



MONTGOMERY

TOWNSHIP, NEW JERSEY

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

MEMORANDUM

TO: Township Committee
FROM: Environmental Commission
DATE: February 7, 2024
RE: Environmental Commission/Sustainable Montgomery 2023 Annual Report

The Environmental Commission respectfully submits a summary of our activities for the 2023 calendar year. The second annual Environmental Awards, a tour of the Watershed Institute campus and annual stream cleanup were the highlights of the year.

Membership

The Environmental Commission is composed of seven (7) members, 2 alternates, 1 advisor, and 2 Youth Leadership Committee liaisons as follows:

Mary Reece, Chair/Member	Kathy Lynch, Alternate 1
Susann Brown, Member	Ratna Revankar, Alternate 2
Frank Derby, Member	Brian Zinn, Advisor
Michelle Jacob, Member	Lauren Wasilauski, EC Coordinator
Greg Kaganowicz, Member	Devra Keenan, Township Committee liaison
Yasmin Reyes, Member	
Sarah Roberts, Member	

The Commission conducted ten (10) regular meetings in 2023, most of which were held virtually via Zoom with in-person meetings scheduled quarterly.

2023 Priorities

The EC set the following priorities for the 2023 calendar year:

- Raising awareness of flooding and stormwater management issues;
- Supporting certification by residents and businesses through the River Friendly program;
- Continue to recognize local businesses, organizations and residents with the environmental awards program

Plus, annual priorities:

- Review site plans for adherence to environmental standards;
- Continue the Earth Day celebration

Earth Day Fair

The 18th Annual Earth Day Fair was conducted on Sunday April 23 as a recycling and donation event at the new Municipal Complex.

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Mary Reece's sister and brother-in-law grew milkweed plants from seed to give away at the Fair, as they have for the past several years.

Recycling opportunities for electronics, metal, printer cartridges and paper shredding were provided. The Sheriff's office collected prescription medications, and Shade Tree Committee collected hundreds of flower pots for reuse. Our community made abundant donations of clothes and household goods to the Rescue Mission of Trenton. Donations of books (15 boxes), tennis racquets (45 racquets), sneakers (90lbs) bicycles (55) and school supplies went to charitable organizations, as well as donations of nonperishable items to the Food Pantry.

Stormwater Management

At our September meeting, the Watershed Institute provided a presentation on stormwater regarding existing regulations, as well as the new Inland Flood Protection Rules and updated Municipal Separate Stormwater Sewer System (MS4) regulations.

The Township secured a grant from NJDEP to retrofit two existing detention basins on Catbriar Court and Red Fox Court into biobasins. The EC members look forward to assisting the Township with publicity and educational materials to disseminate to residents regarding the importance of this work.

Stream Cleanup

The annual stream cleanup event, hosted in partnership with The Watershed Institute, was a big success. The event was held at three locations along Rock Brook on April 15 – Bessie Grover Park, Rock Mill Preserve and Zion Crossing. The Commission rented a bus from Somerset County to transport participants from the Otto Kaufman Community Center to these various locations. Over 433lbs of trash (including a hot tub washed away during Hurricane Ida) was removed from Rock Brook by volunteers – an amazing feat!

Tree Ordinance

In accordance with updated stormwater regulations promulgated by NJDEP, Township staff and professionals drafted an ordinance regulating tree removal and replacement. The Commission reviewed the draft tree ordinance and provided feedback. The Commission would like to assist in developing outreach and educational materials for the community – private and commercial property owners, landscapers, homeowners' associations, etc.

River Friendly Certification

The EC continued to work with the Watershed Institute to make connections to local businesses and golf courses, to encourage participation in the River Friendly certification program. The EC is also exploring how Montgomery can become the test case for a municipal certification.

Environmental Awards

In 2021, the Commission developed an awards program to recognize the work of residents, businesses and local organizations. The second round of awards (for work in 2022, awarded in April 2023) recognized 7 individuals and 1 business.

Ongoing Activities

The Environmental Commission continued to review Planning and Zoning Board applications, and provide comments. There were several large applications such as RPM and Harlingen Associates, which required detailed examination and discussion by the Commission. Overall, comments were offered on green design elements, stormwater management, impervious coverage, pedestrian access and connectivity, landscaping and tree planting. Sarah Roberts and Frank Derby served as the representatives to Site Plan/Subdivision Committee, Susann Brown to Open Space Committee, and Greg Kaganowicz served as the representative to Master Plan Committee.

Members continued to participate in educational workshops, webinars, etc. such trainings offered by the Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions (ANJEC) and Watershed Institute.

2024 Goals

- Host the annual Earth Day Fair celebration
- Educate residents and homeowners associations about flooding and stormwater management
- Develop educational materials and conduct outreach regarding the tree ordinance
- Promote ‘River Friendly’ certification to businesses and residents
- Continue the environmental awards program
- Achieve silver level recertification through Sustainable Jersey
- Provide advice on environmental features, and sustainability opportunities at new Municipal Complex such as solar panels, electric vehicle charging stations and more
- Host an environmental film series in partnership with the Franklin Township EC
- Advise on development of Community Energy Plan (grant application pending)
- Develop plans for pollinator microhabitats on Township properties; publicize to private landowners and encourage replicability