

# Cranford Environmental Commission

**Municipal Building      Cranford, New Jersey 07016**

DATE:            January 6, 2014  
TO:              Township Committee  
FROM:           Nelson Dittmar, Chair  
                    Cranford Environmental Commission  
RE:              2013 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 | Lynda Feder               |
| Carol Berns                    | Kathleen Murray (Planning |
| Ann Darby                      | Board member)             |
| Dave DesRochers                | Steven Jandoli            |

Alternate Members: Ronald Margulis and Daniela Shebitz

Associate Members: Daniel Aschenbach, Rebecca Hoeffler, John Hrebin, Donald Jones, William King, Frank Klapinski, Kathy Lewis, Ana Pinto, Mary Reilly, Mark Smith, and Mary Sudiak

Township Committee liaison: Edward O'Malley

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 April, 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 open to the public and recorded by TV 35 for future use.

- 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.

Nelson Dittmar met with the Committee in January which subsequently 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 adopted a resolution supporting this initiative.

- In January, we hosted at the Community Center a program “Harvesting the Rain: Green Infrastructure for a Healthier Rahway Watershed.” The program was organized by the Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions (ANJEC) in partnership with The Rahway River Association and The Mayors Council on Rahway River Watershed Flood Control. Among the speakers were Mayor Hannon, Commission-member Dan Aschenbach, and Sandy Batty, ANJEC Executive Director.
- 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. This year, 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 below, and made them available on our website.
- Led by Daniela Shebitz, we applied for a \$10,000 grant from American Water to improve stormwater management by planting trees and shrubs and removing invasive species in Township Parks using volunteers from the Commission, the Tree Advisory Board, Hanson Park Conservancy, Kean Univ. ecology students, Boy Scouts, and the CHS Environmental Science Club. Our application was not successful, but the Township has agreed to fund this project on a smaller scale. The work will take place in spring 2014.
- The Rahway River Watershed Storm Water Advisory Board was formed in February by Dan Aschenbach. The Board, which has members for the communities in the Watershed, has met monthly. Carol Berns, John Hrebin, and Frank Klapinski are members of the Board.
- The Commission was awarded a \$2,000 Sustainable Jersey grant in October to design and install a rain garden at the Municipal Building. The Commission will work with the Township, the Rutgers Cooperative Extension Agent, and the Rahway River Watershed Storm Water Advisory Board to complete this project in spring 2014.

- 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. Rain barrels were sold to workshop participants. Visitors could also see the rain garden at Hanson Park and learn how rain gardens help reduce flooding. Using funds from a Sustainable Jersey grant (see below), composters were on sale at a significantly reduced price and anyone purchasing a composter received a free kitchen collection bucket. Commission members manned an information table. Grilled hot dogs and beverages were served.
- In April, the Commission participated in a Green Infrastructure webinar conducted by ANJEC.
- Mayor Hannen co-wrote with the ANJEC Executive Director an article “Tapping the Power of Local Environmental Commissions” which appeared in the April 2013 edition of New Jersey Municipalities, the League of Municipalities’ monthly magazine. The subtitle to the article states “Cranford’s Environmental Commission has accomplished a great deal over the years at little or no cost to the municipality.”
- In November, the Sustainable Jersey program recertified the Township as a Sustainable Community for three years. Sustainable Jersey is a partnership of the Sustainability Institute at the College of New Jersey, the New Jersey League of Municipalities, NJDEP, and the Board of Public Utilities (BPU). Almost 400 communities in New Jersey have registered for the program, of which 137 have been certified.  
 In December, the Mayor presented the Green Team with a Proclamation honoring its accomplishments. A banner announcing that Cranford was named a Sustainable Community is hanging in the Community Center.
- Working with the Chamber of Commerce and the Green Team, 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. Over seventy-five businesses have been certified as green businesses. Cranford is one of small number of communities in New Jersey to have such a program. Each of these businesses was presented a certificate of recognition at a Township Committee meeting and has been given a window sticker indicating Green Business Recognition.
- In October 2012, Sustainable Jersey selected the Township for a \$2000 Sustainable Jersey small grant for the Backyard Composter Program that was created by the Green Team working with members of the Environmental Commission. The program was introduced in the spring of 2013 and educated residents about the benefits of composting. Two workshops were held. Students from Cranford High School’s Environmental Club were trained on the educational material and were featured presenters at the training sessions. An informational brochure was developed and printed and distributed at public events and were available at the Cranford Library and Community Center. A sample

composting bin was on display in the lobby of the Community Center and was used at public events such as the Cranford Earth Day celebration. The bins and workshops were promoted on [www.mygreencranford.org](http://www.mygreencranford.org), in the My Green Cranford newsletter, TV 35, and local print and online newspapers. Compost bins were available at a reduced rate. Kitchen collection buckets were distributed for free.

- In September of 2012, Commission member Rebecca Hoeffler started a petition on Change.org for the Cranford Township Committee to adopt a Complete Streets Policy. The petition has 168 signatures and has generated growing support. Janna Chernetz from the Tri-State Transportation Campaign and Ranjit Walia, founder of the Civic Eye Collaborative, LLC, presented a special information session on April 29 to 25 town members. The audience included residents, parents, Green Team members, Mayor Hannen and Deputy Mayor O'Malley. The information session resulted in the formation of the Complete Streets and SRTS (Safe Routes to School) Task Force. This committee is charged with the adoption, promotion, and implementation of the policy. The policy makes sure that the Township accommodates for all modes of transportation in future road construction. These modes of transportation include but are not limited to: pedestrians, cyclists, people with disabilities, and people of all ages. The Complete Streets & SRTS Taskforce has worked alongside of Janna Chernetz and Ranjit Walia to finalize the Complete Streets Policy and prepare the implementation plan as part of the policy. Cranford's Complete Streets Policy was reviewed by the Planning Board and adopted by the Cranford Township Committee on September 10, 2013 in Resolution No. 2013-293.
- In February, at the Commission's recommendation, the Township Committee adopted a Resolution supporting sustainable state funding for preservation and stewardship of open space, parks, farmland, and historic sites in New Jersey.
- 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 and Mary Sudiak regularly attend these meetings.
- In March, the Township Committee adopted a Resolution of continuing support for the goals and purposes of the 2004 Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act. We sent a letter to the Committee urging that it adopt this resolution
- 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. Visitors have the option to sign up for the e-mail newsletter, which offers tips and news. We have approximately 180 subscribers. At its annual Congress in October 2012, ANJEC awarded our Commission one of its Environmental Achievement Awards for the development and content of our website.

- Working with the Union County Dept. of Parks, seven members of the Commission planted fifteen trees in McConnell Park in November.
- In 2008, with the support of the Township Committee, we became a Community Partner in the Clean Energy Program of the Board of Public Utilities (BPU). One of the programs is the Clean Power Choice Program. It seeks to encourage more people to choose renewable energy as an energy choice. Another is the Change the World, Start With ENERGY STAR program, which encourages residents to take actions to save energy such as switching to compact fluorescent bulbs (CFLs) and purchasing ENERGY STAR qualified products. During this year, we sought to promote these programs by taking the ENERGY STAR pledge.
- 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 consists of Sandra Caceres-Cardenas, Steve Robertazzi, Kelli Glasgow (a LEED-certified architect), Mike DeChiaro (a LEED-certified professional), and Nelson Dittmar. We did not meet during the year. 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 2014.
- Mary Reilly, a Commission member, made a presentation at the Library on Climate Change. It was attended by 25 people.
- Using a graphic designer who is a member of the Commission, we prepared a quarter-page piece which was included in the September edition of the Cranford Township News. It promoted the Commission and asked the reader to go to our website for answers to environmental questions.
- 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.
- Nelson Dittmar continued to serve as President of the Board of Trustees of ANJEC. He made a presentation in March on the Environmental Commission's Powers and

Responsibilities at one of ANJEC's Environmental Commissioners Courses. In October, Nelson and Don Jones attended the annual ANJEC Congress.

- In November 2006, Mayor Aschenbach signed the US Mayors Climate Protection Agreement. Cranford is now one of 1060 towns nationwide, including 109 in New Jersey, to sign the Agreement.
- We reviewed thirty nine 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 2012 was \$4,000. Our total expenditures were \$2265, which included \$1,000 for the Stormwater Training for the Planning and Zoning Boards, and \$575 for annual dues for ANJEC, \$168 for printing the 1000 Rain Gardens brochure. In addition, \$2,500 has been encumbered in 2013 for a project noted above to be completed in 2014 to plant trees and shrubs and remove invasive species in Township Parks.

cc: Terence Wall, Township Administrator  
Sandy Batty, ANJEC Executive Director