

Environmental Commission Annual Report for 2020

Throughout 2020, 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 2020, 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 2020.

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 Foundation and on the Transfer Station Task Force. 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.

2020 Projects

Annual Earth Day Clean-Up: Due to the COVID-19 restrictions in place in April, the city did not hold an annual Earth Day Clean-Up event in 2020. Residents were instead encouraged to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Earth Day by choosing their own green activity. In September, Summit Boy Scout Troop 67 picked up trash and cleared the trails at Martin's Brook Park. They also weeded and trimmed tree wells downtown.

Roots for Rivers Reforestation: With funding provided from The Nature Conservancy and Sustainable Jersey, John Kilby and retired EC-member Dr. Marian Glenn coordinated with Union County and the city and enlisted the help of city staff and several volunteers to plant just over 200 Roots for Rivers trees and shrubs in floodplains. Plantings have been made at the Transfer Station (both along the driveway into the Station and around the new Free Market Building) and the first section of the new Passaic River Trail off of Chatham Road behind the DPW Shed. At the Transfer Station, we are experimenting with weed block and some transplanted soil from Tatlock to assist with keeping the Japanese knotweed at bay.

Sustainable Jersey Grant: The EC received a \$2,000 grant from Sustainable Jersey in 2019 for on-going projects. The timeline for spending the grant was extended due to COVID-19. This grant has been used to fund the carbon footprint analysis in Summit's 2019 Sustainable Jersey application, as well as additional materials used to assist the Roots for Rivers plantings, printed advertisements for the Virtual Free Market Facebook group for distribution at GRACE and printed door hangars and tree tags for the November shade tree plantings

Green Infrastructure Projects: Retired EC-member Dr. Marian Glenn designed two gardens to the right of the new permanent Free Market Building (looking at it from the parking lot) which border the paved donor walk. With assistance from several members of Summit's Department of Public Works, Dr. Glenn and several volunteers got the gardens dug and filled and planted in time for the ribbon cutting. In addition, a Rutgers team under Dr. Chris Obropta and Toby Horton continues to work on the details for the larger rain garden at that site which will collect the parking lot runoff and a smaller potential rain garden for the Summit Community Center.

Membership in Union County Hub and the Northern Jersey Sustainable Municipal Alliance Group: The Environmental Commission is in contact with the Environmental Commissions 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. 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. Dr. Marian Glenn and Donna organized a small group of people interested in researching renewable energy and its potential for municipal and residential use in Summit. The subcommittee kept abreast of the community solar pilot in New Jersey and continues to share resources with these multi-town groups.

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. The EC also authored an article celebrating the 50th anniversary of Earth Day for the Summit Living magazine. Thanks to Amy Cairns and Meredith Hendra for their substantial help in outreach.

Recognition: Dr. Marian Glenn received a Union County Women of Excellence award in 2020 for her extensive environmental work, including her service on the Environmental Commission from 2002-2019, including as Chair from 2003-2010.

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 2021 meeting dates appears below.

Respectfully submitted,
Donna Goggin Patel, 2020 Chairperson
City of Summit Environmental Commission

2021 EC meeting dates (8 PM via videoconference until further notice (or in the Whitman Room at City Hall when in-person meetings are possible)): 1/11 (2nd Mon), 2/8 (2nd Mon), 3/15, 4/19, 5/17, 6/21, 9/20, 10/18, 11/15, 12/13 (2nd Mon). There are no meetings in July and August.