

Environmental Commission Annual Report For 2016 submitted by Rich Cotter, Chair

The Environmental Commission would like to recognize and thank retiring member Sarah Dean Link for her 26 years of service as a member and leader of the Commission. She will remain a trusted resource for history and information going forward.

Sponsored Events for Township Residents

1) In May the Township joined 141 municipalities participating in the 2016 NJ Tree Recovery Campaign. Free native bare root seedlings were provided to residents in an effort to restore trees lost in recent violent storms. All 250 tree seedlings were distributed to residents in a little over one hour. If the campaign is offered in 2017, the Commission plans to request 500 tree seedlings.

2) In October the EC worked with the Raritan Headwaters Association to set up a Well Testing Program for Mendham Township residents. Residents paid for the tests they selected and received confidential results with recommendations to remediate if necessary. Forty-eight wells were tested; the Commission plans to offer the program again in 2017.

3) In December a successful collection of bulky Polystyrene foam blocks for recycling was held for the first time at the Mendham Borough DPW. EC volunteers and DPWs from both the Borough and Township participated along with a student representative from the WMMHS Environmental Club. The Commission plans to hold the event once again in 2017 switching the location to the Township DPW.

Environmental Stewardship

1) NJ Freshwater Wetland Protection Program - Commission members reviewed all applications to the NJDEP for Letters of Interpretation and Permits under the Freshwater Wetlands Protection Act for projects in Mendham Township. Comments were directed to the agency as appropriate.

2) The EC continues to maintain records for more than 160 Township Conservation Easements. A letter is sent to new homeowners who purchase properties with easements on their property notifying them of their stewardship responsibilities.

- 3) The Commission encouraged the Township Police Department to resume participation in Operation Take Back, a national initiative to provide a safe, convenient, and environmentally responsible means of disposing of prescription drugs.
- 4) The Commission generated publicity material and worked with the Township to educate residents about the approaching deadly emerald ash borer insect threat to all Ash trees.
- 5) The Commission continued to manage the recycling collection of rechargeable batteries at Township Hall. Forty pounds of batteries were recycled through this station in 2016.
- 6) The Commission participated in April with the Mendham Borough EC in a Three River Festival – this event was led by Raritan Headwaters Association to promote clean-up of area streams leading to the Raritan, Passaic and Whippany rivers. A significant amount of litter was cleared at the Township selected site of the stream running along Combs Hollow.
- 7) Commission members participated with Raritan Headwaters Association in water monitoring activity of Township streams. This data collection requires training and the results are accepted by NJ's DEP.
- 8) 2016 Watershed meetings for both the Raritan and Passaic Rivers were attended by Commission members with reports distributed to all. Kristi MacDonald, Director of Science, and Lauren Theis, Director of Education at RHA attended a Commission meeting. They presented the background of this conservation organization and information on programs available to the schools and community in Mendham Township.
- 9) A representative from Schiff Nature Preserve attended a Commission meeting to update members on their activities and discuss ideas on working together in the future to protect the environment in the Township.

Township Budget/Records/Other Representation

- 1) The EC's Capital Improvement Fund of \$16,000 was appropriately accounted for under Township Ordinance 2016-2. The account will provide funding for various capital improvements by the EC within the Township.
- 2) Additional capital funds of \$2,863.66 targeted for Brush and Vegetation removal have also been identified.
- 3) The EC did a historical review of EC records in Township storage in order to avoid unnecessary retention of redundant Township files.
- 4) A Commission member continues to hold a seat on the Planning Board and represented that Board at TRC meetings.
- 5) The Commission supplied comments to all Board of Adjustment applications where applicable.

2016 Membership

Regular Members:

Rich Cotter, Chair
Teri Cosentino*
Jamie Kinsel
Sarah Dean Link
Ralph Rhodes
John Schmerler
Susan Schmerler

Alternate Members:

Brian Boden
John Mallon*

* New members to the EC in 2016 - both attended ANJEC EC Training seminars

Township Committee Liaison:

Diana Orbin Brown