

DATE: January 4, 2016  
TO: Township Committee  
FROM: Nelson Dittmar, Chair  
Cranford Environmental Commission  
RE: 2015 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	Donald Jones
Carol Berns	Kathleen Murray (Planning
Ann Darby	Board member)
David DesRochers	Steven Jandoli

Alternate Members: Ronald Margulis and Daniela Shebitz

Associate Members: Daniel Aschenbach, Alyssa Frediani, David Gretta, John Hrebin, William King, Frank Klapinski, Edward O'Malley, Patricia Pavlak, Ana Pinto, 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, I met with the Township Committee in March to discuss the goals for 2015 and our accomplishments for 2014. Among the goals discussed were the Committee's pledge in 2013 to reduce impervious surface by 10% by

2015, our proposal to implement an Open Space Tax to fund future open space acquisitions, a Rain Barrel building training program, holding an Earth Day Fair, and Planning and Zoning Boards stormwater training. See below for discussion of some of these items.

- 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 2015 and made new plantings, as necessary.

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 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.

- Dave Pringle and I met with the Township Committee in December 2014 to urge the Committee to adopt a resolution opposing the proposed Pilgrim Pipeline which would run through thirty communities in New Jersey including Cranford. The Committee adopted a resolution to oppose the Pipeline on January 13.
- In a letter to the Township Committee in September 2012, we recommended that it should:
  - Pledge to a 10% reduction in impervious surfaces on school and municipal facilities by 2015.
  - Amend existing ordinances to include a mandatory stormwater mitigation plan for development proposals that include the addition of 100 square feet or more of impervious surface.

In 2013, the Committee passed a resolution adopting the pledge to reduce impervious surface. Implementation of these recommendations is pending at this time. At our recommendation, the Cranford Board of Education in May, 2013 adopted a resolution supporting this initiative.

During 2015, Commission member Alyssa Frediani, performed a survey of all Township-owned properties to determine the amount of impervious surface.

- On March 21, we held a Rain Barrel Workshop. Twenty-five participants were instructed on how to build rain barrels. The barrels were donated by L'Oréal USA. Each participant was given a copy of Rain Barrel: Installation and Use, written by Rutgers Water Resources. A slide presentation was made by Brittany Musolina, the NJDEP AmeriCorps Watershed Ambassador. Brittany also visited each participant's home to ensure that the rain barrel had been properly installed. Prior to the workshop, a flyer was prepared and posted to appropriate bulletin boards in Cranford. A press release was prepared. It appeared in local print and online newspapers.
- We held an Earth Day Celebration at Hanson Park in conjunction with the Spring River Cleanup. There were demonstrations on using a backyard composter and one of our members, Kathleen Murray, conducted a workshop of the step-by-step method to build and install rain barrels. Visitors could also see the rain garden at Hanson Park and learn

how rain gardens help reduce flooding. Commission members manned an information table. Grilled hamburgers and hot dogs and beverages were served.

- 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 2015, copies were given to Planning and Zoning Board members for their viewing.
- The Greenway Channel Improvement Advisory Board was formed in January 2015 to develop input for the proposed channel improvements that are part of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers flood (Army Corp) mitigations. Dan Aschenbach chaired this Board. Kathy Murray and I attended the meetings.
- In July, we sent a seven-page letter to the Army Corp commenting on its Rahway River Basin Flood Risk Management Study.
- At the request of the Township Committee, we looked into the New Jersey PACE program for financing of energy efficient facilities. Under this program, businesses that install energy efficient equipment would receive financing that would be repaid as part of their property taxes. We concluded that the program could be beneficial to the community and arranged for a presentation from the Company on June 8. Further action is pending the passage of legislation by the State of NJ.
- 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.
- Based on our recommendation, the Township Committee passed a resolution in support of a safe, sustainable supply of New Jersey water resources by requesting the Governor and the NJ DEP to release an update to the New Jersey Statewide Water Supply Plan immediately for public review and comment. NJ Assemblyman Jon Bramnick sent a letter of appreciation to the Township Committee.
- At the request of Library Director, John Malar, we reviewed a proposal from NJ Office of Clean Energy Direct Install Program. The recommendation is to replace nearly all of the bhLibrary's lighting with LED units and HVAC units which will result in significant energy savings. The State program would pay 70% of the costs and the Library would pay 30%. We highly recommended that the Library go forward with it.
- In July, we responded to a survey from NJ Department of Environmental Protection addressed to the Township concerning Cranford's Anti-Idling Programs. We explained

the program that the Green Team had carried out including its education program at our schools and the anti-idling signs that had been placed around town.

- 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, including the Earth Day Fair noted above, and made them available on our website.
- At our suggestion, the Cranford Public Library had a special display in April, in honor of Earth Day, of environment-related books and DVDs. Some of the books were donated to the Library in prior years.
- Terence Wall (Township Administrator), 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. 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. Ninety-five businesses have been certified as green businesses. Cranford is one of small number of communities in New Jersey to have such a program. Seven businesses were awarded certificates during 2015. 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](http://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 has a photo gallery of wildlife seen in Cranford along with an events calendar, and a resource page with links to helpful green web sites. We continued to update and improve the site during the year. 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 175 likes.
- 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, John Hrebin, and Frank Klapinski are members of the Board.

- 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.
- 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 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. However, in order to meet the LEED-EB prerequisites, the HVAC system must be upgraded. This matter is pending at this time. We hope to start meeting again in 2016.
- 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 2015 was \$3,000. Our total expenditures were \$2114, which included \$650 for annual dues for ANJEC, \$755 relating to our website, and \$350 relating to plantings for the rain garden at the Municipal Building

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