

FRANKLIN TOWNSHIP
ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION
ANNUAL REPORT
2013

JANUARY 2014

2014 Environmental Commission

Arnold S. Vernick, Chairman
Arnold W. Schmidt, Vice Chairman
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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 2013 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 18 regular official meetings during 2013, meeting either monthly or bi-monthly 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 48 site plans for proposed residential and commercial development within the Township. In previous years, 36, 46, 48, 42 and 96 site plans were reviewed during calendar years 2012, 2011, 2010, 2009, and 2008 respectively.
- 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 the Delaware and Raritan Canal and its towpath at Blackwell Mills on April 20. A total of about 45 volunteers participated in the cleanup, which removed approximately 850 pounds of debris from the area.
- Continued to support the operation of the two community gardens that the Commission constructed in 2010 and 2011, in Naaman Williams Park and at the Pine Grove Manor School. The gardens have 34 and 47 plots respectively that were used by residents for growing fruit and vegetables. The gardens were featured in an article in the Home News Tribune in July, and in a video shown on Franklin's TV station in the fall.
- 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 again awarded bronze certification at the League of Municipalities meeting in Atlantic City in November 2013.
- Sponsored a presentation in May by the NJDEP Division of Fish & Wildlife on coyotes in New Jersey.
- Sponsored a presentation in October by the NJDEP Division of Fish & Wildlife on wild turkeys in New Jersey.
- 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.
- Continued to support 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.
- Co-sponsored two workshops with the New Jersey Water Supply Authority in May and July in the Municipal Building, to instruct and assist residents in the construction of rain barrels for their homes. A total of 37 rain barrels were constructed by approximately 60 people that attended the two workshops.
- Continued to support the Delaware & Raritan Canal Commission and NJDEP in their program to dredge and remove sediment from the bottom of the canal.
- Sponsored a presentation in June by All American Poly, regarding the recycling of soft plastics (grocery bags, newspaper wrappers, bubble wrap, etc.). A grant has subsequently been obtained to set up recycling bins at several locations within the Township, for deposit of soft plastics that will be collected by All American Poly for recycling. The bins have been ordered and should be in place soon.

Expenditures

The Environmental Commission spent a total of \$340 in 2013 for annual membership in the Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions (ANJEC). No Environmental Stewardship awards were given this year, but the Commission continues to look for deserving awardees.

Membership

There were no changes in Commission membership in 2013. Two members and one alternate were reappointed in January.