

Teaneck Environmental Commission

Annual Report for 2019

Completed May 2020

INTRODUCTION

This report for 2019 was prepared in accordance with Township Ordinance Section 2-125 and NJSA 40:56 A-4, which require the Environmental Commission (EC) to make written reports to the Township Council at least once per year. This report includes data collected in 2019 on-site plan reviews, conducted by the Commission as provided by the Municipal Land Use Law (MLUL) for Environmental Commissions which have an Environmental Resource Inventory (ERI), as Teaneck does. Data are shown in appended tables and discussed below. Additional information in this report covers training, grants, projects worked on during the year, the EC budget and expenditures, goals for 2020, and recognitions and acknowledgements.

The Commission provides advice to the Council via the Manager on environmental issues. It may conduct special Township-wide meetings to inform the public on specific environmental issues and get public input.

This is a summary of the many activities performed by and monitored by the Commission during 2019.

SITE PLAN REVIEW (*Provided for by MLUL, if the Environmental Commission has an Environmental Resource Inventory, as Teaneck does. Data is shown on two tables appended to this report, and discussed following.*)

1. a) Sixteen Zoning Board Permit Refusals were received for preview, four carried over from 2018, and twelve from 2019 (see Table 1). Because the Building Department determined that the timing of EC and Board meetings precludes the EC from commenting on Referrals, the Zoning Board ceased asking for any EC input on Referrals. Input was provided, however, upon completion of the Preview of Refusals. There is no indication EC remarks were considered.

b) No Zoning Board Permit Refusals have been received by the EC since March 2019.

2. a) Four Planning Board Permit Refusals were received for preview, three carried over from 2018, and one from 2019. See Table 2. The Planning Board did not request the EC to comment on Referrals. None were requested for Referral for the same reason shown in 1. a) above. Input was provided by the EC upon completion of Preview of Refusals.

b) No Planning Board permit Refusals have been received since January 2019.

3. a) For the site plans the EC did receive, many did not have the 200-foot radius locator map.

b) Many also did not have "Checklist T."

c) These issues were noted in a memo to the Building Department.

d) Regarding 1. b) and 2. b), three phone calls were made to the Building Department with no apparent effect.

e) The exclusion of the EC from the Referral process also excludes the EC from seeing the Township Engineer's review, which from past experience captures many environmental concerns.

4. No NJDEP notices of permit application / modification were received in 2019.

[see list of site plans in Appendix]

COMMISSIONER TRAINING

One Commissioner attended the "ANJEC commissioner training conference" in March.

COMMISSIONER LIAISONS

1. The commissioner assigned to the Shade Tree Advisory Board participated in every meeting and "Arbor Day."

2. The commissioner assigned to the Municipal Open Space Trust Fund (MOST) committee participated in many of the meetings and the "Tour of Teaneck" conducted to support the update of the OSRP. An alternate representative from the EC also attended meetings. In the past, the EC prepared the Open Space Plan as per its purview under the MLUL, which was separate from the Recreation Plan. The Township decided to change procedure by combining the two under the aegis of the MOST committee. A great proportion of MOST funds have been spent on recreation, and very little on historic preservation and open space acquisition / preservation.

3. The commissioner who also co-chairs the Hackensack River Greenway Advisory Board reported that, with support from Friends of the Greenway, they were able to have cleanups, lectures, and guided walks along the greenway. They continued to maintain and expand the native gardens at the Mary S. Topolsky Garden and Trail (640 River Road). They have been working to install a rain barrel at the site and have submitted plans (attached) to the township engineer for a rain collection shed. They have met with the leadership of the New Bridge Landing Historic Commission to discuss joint plans for improvement at Brett Park to remove invasives and reduce flooding. They have been working on including the Greenway on the shoreline of the Teaneck Historical Burial Ground and are pursuing ways of determining the actual sites of the graves.

GRANTS

No grants were sought by the EC this year.

STATUS OF 2019 GOALS

1. Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan

- A version of the Complete Streets Ordinance was passed by Council in May 2017. It differs from the draft plan submitted by Rhodes, Kissileff and Chin in 2015 in that no set percentage of the total expenses is bound to be allocated towards Complete Streets specifications.
- Advocating for implementation of other plan goals (signage, street improvements): The EC suggested adding a bike rack near the entrance of the Votee Sportsplex.

2. Assist Hackensack River Greenway Advisory Board

- Maintenance along the trail at FDU with vistas across from the benches: FDU has been clearing the vistas as part of an effort to eliminate invasive species, while the Greenway

would like the vistas expanded.

- Improving the trail at Riverside Drive: it would be ideal to upgrade the trail to be ADA compliant, which would benefit the nearby senior center greatly. Unfortunately, frequent vandalism on that part of the Greenway must be addressed before money and effort are allocated.

3. Sustainability

- Polystyrene recycling: in March, the DPW and Township Manager followed through on the EC suggestion to provide residents with a collection bin at the DPW facility. When filled with packing Styrofoam, the bin gets trucked to Foam Pack Industries in Springfield, NJ. In September the EC suggested to DPW Manager that Teaneck could bring plastic bags and film to Englewood for recycling. Englewood would compress the bags into bales and then sell them to Trex. Englewood would keep the 4 cents a pound to be able to continue running the collection program. The DPW manager has not responded to this proposal.

- A plastic bag fee ordinance was sent to Council in September 2015. The ordinance was passed in June 2017, to be implemented a year later, but was not enforced. Township leaders said they were awaiting State-level action. The EC is still looking into the possibility of handing out reusable bags to residents.

- “NJ State Water Plan” by NJDEP was reviewed by the EC, which noted certain recommendations to townships given that the water supply is projected to be lower in the future, while demand is expected to grow. The EC requested that the governing Township body double-check the EC’s observations. There has been no response to this request.

- Trash Collection Proposal: In November 2016, the Environmental Commission provided the Council with a proposal to reduce the waste and traffic of multiple carriers serving the same streets. The EC proposed a bidding process for each of Teaneck’s eight collection zones, and submitted a “pay as you throw” (PAYT) proposal to the Council. Since then, two Council trash subcommittees were formed and dissolved. This year, the EC commissioned a graduate student research project, to take place in the Spring, to obtain Teaneck residents’ trash pickup views and to research potential pollution and money saving alternatives. This project is open-ended; the EC will not advise the graduate student group regarding past work or possible alternatives. The students will be advised that some residents find the passing of multiple trucks may cause vehicle and noise pollution, but will otherwise be left to explore alternatives.

- Leave the Leaves initiative / Lawn Maintenance Restrictions: two options to limit usage of leaf blowers were submitted to Council, in the hopes of reducing noise and particulate pollution. One is an amendment to the Township's existing noise ordinance; the other is modeled on Montclair’s successful ordinance. Both would ban leaf-blowers during the summer months, and have fewer restrictions for homeowners than for contractors. In addition, a leaflet (similar to one issued by Englewood) was provided to the Township Manager to promote using leaves as mulch.

- The Teanecknj.gov website offers residents the option to sign up to receive EC newsletters, there were 192 subscribers in November. However, the first Newsletter, called “Fall leaves,” did not get sent out.

- “Teaneck Times,” the Township recycling calendar which gets sent out yearly to every household, has been including a list of recommendations supplied by the EC for the last two years. It can be found on page 7, under the title “Keep Teaneck Green.”
- The EC reviewed the “Draft 2019 NJ Energy Master Plan,” which projects 100% clean energy by 2050.
- Renewable Energy Teaneck: an initiative led by resident Paula Rogovin (and backed by NJ Food and Water Watch) would convert Teaneck’s energy consumption to fully renewable energy sources, as many New Jersey Towns already have. Ideally, Teaneck would work with neighboring towns to negotiate a low rate for electricity. The EC is interested in seeing progress in this initiative.
- Amanda Nesheiwat, the Environmental Director and Recycling Coordinator for the Town of Secaucus, presented her work at the September EC meeting. Following her impressive presentation, the EC asked Ms. Nesheiwat to draft a list of proposed services that would help our Township save energy, implement environmental measures, and save money.

4. Recycling

Last year the EC ceased reporting on Township recycling numbers, which can be obtained from the DPW. The EC will continue to support recycling, but a more effective way to cut down on landfills is by reducing waste and reusing existing materials.

5. Public events

- The Teaneck EC had a table at the Overpeck EarthFest event, organized by the Hackensack Riverkeepers in May.
- Participated in Township’s “Arbor Day.”

6. Stormwater Management

- Advocate and educate to reduce stormwater runoff – no action.
- Update Building Code – no action as it is not in EC purview.
- Work with Zoning Board and Planning Board, continuing through EC site plan review.

7. Trees and Parkland

- Tree Protection Ordinance for private trees – An ordinance, based on the Tenafly Private Tree Ordinance, was sent to the Shade Tree Advisory Board (STAB) and the EC Council Liaisons, first in August ‘17, then in August ‘18. There has been no response.
As reported by Kevin Arahill of DPW, in 2019, 276 trees were removed and 228 trees were planted. He also reports for 2019, only one street tree removal application was received from a resident; other residents have removed street trees without submitting the applications required by Township code. The Township does not track tree removals on private property. The EC and the STAB will continue to encourage private tree preservation and new planting for reasons including alleviating climate change effects. This is also encouraged by the Township’s “Community Forestry Management Plan,” despite the Township governing body’s reluctance to impose on the residents.

The following info was received from Kevin Arahill, Director of Public Works about Township trees (this does not include street trees removed by residents, or park trees removed by DPW):

2019: 276 trees planted, 228 removed
2018: 0 trees planted, 205 removed (no budget)
2017: 0 trees planted, 202 removed
2016: Unknown number of trees planted, 273 removed
2015: 10 trees planted, 172 removed
2014: 0 trees planted, 231 removed

- Advocate for pedestrian access to Overpeck County Park from Teaneck – no action.
- “10 Minute Walk” initiative – This program of “The Trust for Public Land,” was brought to the attention of the Township Governing Body and the “Playground, Parks, Recreation Advisory Board,” and was adopted by the Township in 2018. It has been included in the OSRP.

GOALS FOR 2020 (Due to Covid19, some of the goals might be impacted.)

1. Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan

- Explore creation of steering committee on Complete Streets and the Master Plan.

2. Sustainability

- Advocate for Sustainability through proposed legislation and restart of the Advisory Board on Sustainability.
- Given the lack of enforcement of the plastic bag ordinance, promote a (BYOB) Bring Your Own Bag campaign. Encourage retailers to provide reusable bags.
- Urge the Council to consider transitioning to a Township-wide garbage collection, or to implement the competitive “Waste Collection Small Business Opportunity Plan” presented by the EC, which proposes eight (or more) collection zones with trash collectors to bid on contracts for each zone. Each street would be served by one collector, and residents would pay by the number of bags or bins per collection. Waste is a problem world wide, and incentives are needed to reduce it.
- Partner with the business community to increase recycling and reduce plastic bag and Styrofoam use.
- Urge the Township to begin a recycling program for cans and bottles in all parks (especially Votee) and sports fields.
- Work with public and private schools towards Sustainable Jersey goals.
- Look at ways for Teaneck to shape New Jersey’s Clean Energy Future:
 1. Perhaps by working with Paula Rogovin on her initiative “Renewable Energy Teaneck.”
 2. By approaching Township Manager about getting Amanda Nesheiwat on board as a Sustainability Consultant.

- While many of the Township building codes comply with Sustainable NJ recommendations, explore the potential for instituting additional green building codes. Advocate for Green Infrastructure (Sustainable Jersey.)
- Keep exploring opportunities for recycling, such as textile, and plastic bags and film, and making sure that the Styrofoam recycling remains in place. Work with the DPW recycling depot to add clear signage and improve conditions for residents and workers.
- “Teaneck Times” – information guide and calendar: attempt to include information on landscape watering, resident requirement to obtain permit for street tree removal, encourage tree planting / maintenance on residents’ property, as examples.
- Seek information on the Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP).
- Encourage the governing body to increase open space.

3. Site Plans

- Get site plan review on track with Planning Board and Zoning Board (and Building Department).

4. Stormwater Management

- Advocate and Educate to reduce stormwater runoff.
- Suggest known remedies for variances.
- Work with the Zoning Board and Planning Board.

5. Trees and Parkland

- Coordinate with DPW for an unused piece of public land to be turned into a pollinator field, instead of a mowed lawn. Start with one area, such as Windsor Park, as a pilot program.
- Since an ordinance will not be adopted regarding protecting private trees, the EC will turn to educating residents on the benefits of trees, as a tool to fight climate change.
- Advocate for pedestrian access to Overpeck County Park from Teaneck.
- Participate in Arbor Day Celebration.

6. Open Space Preservation

- Advocate for a greater percentage of MOST funds to be used to preserve open space. The ANJEC’s Environmental Commissioners’ Handbook lists these ways in which open space contributes to quality of life:

- recreation (active or passive);
- water storage and flood retention;
- groundwater recharge;
- wildlife habitat;
- carbon sequestration;
- aesthetic and scenic values;
- farmland preservation;
- air and water purification;

- vegetation and species preservation; and
- microclimate control.

ANJEC reminds us that while development can generate revenue, it can also lead to costs exceeding that revenue.

- Encourage developers, builders, and residents to build smarter using porous paving, rainwater harvesting, and rain gardens.

7. Outreach and Community Education

- ‘Keep Teaneck Green’ public campaign–write articles to be submitted to local news outlets. Obtain numbers demonstrating the high cost of leaf removal, and promote the initiative of a “Leave the Leaves” campaign with a leaflet.
- Expand outreach activities to Teaneck residents on Teanecknj.gov website, via EC newsletter, and on social media.
- Work with other community and civic groups to increase awareness on all environmental issues.
- Participate in public activities such as the Hackensack Riverkeepers’ EarthFest, Arbor Day, National Night Out, etc.

BUDGET FOR 2019 (idem for 2020)

	suggested by engineering dept.:	spent by EC:
- ANJEC dues and training	\$750	\$350
- ERI update	\$10,000	\$0 (EC will wait another 2 yrs)
Total:	\$10,750	\$350

PERSONNEL (end of term)

Bettina Hempel-Gilbert	Chair and Secretary	(June 30, 2020)
Philip Rhodes	Vice Chair, MOST representative	(June 30, 2021)
Don Daume	Site plan reviewer, drafts minutes, STAB, Preserve Rt 4 Greenbelt, alt. rep. to MOST	(June 30, 2021)
Karen Orgen	Representative to Planning Board	(June 30, 2021)
Roslyn Turner		(June 30, 2020)
Aryeh Meir		(June 30, 2022)
Peter Goldman	Hackensack River Greenway Co-Chair	(June 30, 2022)
Paul Hutt (1st semester)		(June 30, 2019)
David Zatz (2nd semester)	1st alternate	
Ken Hoffman	2nd alt., MOST member at large, PPRAB Chair	(June 30, 2020)
Keith Kaplan	Council Liaison	(began July, 2018)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The EC acknowledges with gratitude the help of Dean Kazinci, Township Manager, and Maureen Ince, Secretary of the Engineering Department, for keeping track of our files and preparing packets for each meeting. The EC also thanks Township Engineer, Farah Gilani, for sharing her time and expertise, as well as Kevin Arahill, DPW Manager. The EC also thanks Keith Kaplan for serving as Environmental Commission liaison to the Township Council, and all members of the Council for their support of the Teaneck environment.

APPENDIX

Site Plan Review summary

Zoning Board # (2018)	Address	Block	Lot	Description	Coding per EC Checklist	Full EC "Official" Review
43	296 Home Street	4303	5	2 story rear addition	A2a, B4,5,6	
44	1301 Sussex Road	2110	18	Already installed blacktop + sidewalk	B5,6	
46	569 Standish Road	901	34	2 story rear addition, porch, patio	A7,B1	
47	265 Johnson Ave	2404	9	New driveway, add side fence + trees	A7, B1	
Zoning Board # (2019)						
1	20 Sherwood Ave	3309	5	Reconstruct 1873 addition	A7, B1	
3	310 Maitland Ave	2007	6	Increased building coverage (0.7%)	A2a, A7	
4	521 Maretense Ave	806	27	Rear addition, rebuild porch	A2a, A7	
6	750 Cedar Lane	202	4	Rear addition	A2a, A7, B7	
7	313 Rutland Ave	2007	22	fence	A7	
11	507 Palmer Ave	2413	1	Add a 2 car garage	A2a, A7	
12	280 Rutland Ave	2010	11	Side yard addition	A2a, A7, B6	
17	189 State Street	5005	2	15 story apt building	A3, B4,5,7	x
18	75 Chadwick Road	3002	6	New 2 story childcare center	A1, B2,4,5,7	
23	502 Sagamore Ave	801	16	One story rear addition	A2a, B5,6	
24	868 Perry Lane	3909	14	Rear addition, more parking, patio	A2a, B1, B2	
25	1290 Hastings St	1718	20.02	Replace driveway	A2a, B5,6	

Code
A
A1 - New construction on vacant lots
A2 - Alterations to existing buildings - a) same use b) different use
A3 - Replacement/conversion of existing buildings to another use
A4 - Antenna installation
A5 - Landfill cleaning and capping (Overpeck Park)
A6 - Subdivision
A7 - No environmental effect/no need for EC review (i.e. not reviewed)
A8 - Merge lots
B - Problems/Issues
B1 - No environmental impact (after review)
B2 - Parking inadequate
B3 - Sky glow and/or inadequate presentation of lighting plans
B4 - Crowding
B5 - Excessive lot coverage
B6 - Storm water run-off

Planning Board # (2019)	Address	Block	Lot	Description	Coding per EC Checklist	Full EC "Official" Review
1	1348 Teaneck Road	4905	13	Establish a "Blimpies"	A2b, A7, B1	

Code Same as above