

Mendham Township Environmental Commission

Annual Report 2021

Key bullets were presented in person to Township Committee on January 5, 2022

Printed version shared February 28, 2022

The Environmental Commission (EC) was very active in 2021. Key achievements are described below.

EC established a newly structured working plan, to cover the range of issues that impact and benefit our community environment. The current EC is a highly motivated team of volunteers, with significant progress being made.

Trail-head signage installed and repaired - five new signs installed with the help of DPW, and several existing signs salvaged by re-painting. Five further signs were produced, ready to install early 2022. These align with the three-year plan prepared by EC mid 2020.

The EC members walk the Mendham trails, do some clean-up themselves and work with scouts and the DPW to do more major work when needed. The Cold Hill Preserve Trail is an example of the EC efforts.

Volunteer support from Eagle Scouts has installed new kiosks and benches, and trail-clearing. We are planning to recognize these efforts shortly (proclamation delivered at TC February 2, 2022).

EC is underway revising our Township trail maps, to share online and post laminated copies in the new kiosks, a priority into 2022.

We have organized trash clean-up events, including the Raritan Headwaters annual event, April, and have also teamed up with Raritan Headwaters on the annual well-water testing, November.

We partnered with the Township and Borough DPWs for the January and June styrofoam recycling events. EC helped with education to support the Township's new recycling plan.

We organized and provided community webinars with expert education on wildlife, birdlife, and native planting, building a close partnership with NJ Audubon, and independent plant experts.

We have registered with the National Wildlife Federation, the goal to secure wildlife-friendly accreditation for the Township, an attractive status to achieve, and which would attract homebuyers to our community (the program presented to TC February 2, 2022).

The Student members of the EC have developed promotional and education materials, using social media platforms and websites to promote environmental awareness, also supporting high

school project work. This includes an Instagram account, the NWF logos and brochure, Instagram @sustainablemendham and Facebook 'The Nature of Mendham'.

EC supported the Planning Board on environmental impact assessments for a number of projects. One particular large project, we were not satisfied with the impact assessments, and spoke out on EC concerns about potential impact on our community environment. We took seriously our responsibility to represent the issues that impact our environment, despite some apparent unpopularity on tough issues. The EC takes pride in encouraging transparency and objectivity, to raise community issues and seek resolution.

We initiated a project to promote clean energy and solar power, helping investigate scope to install solar energy into the new Township building plans. This is an increasing EC responsibility to promote sustainable technologies for developments in our Township.

We investigated scope to restore overgrown walking easements across our community, aimed to help provide more pedestrian access between communities, and reduce the need to drive by car between neighborhoods. The restoration work was planned, but execution was delayed due to workload demands on the DPW.

EC conducted the second Annual Fall Photography competition, allowing talented amateur photographers of all ages across our community to share their images.

Two members of the EC retired at the end of the year, after numerous years of service, Sue Schmerler (13 years) and Morse Wilkenfeld (3 years), and were recognized at the Township Committee for their commitment to the EC and the service to the community. EC has since filled the two open positions.

Overall, a highly active and successful year, with ambitious plans to further support our community in 2022.

On behalf of all the hard-working volunteer members of our Environmental Commission

Martin Slayne, PhD
Chair, Mendham Township Environmental Commission