



BERKELEY HEIGHTS ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

2011 Annual Report Berkeley Heights Environmental Commission

- 1) The Commission met 14 times to review plans and conduct environmental business. The number of plans reviewed were again below past years as a result of lessened construction activity. Comments were submitted on 6 plans to the Board of Adjustment/Planning Board.
- 2) The Sustainable Jersey program was a major focus for the year. The Commission submitted a request for silver certification, an honor reached by only 10 communities in the state. Some of the activities for this program included:
 - documentation of energy consumption for the Township for the past 2 years and entry into a data base for future comparison
 - inventory of conservation easements granted in town
 - promotion of no-idling
 - inventory of street trees, hazard assessment and tree planting
 - calculation of carbon footprint for the township and municipal facilities
 - cataloging of community health initiatives
 - numerous educational activities on energy and environmental conservation
- 3) We produced GIS maps indexed to the township lot and block data covering steep slopes, wetlands, flood zones, water recharge areas, and environmentally important areas. The maps were distributed to the Engineering Department and the Planning Board as well as the Environmental Commission and a set is displayed in the Township conference room. The maps were created by GIS experts at the Passaic River Coalition and the project funded with grant funds from ExxonMobil at a cost of \$3500.
- 4) We organized a series of educational programs during the month of April in cooperation among the Berkeley Heights EC, the Berkeley Heights Public Library and the Union County Master Tree Stewards. Programs included a discussion of organic lawn care practices, discussion of trees, distribution of saplings, two workshops on making things from recycled materials, a discussion of where our recycling goes, and a film about oceans. Three trees were raffled off to attendees.
- 5) Our intern, Maxine Tagay, gave a lecture on energy wastage consumption in the home, and we set up a program with the library to loan out energy meters.

6) Our members continued care at the walking path along the Passaic River. Together with Union County personnel and master gardeners, we planted 100 willow oak and silky dogwood seedlings along with deer protective tubes. Together with Union County personnel and 25 volunteers from the L'Oreal Corporation, we cleared invasive plants from among the trees and shrubs and also removed debris from a stream. An Eagle Scout repaired the deer enclosure to demonstrate the harmful effect of deer browsing on the forest understory. We also participated in the Union County Park Department's Bio_Blitz which did a census of plant, animal, and insect species in the park.

7) We distributed 230 saplings to all 4th fourth graders in town and 70 to girl scouts in connection with Arbor Day.

8) We maintained the rain garden at Hughes school with the cooperation of a local landscaper.

9) Volunteers completed the survey of approximately 2,000 street trees, constituting around 70% of the town. Species, size, condition and hazards were inventoried and places for new plantings were identified. Funds were used for the training of the volunteers by an experienced arborist, and the remaining \$3,200 of the grant was used by the township for hazardous tree removal. This work was funded by an ARRA grant.

10) We completed work under a \$10,000 grant through Sustainable Jersey, funded by Walmart, to use aerial survey data to evaluate the Berkeley Heights' urban tree canopy and estimate its economic and environmental benefits. We hired the Global Ecosystem Center as contractor for the photoanalysis. The study showed that the canopy value to Berkeley Heights is around \$30 million. The beneficial effect of reducing runoff was most noteworthy. Presentations were made to the Union County Shade Tree Commission, Union County Master Gardeners, the League of Municipalities, the Old Guard Organization, the Planning Board and the Board of Adjustment on the results and implications of the study. Two articles have also been published so far.

11) We located and coordinated the planting of 20 3-inch caliper trees as part of the Greening Union County program.

12) The recycling subcommittee held a styrofoam collection and recycling day.

13) Two commissioners served on the solar energy advisory committee for the Board of Education.

Estimated total volunteer hours were : 850

New grant funds received were \$3700: \$2,000 from ExxonMobil, \$200 from the Board of Public Utilities, and \$1500 from the Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissioners.

Funds expended from new and previous grants were approximately \$14,500 on the projects listed as numbers 3, 9, and 10 plus payment for the Natural Resources Inventory done last year.

Commission members were :

Leonard Berkowitz, Chairman
Richard Leister, Co-chairman
Kevin Hall, Planning Board Liaison
Robin Callaghan
Michael D'Aquila
Ed Delia
Deborah Plotnik
Stephanie Zecca, Alternate
Helen Kirsch, BOE liaison

Leonard Berkowitz, 12/21/2011