



BERKELEY HEIGHTS ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

## **2018 Annual Report Berkeley Heights Environmental Commission**

The Commission met 22 times to review plans and conduct environmental business. Comments were submitted on 48 applications to the Board of Adjustment or the Planning Board.

Volunteers for the Environmental Commission gave more than 1,060 hours of their time for meetings and work in the community and the Community Garden proposal.

In 2018 the Environmental Commission also:

1. Obtained Sustainable Jersey Bronze Certification again.
2. Together with the Tree Inspector Thomas Bocko and Certified Tree Expert Stephen Chisholm revised the Five-Year Community Forestry Management Plan. Funding to pay Mr. Chisholm came from a CFM grant.
3. Obtained a \$5,000 grant from Sustainable Jersey and a \$1250 grant from Union County for the Learning Community Garden.
4. Submitted required paperwork to Green Acres and the Historic Registry for the Berkeley Heights Learning Community Garden and obtained approval from both the Township and the agencies to start the garden. Also developed application and rules for the BH Learning Community Garden. Held orientation meeting with gardeners in October.
5. Initiated a relationship with The Trex Company to collect thin-film plastics as part of Trex's Thin-Film Plastics Challenge. The EC has partnered with the Recreation Commission, Sandy Hook Promise, seven Girl Scout Troops, and The Rotary Club for collections at the six Trex bins placed around town. Our residents' participation has been enthusiastic, resulting in more than 3,000 pounds of thin film plastics being collected in slightly over six months. As a result of these collections, our town will be receiving four composite outdoor Trex benches to be installed in Lower Columbia Park. ANJEC recognized the EC for this project, a 2018 Environmental Achievement Award at its annual conference.
6. Organized a three-day long Vegan Fest. This event featured three events: (1) an outdoor yoga and Tai Chi sessions in The Grove Park at the Connell Center, focused on exercise and mindfulness; (2) two educational panels – one on health impacts of eating a more vegan-like diet and the other on

- how a vegan diet positively impacts the supply chain and helps reduce global warming by decreasing demand for meat and dairy products; and (3) a vegan cook-off that over 100 people attended and for which over several hundred dollars-worth of prizes from local vendors were awarded, demonstrating to the public that plant-based food can be healthy and taste delicious.
7. Co-sponsored with Val's Valiants (a high school student) 10 litter clean up areas next to streams in the township. Other organizations including "The Warriors" Relay for Life team, Cub Scouts and Scouts from Pack 368, and students from TCNJ participated in one or more of these events. Collectively, these volunteers collected approximately 600 pounds of trash and recyclables. ANJEC recognized Val's Valiants for this effort at its annual conference in October with its prestigious 2018 Environmental Achievement Award.
  8. Met with the Township Administrator John Bussiculo, Treasurer Michel Marceau to coordinate environmental issues. One outcome was to support storm clean up with \$10,000 from the tree fund.
  9. Obtained Green Acres signs to make people aware of public property and encourage them to keep it clean.
  10. Submitted comments for the township master plan.
  11. Distributed some 200 saplings to all fourth graders in the Township in connection with Arbor Day.
  12. Planted trees at Governor Livingston High School as part of Arbor Day Celebrations
  13. Coordinated with the tree inspector to plant trees along the Township rights of way.
  14. Continued with volunteers to weed and mulch mostly native plants at the eastern end of Peppertown Park.
  15. Worked with the tree inspector and contractor to implement the \$25,000 Community Forestry Management grant obtained to treat ash trees against emerald ash borer.
  16. Issued press releases announcing the ash tree treatment and encouraging residents to have their ash trees treated.
  17. Cosponsored rain garden talk and tree walk with Berkeley Heights Public Schools at Governor Livingston High School.

18. Updated the EC website with the support of the Communications Committee.
19. Continued support of Green Infrastructure in the Township's redevelopment plans.
20. Promoted the planting of trees along the ROW by asking residents to contact the Township if they wanted trees. More than 20 residents replied.
21. Organized a presentation by Chemtrade for residents concerned about Chemtrade's site.
22. Joined the Sustainable Jersey Union County Hub, which consists of green teams, including environmental commissions, from various Union County towns. This group looks for and discusses Sustainable Jersey opportunities.
23. Worked with the County and volunteers from L'Oreal in June to continue care at the walking path along the Passaic River Park.
24. With the possibility that Nokia Bell Labs may want to sell off part of its property, the Commission offered to help explore possible open space options for the property.
25. Continued a Facebook page for the EC

**Major Goals for 2019:**

- Continue our mission to review applications
- Achieve Sustainable Jersey Silver Certification
- Review tree ordinance
- Raise awareness of Green Infrastructure and revise stormwater ordinance to include impervious surface mitigation
- Improve communications with community and gain input from residents
- Try to increase number of grants obtained.

Commission members were :

Richard Leister, Chairman  
Kevin Hall, Planning Board Liaison  
Kim Diamond (starting in February)  
Mitchell Gayer  
David Harris (starting in October)  
Deborah Plotnik  
Michael D'Aquila  
Alvaro Medeiros (starting in February)  
Kinan Tadmori  
Jaime Salazar, alternate (resigned midyear)

BOE liaison Helen Kirsch

Submitted by Richard Leister, February 6, 2019