

ANNUAL REPORT 2009
BERKELEY HEIGHTS ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

It was a busy and productive year, capped by the selection of Berkeley Heights for certification by the Sustainable New Jersey program as one of only 34 towns in the initial group.

- 1) We distributed 230 saplings to all 4th graders and a girl scout troop in town in connection with Arbor Day.
- 2) We planted 6 trees with cooperation of the Board of Education - one at each school, also for Arbor Day and in honor of Mary Kay McMillan.
- 3) A commissioner spoke at the Arbor Day Celebration at Woodruff School.
- 4) Commissioners led the creation of a rain garden at Hughes School in cooperation with the PTO, Board of Education, Union County Agricultural Extension Agent, Master Gardeners, and Rutgers Cooperative Extension Service.
- 5) Seven sustainability teams, involving around 40 volunteers, developed draft action plans which were reviewed with the governing body, Planning Board, Board of Adjustment, department heads and the public. The League of Women Voters partnered with us on this effort and is handling the topic of solid waste and recycling. We encouraged the township to do an energy audit of its facilities and a contractor has been selected for this work. The Township Carbon Footprint was estimated as part of the sustainability effort.
- 6) A web site was set up for the Environmental Commission with a link to the township web site. The draft action plans and much other environmental information were posted.
- 7) Commissioners and the sustainability team volunteers organized a Green Fair which was attended by approximately 350 residents and included many environmental exhibits and demonstrations. The Commission also created a "green" logo for use at the GreenFest and later. Orders were taken for rain barrels and composters and these were also advertised at the "Rubber Ducky" festival, the Summit farmers' market and the Summit GreenFest. 15 rainbarrels and 16 composters were ordered. Survey Questionnaires on environmental choices were also distributed at the GreenFest and the Rubber Ducky festival.
- 8) Two meetings a month were held, except when not necessary. The Commission reviewed plan submissions to the Board of Adjustment and the Planning Board. The level of submissions was down this year. Specific suggestions were made on 10 plans.
- 9) The "green building team" is working with the Planning Board, Board of Adjustment and the Building Inspector to develop a sustainable building check list or brochure that can be given to homeowners and builders who are planning development. We also had a specific discussion with the Board of Adjustment on controlling impervious surface and the desire to identify trees on plans submitted.
- 10) A list of suggested trees for planting under power lines was sent to the Planning Board.
- 11) We submitted Grant Proposals to Sustainable Jersey, ANJEC, and NJDEP (preliminary). All had significant elements related to tree planting, or preservation of the tree canopy. We did not get the Sustainable Jersey grant; the NJDEP preliminary proposal is still pending. We were awarded the ANJEC grant together with Summit. This grant will allow us to update our NRI, do regional planning for the Passaic River greenway, and hopefully index our natural resource data to the town's GIS data. A public meeting on the Passaic River was jointly sponsored with the Summit EC and was attended by people from 6 neighboring towns in Union and Morris counties. Two thousand dollars of grant funding was

received from the ExxonMobil Foundation.

12) We applied for Sustainable Jersey certification for Berkeley Heights, with 150 points versus the minimum 100 target and became one of only 34 towns in the state to be awarded certification. The EC also adopted a goal of 40 % tree canopy for Berkeley Heights.

13) The deer enclosure in Passaic River Park was repaired again. Meetings were held with the tree officer and one homeowner was visited to discuss his plans for tree removal.

14) One of the commissioners helped to set up recycling throughout the Berkeley Heights school system, working with the BOE head of maintenance. Planning is also underway for introducing Back 2 Tap bottles in the schools and setting up an Environmental assembly.

15) One EC commissioner attended core training; two commissioners attended the ANJEC annual meeting; two attended the Sustainable Jersey awards luncheon. Other courses and conferences attended included ANJEC trainings and webinars (3 commissioners), a food waste recycling conference, two sustainable cities' conferences, and an alternate energy conference.

16) The transportation sustainability team began posting "no idling signs" at locations where people frequently idle. The first such signs were posted at the YMCA and the railroad station.

17) Approximately 20 articles and press releases were published on environmental topics in the Independent Press, Alternative Press, and Township Quarterly. Two commissioners joined the Advisory Board of the on-line "Garden State Green" web site along with representatives from many of the neighboring towns. This web site publicizes environmental events and topics.

Estimated volunteer hours: For general EC meetings: 400. For other activities above: 500+

Leonard Berkowitz
Chairman
12/22/09