

FRANKLIN TOWNSHIP
ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION
ANNUAL REPORT
2011

JANUARY 2012

2012 Environmental Commission

Arnold S. Vernick, Chairman
Arnold W. Schmidt, Vice Chairman
John Clyde
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In accordance with the provisions of Ordinance No.676 adopted in August 1974, establishing an Environmental Commission for the Township of Franklin, the Environmental Commission is pleased to submit this annual report for calendar year 2011 to the Mayor and Township Council. The organization, responsibilities, powers and activities of the Commission adhere to the provisions of the Ordinance as well as the State legislation (NJSA 40:56A) passed in 1968, governing the establishment of environmental commissions.

Powers and Responsibilities

The state statute and municipal ordinance outline a broad range of powers and responsibilities for the Environmental Commission to help preserve and protect the environmental wellbeing of the Township. Principal powers and responsibilities include:

- Promote the conservation and development of the natural resources of the Township
- Advise the Mayor and Council and other municipal officials on environmental issues effecting the Township
- Inform and advise the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Adjustment regarding the environmental impact of proposals for development
- Investigate environmental and natural resource issues for the Township and recommend solutions
- Inform residents on environmental matters and ways to help protect the environment
- Interact with neighboring Commissions and other organizations concerning regional and state environmental issues
- Develop and maintain an inventory of the environmental resources and land use constraints of the Township.

Activities and Accomplishments

The Environmental Commission held a total of 19 regular official meetings during 2011, generally meeting bi-monthly, except for 5 months throughout the year. Minutes documenting the activities of each meeting were recorded and posted on the Township website. Principal activities and accomplishments for the year were as follows:

- Reviewed and commented on a total of 46 site plans for proposed residential and commercial development within the Township. In previous years, 48, 42 and 96 site plans were reviewed during calendar years 2010, 2009, and 2008 respectively.
- Continued the Environmental Stewardship Award program for an outstanding citizen by presenting the award at the Township Council meeting on November 22, 2011. The award was presented to Audra Wood, a teacher at the Pine Grove Manor School, for her efforts in establishing a community garden at the school.
- Updated and maintained the Environmental Commission's section of the Township's website.
- Co-sponsored and participated with the Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association in a cleanup of Seeley's Brook on April 2. The Association reported that a total of 10,568 pounds of debris were collected in their cleanups throughout the area. Franklin was one of the largest and most successful of the cleanups that they sponsored.
- Continued to support the operation of the community garden in Naaman Williams Park that the Commission constructed in 2010. With 34 plots available for use by the public, the garden was used this past summer by residents for growing fruit and vegetables.
- Constructed a second community garden in the Township at the Pine Grove Manor School, with a total of 47 plots. A ribbon-cutting ceremony was held and the garden was placed in operation in the spring of 2011.
- Provided support to the Township's Project Team for the County's Energy Audit Grant Program, and participated in Somerset County's Renewable Energy Initiative.
- Provided input to appropriate Township officials regarding environmental issues affecting the Township.
- Continued to support the Township's participation in the Sustainable Jersey program. Several Environmental Commission members are serving on the Township's Green Team, which is being chaired by Councilman Theodore Chase. The Township was previously awarded bronze certification at the League of Municipalities meeting in Atlantic City in November 2010.
- Continued to represent the Township in the Sustainable Raritan River program sponsored by the Rutgers University Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy. Several members of the Environmental Commission are serving on the program's working groups.
- Sponsored a presentation in April by the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife on black bears in New Jersey.
- Conducted a detailed review of the Environmental Resource Inventory, and prepared a summary of the updates required. Since the ERI is 3 years old, and updating is only required every 6 years, it was decided to delay updating of the document.
- Participated in a meeting with the Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association concerning the program to remove two dams in Franklin Township on the Millstone River. Removal of the dams would facilitate the use of the river by anadromous fish such as American shad.

- Participated in a meeting with the Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions (ANJEC) regarding their project to enhance access to the lower Raritan River.
- Met with a representative of the New Jersey Water Supply Authority and developed preliminary plans for a workshop on rain barrels to be held in the spring of 2012.

Expenditures

The Environmental Commission spent a total of \$470 in 2010. The expenditures included \$320 for annual membership in ANJEC and \$150 for two plaques.

Membership

One member of the Environmental Commission ended his service in 2011. Alternate Member Eugene Unger has decided to move out of state, and therefore he has not been reappointed. His service is acknowledged and appreciated.