

DATE: January 3, 2017
TO: Township Committee
FROM: Nelson Dittmar, Chair
Cranford Environmental Commission
RE: 2016 Annual Report

In accordance with the ordinance that established the Commission, this will serve as our annual report to the Committee. The Commission was comprised as follows:

Members: Nelson Dittmar, Chair	Steven Jandoli
Carol Berns	Donald Jones
Ann Darby	Kathleen Murray (Planning Board member)
David DesRochers	

Alternate Members: Ronald Margulis and John Hrebin

Associate Members: Daniel Aschenbach, David Coughlin, Alyssa Frediani, William King, Frank Klapinski, Edward O'Malley, Patricia Pavlak, Ana Pinto, David Pringle, Lawrence Russo, and Mary Sudiak

Township Committee liaison: Mary O'Connor

We are very proud of our accomplishments this year. We think that, in a small way, they have enhanced the quality of life and the environment in Cranford. We are very grateful for your support. We look forward to working with you in the future.

Generally, we meet monthly to discuss matters relating to the environment, including recycling, and ways in which educational information can be distributed to the people of Cranford. On a regular basis, we review the potential environmental impact of site plans submitted to the Planning Board and the Zoning Board of Adjustment, and provide comments to the Boards, as appropriate. We also review on an as-needed basis various legal notifications received under the requirements of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) regulations. Our major activities and accomplishments, some of which are parts of programs commenced in prior years, were as follows:

- In January, members of the Commission met with Mayor Kalnins to discuss our goals for the year. As a follow up to that meeting, members of the Commission and I met with the Township Committee on February 8 to discuss the goals for 2016 and our accomplishments for 2015. Among the goals discussed were the Committee's pledge to reduce impervious surface and ways to accomplish that, our goal to gain recertification as a green community by Sustainable Jersey, holding an Earth Day Fair, our Green Business

Program, a recommendation to purchase more fuel efficient Township vehicles, and My Green Cranford website. See below for discussion of some of these items.

- In November, Cranford was certified as a Sustainable Community by Sustainable Jersey. Mayor Kalnins, Deputy Mayor O'Connor, and I accepted the award at a luncheon in Atlantic City. We completed 18 actions to achieve certification at the Bronze level. Some of our Actions were our Green Business Program, the Town taking the Sustainable Land Use Pledge, the Mayor's Wellness Program, our Rake for the Planet program, the solar panels at the Community Center and Library, our review of all plans presented to the Planning and Zoning Boards, the Township's Prescription Drug Safety Program, the rain gardens that we planted, and our Anti-idling Program.
- In September 2014, using a \$2,000 grant from Sustainable Jersey, the Commission led other community members including Township Committee Commissioners, Master Gardeners of Union County, Hanson Park Conservancy members, Boy Scout Troop 80, and Viridian volunteers in the installation of a rain garden on the front lawn of the Municipal Building. Over 80 plants were installed. We continued to maintain the garden in 2016 and made new plantings, as necessary. Visit the Facebook page "Cranford Rain Garden" for photo, video, and other related content.

The garden was designed to receive runoff from the Municipal Building roof. This runoff previously discharged directly to the street by PVC pipe. By disconnecting this discharge and routing it through the rain garden, this project demonstrated an effective and attractive solution to urban runoff, a solution that is especially needed in our flood-prone town.

- In the past few years, we have been working with the Township Committee to implement its pledge to reduce impervious surface. During 2015, Commission member Alyssa Frediani performed a survey of all Township-owned properties to determine the amount of impervious surface. In 2016, the Township reduced impervious surface by including gravel areas in parking lots that were being repaved. The small parking lot across from Roosevelt Park will be removed in 2017.
- In May, a team of volunteers from the Commission, Township Commissioners O'Connor and Giblin, Friends of Roosevelt Park and volunteers from Viridian created a Monarch Butterfly habitat in Roosevelt Park. There was an educational program with live butterflies and caterpillars provided by Stacy Nick. The team plans to replant milkwood wildflower seeds in January 2017 in order to re-establish the core habitat for Monarch butterflies
- In 2013, we organized and sponsored a presentation to the Planning and Zoning Boards by Christopher Obropta, Ph.D., P.E., a Water Resource Specialist from Rutgers Cooperative Extension on Stormwater Management and Regulations. Among other things, the training focused on helping municipal officials understand the questions they should be asking of applicants to ensure that they are complying with the stormwater regulations. The two-hour session was recorded by TV 35 and, in 2016, copies were given to Planning and Zoning Board members for their viewing.
- We continued to monitor the status of the proposed Pilgrim Pipeline which would go through Cranford.

- This autumn we again urged residents to forgo the use of powered leaf blowers and rake leaves on two designated Saturdays. The Rake For The Planet program was endorsed in a resolution by the Township Committee. The benefits of raking were pointed out in flyers that we posted around town and in our press release, which appeared in local newspapers.
- To educate the community concerning flood-related issues, in 2012, we produced a four-page leaflet entitled Stormwater Run-off Impacts and Management, and purchased the Benefits of Trees brochure published by the International Society of Arboriculture. In 2013, we printed a brochure “1,000 Rain Gardens in the Rahway River Watershed,” which was prepared by ANJEC. We distributed these at events during the year, and made them available on our website.
- At our suggestion, the Cranford Public Library again had a special display in April, in honor of Earth Day, of environment-related books and DVDs. Some of the books were donated by us to the Library in prior years.
- In April, Deputy Mayor O’Connor, Ron Margulis, and I met with the recycling coordinator of the West Orange Conservation Center to discuss the possibility of outsourcing the Township’s recycling operations and producing mulch at the Conservation Center. In 2015, Terence Wall (Township Administrator) also visited this site with Ron Margulis and me. This operation is very profitable for West Orange. The outcome in Cranford of this is pending a decision from the Township Committee.
- Working with the Chamber of Commerce and the Green Team, in 2011, the Commission developed a Green Business Recognition program to recognize local businesses for taking sustainability actions, i.e., those that benefit the environment while being economically beneficial. One-hundred businesses have been certified as green businesses. Cranford is one of a small number of communities in New Jersey to have such a program. These businesses have demonstrated sustainability practices such as energy efficiency, recycling, minimizing or composting waste, and fair trade and socially-responsible product sourcing. During 2015, Don Jones worked with two Kean University sustainability science students to contact merchants who were not participating in the program. Photos of several of the 2015 recipients can be seen on the "My Green Cranford" Facebook page.
- Our web site www.mygreencranford.org, launched in January 2009, contains information about the Commission’s activities and serves as a community resource guide for issues relating to the environment, energy-savings ideas, and environmental events. The site was redesigned in 2016 and is updated monthly. At its annual Congress in October 2012, the Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions (ANJEC) awarded our Commission one of its Environmental Achievement Awards for the development and content of our website.
- In 2014, we expanded our community outreach by creating a Facebook page, My Green Cranford. By the end of this year, we had over 237 followers.

- The Rahway River Watershed Storm Water Advisory Board was formed in February 2013 by Dan Aschenbach. The Board has members from the communities in the Watershed. Carol Berns and Frank Klapinski are members of the Board.
- We prepared a Proclamation to honor Paul Lioy, who died in July 2015. Paul, a long-time Cranford resident, was a noted environmentalist and an internationally renowned authority on exposure science. Mayor Kalnins presented the Proclamation to Mrs. Lioy on February 9, 2016.
- The Cranford School System has an Environmental Education Committee which meets four times a year. It is chaired by the Assistant Superintendent and is attended by teachers from each of the schools. Environmental ideas and projects are discussed and promoted. Nelson Dittmar regularly attends these meetings.
- Nelson Dittmar attended a presentation by the DMC to the Township Committee to support a proposal to replace 343 overhead lights with LED lights. A \$100 rebate is available from Clean Energy for each light, and each light lasts 20 years, resulting in a payback of expenditures in 6.5 years.
- Donald Jones made a presentation on rain gardens to the Floraphile Garden Club. About twenty people attended.
- In 2005, we drafted an ordinance, which was enacted by the Township Committee, adopting the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Rating Systems for certain construction in Cranford. These systems, developed by the United States Green Building Council (USGBC), use an approach that reduces the environmental impact of construction-related activities while producing meaningful savings to the owner. In 2008, the Mayor created a committee to implement LEED-EB (for existing buildings) as required by the ordinance. The committee consisted of the Assistant Township Engineer, Steve Robertazzi, Kelli Glasgow (a LEED-certified architect), Mike DeChiaro (a LEED-certified professional), and Nelson Dittmar. We have not met for over three years. In the latter part of 2009, we installed sensors in the Community Center to obtain temperature, light usage and other information on each room. The resulting data was used to determine an Energy Star Rating Number. The rating did not meet the minimum required by the LEED-EB prerequisites. Consequently, it was decided to take steps to remedy the situation. Using the recommendation of one of the members of the Renewable Energy Task Force, the lighting was upgraded to more energy-efficient bulbs throughout the facility. We hope to start meeting again in 2017.
- Nelson Dittmar continued to serve as Past President of the Board of Trustees of ANJEC.
- We reviewed thirty-three proposed site plans and provided our written comments to either the Planning Board or the Zoning Board of Adjustment, as appropriate.

Finally, our budget for 2016 was \$3,500. Our total expenditures were \$885.56, which included \$7100 for annual dues for ANJEC, and \$175.56 relating to plantings for the Monarch butterfly garden at Roosevelt Park.

cc: Terence Wall, Township Administrator
Jennifer Coffey, ANJEC Executive Director