

Memo

To: Mayor Judson Moore

From: John J Nardone Commercial Township Environmental Commission Chairman

Date: 5/13/2014

Re: 2013 Annual Report

We would like to thank the Township Committee for its support of the Environmental Commission in the past year. The following is a brief summary of our efforts and accomplishments:

In 2013 we renewed our membership in the Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions, (ANJEC). Several Commissioners attended ANJEC seminars and webinars to become more effective in our positions and to learn some of the issues impacting neighboring townships and the state as a whole. Members of the Commission attended ANJEC networking meetings with other environmental commissions in Southern New Jersey.

After over a year of work, consultation with the Township Engineer and incorporating suggestions from the Land Use Board, the Environmental Commission presented a tree ordinance to the Township Committee. This ordinance was adopted and will go a long way to protect the trees and the rural nature of the township.

The Members of the Environmental Commission has participated for the last year in the Bayshore Communities Long Term Planning Committee that was formed in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy. Along with representatives from Maurice River Township, the Army Corp of Engineers, The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, The Bay Shore Center at Bivalve and other stakeholders to study the effect of climate change on the Townships wetlands, shorelines and dikes in Port Norris, Bivalve, Shellpile, and along the mouth of the Maurice River. These meetings also study the effects of erosion and rising water levels on the above mentioned sensitive areas of the Township and surrounding areas. The purpose of the meetings is to gather all concerned parties to devise a plan to protect these valuable resources.

The Commission, with the cooperation of the Township Committee, is now the second community in Cumberland County to become a certified municipality in the Sustainable Jersey Program. This program provides grants, guidance and information to help a municipality become more energy efficient thereby saving money and helping the environment. This certification process began in 2012 and resulted in the creation of a Green Team which will direct and coordinate the efforts of the Committee and Commission toward the goal of making the Township more energy efficient, obtaining state and federal grant money and help protect our environment.

At the annual Bay Day celebration the Commission distributed car litter bags purchased by the Township Committee encouraging people to recycle and not litter. In addition the Commission provided a shredder for the use of Township residents and collected over 500 lbs. of paper for recycling. This was the second year we have sponsored the shredder and the event was a big success. We anticipate an even greater response next year. We answered questions and distributed literature at various township events to increase awareness of the Environmental Commission to the people of the township.

The Commission was requested by residents of Laurel Lake to look into remedies regarding the proliferation of bamboo in the township. Bamboo is extremely invasive and difficult to eradicate. The residents appeared before the Commission because a neighbor has it growing on his property and it has travelled to their lot and they cannot effectively remove it while it is still growing on the neighbors' lot. Unfortunately, while there are remedies, the options are few and extremely expensive. Currently the Township has no way to prohibit the cultivation of invasive plant species. The Commission looks forward to discussing with the Committee and the Land Use Board, the possibility of drafting an invasive plant ordinance which has been done in several other New Jersey municipalities.

The Commission, for the second straight year, supplied volunteers to work the registration tables for the Eagle festival in Mauricetown in association with ANJEC. We have already committed to volunteering again in 2014.

We reviewed and commented on several site plans distributed to us by the Land Use Board. Where necessary, we performed site visits to understand how the proposed plans would impact the environment. We provided our comments to the Land Use Board for their consideration. We have attended Land Use Board meetings to better understand the issues and problems it faces in planning issues in the township. The Commission maintains a member as liaison member of the Land Use Board to promote the ideas of the Environmental Commission to that body.

Members of the Environmental Commission performed a roadside cleanup along a portion of Sheep Run Road for the cleanup the Environmental Commission received \$500. We applied that money to provide rebates to Commercial Township residents who purchase native trees. The program will be repeated this year. The participation of the Assistant Township Clerk in providing information to residents and doing the necessary paper work has been instrumental to the success of this program.

The Environmental Commission investigated the possibility of beautifying the intersection of North Avenue and the Mauricetown By-Pass. Currently it is an ugly conglomeration of mismatched signs. After performing preliminary work the Commission approached the Commercial Township Chamber of Commerce for support and ideas. The Chamber, under Co-Chairperson Meghan Wren, has taken on the project. The plan is to replace the current individual signs with a natural looking single backing which will have smaller removable signs which can be up dated as necessary. The Commission has provided \$500 and the information we have gathered to the Chamber. The Chamber will provide the remaining money necessary and will be able to ensure greater merchant participation. The Commission will review the plans prior to construction.

In 2013, the Commission created a Facebook page as a central source for environmental information in the Township including meeting minutes and our annual report. Although it is not well publicized, we have 28 followers so far and hope to attract many more in 2014.

It is my belief that one of the strengths of the Commercial Township Environmental Commission is our ability to work with other government and non-government entities for the good of Commercial Township. We have built and maintained an excellent working relationship with The Township Committee, the Land Use Board, as well as state and local governments and departments. We plan to build on this foundation and continue the spirit of cooperation that exists between all the organizations in and around Commercial Township. We will be available to discuss our plans and goals for 2014 at the Committees' convenience.

At our January meeting, the Commission will develop a set of goals for presentation to the Township Committee. One of our primary goals will be to repopulate the Green Team to maintain and upgrade our sustainable New Jersey certification.

We are proud of our accomplishments in 2013 and look forward to another year of raising awareness of the environment and the problems associated with climate change, rising sea level and increased flooding, meeting our recycling goals, working with the township, and being proactive in Environmental issues.

cc: Township Committee

Township Environmental Commission