to hold an annual native plant sale that was a huge success and will be continued.

Review of Plans for the Planning and Zoning Boards: EC member and New York City architect Rick Bell, on behalf of the EC, has reviewed more than 40 plans under review by the Planning and Zoning Boards, and has provided suggestions, which usually relate to planting native species, addressing storm water runoff, and green building practices. His main comment 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 Environmental Commission Facebook group](#), and the [Recycling Advisory Committee's Facebook page](#), as well as the [City of Summit Facebook page](#) and local newspapers. Thanks to Amy Cairns for her substantial help in outreach.

Educational Tables at Events: John Kilby, Donna Goggin Patel, Chris Sprague and Mimi Zukoff manned a table for the EC and the Shade Tree Advisory Committee at Community Night on the Green in August.

Please join the Summit NJ Environmental Commission Facebook open group 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 at 8 PM via videoconference or in the Whitman Room when in-person; they generally last about an hour. A list of 2022 meeting dates appears below.

Respectfully submitted,
Donna Goggin Patel, 2021 Chairperson
City of Summit Environmental Commission

2022 EC meeting dates (8 PM via videoconference until further notice (or in the Whitman Room at City Hall when in-person meetings are possible)): 1/24 (4th Monday), 2/28 (4th Monday), 3/21, 4/18, 5/16, 6/20, 9/19, 10/17, 11/21, 12/19. There are no meetings in July and August.