



The Borough of Hightstown
Environmental Commission
Annual Report
156 Bank Street
Hightstown, NJ 08520

The Hightstown Environmental Commission (EC) got off to a good start in 2019, seating 1 new members. The Commission is comprised of Allen Keith LePrevost, Donna LePrevost, Yan Troizier, David Zaiser, Todd Frantz, Joe Cicalese, Tom Musa, Gary Grubb and Barbara Jones. Susan Bluth will be the Commissions Borough Council Liaison. The Commission in their reorganization meeting elected new officers. Allen Keith LePrevost was the chair for 2019, with Yan Troizier as the vice chair. Todd Frantz accepted the roll as secretary. Leigh Isleib from Meadow Lakes and Jennifer Morgan are the liaisons from their respective communities.

The Commission set out establishing their “Green Team” members for 2019. Each EC member is automatically on the Green Team, as well as the following individuals: Ken Lewis (Public Works), Debra Sopronyi (administrator), Jennifer Morgan (Peddie School), Leigh Isleib (Meadow Lakes).

The Commission set off on an aggressive agenda for 2019. Included are the items and the results:

- Designate locations and plant 12 new street trees. David and Yan did a fantastic job this year identifying both species of trees that are “street friendly” but also locations for those trees. David developed a thorough RFP that gives us the opportunity to select the number of trees and locations around the borough. We hope to make this an annual item. We also helped the Borough locate 16 new trees on a planned street project. We were unable to get the 32 trees as prescribed by the council, but budget always takes precedents.
- Work with the borough to dedicate in the budget 3 days with a tree crew to shape and maintain our street trees. Yan and David did a great job this year outlining street trees that have been planted and are in need of Pruning. We are focusing on the maintenance and quality of tree over the sheer quantity. We are hopeful this is a program that can be incorporated annually. In 2019 we successfully trimmed and planted the trees planned. The EC did an excellent job extending their budget from \$3200 to \$10,000 to accomplish this.
- Complete ANJEC grant in Rocky Brook Park. Unfortunately, this project has not been completed. We did have a good workday with over 12 volunteers from Peddie. We accomplished a lot of

work including cleaning, weeding, mulching and removal of all the natural and manmade debris from the wetlands. Unfortunately, we had a Beaver issue in the park which prevented us from finishing our work. We are looking at the Spring of 2020 to complete the project. We are inviting Kevin Scibilia, our tree expert to give a presentation with Gary Grubb to help identify all the trees, shrubs and “weeds” in the park. They will be mapped and tagged later in the year.

- Recycling Campaign- increase Borough’s compliance by 10%
 - Increase recycling capacity- add special recycling days and materials. The EC spent quite a bit of time in the spring settling with the town exactly what is “Recyclable”. As we are moving forward, less and less is being recycled. Our town is not part of the MCIA, so there was general confusion as to the materials acceptable in our area. The borough has begun using the EC material on their website. They were unable to fund printing the material, but we are glad they are using it.
- Small Business Energy Efficiency- get at least 5 businesses to participate. We had great interest in the project, but a lack of resources from the vender. Most of their time was spent in Lawrence and Princeton where paid staff and swarms of volunteers blanketed the area. With our limited team and resources, we were able to get businesses involved, but could not get the company to follow up.
- Work with Parks to resurface the Greenway with new gravel. Repair edging and clean up around the entire greenway. This did not happen. We are hoping and will push the 2020 budget in this direction.
- Identify and tag all trees in Association Park. This project was done with great success. Over 10 volunteers spent the morning looking at and tagging trees. We had a generous donor that supplied all the tags. We plan on addressing the Rocky Brook Park on Bank Street in 2020
- Sustainable Jersey- We took 2019 off and plan to possibly resubmit in 2020
- Work with Peddie and Meadow Lakes on the food waste recycling program. Great news! Both Peddie and Meadow Lakes have established food waste programs. Both are operating very well and Springpoint (parent of ML) is considering the program statewide in all nursing, Assisted Living and Retirement Communities.
- Continue to be an active participant with the Mercer County Sustainability Coalition. Achieved. Hightstown headed up the Mercer County Recycling committee and turned the project over to Jenny Ludmer of Princeton due to illness.
- Move Council to pass the expanded tree ordinance. Unsuccessful. The council voted down the ordinance but is considering relooking at the ordinance with some revisions.
- Introduce and move council to pass the expanded Storm water ordinance. Unsuccessful. Council unanimously rejected the ordinance as being too intrusive, but the Commission will rework and present in 2020.

EC Role in Plan review:

The Hightstown Environmental Commission has the role of reviewing each and every building/zoning/ planning application that includes an increase in impervious coverage. Our current role is to review, advise and recommend passive storm water actions to homeowners and business. In 2019 the EC reviewed 17 applications, ranging from a driveway addition to the very large projects at Old Hight’s Brewery and the Mills redevelopment project. (Multi-year) Each project was carefully reviewed, and recommendations were written and submitted to the

building/zoning official for distribution before permits were issued. This is a very good process, but we have limited success with passive storm solution being built. Therefore we are going to push in 2020 to strengthen our storm water regulations to include mandatory capture and retention based on the new impervious coverage. This will help with larger project like on Bank and Main Street where the EC rejected replacing 3 gravel parking spots with 10-12 compacted gravel spots with no storm water remediation. We need to address the “issues” that are common in the town and capture all the projects. The large developments are mainly regulated by our borough engineer, and have environmental engineers submitting plans for her to review. Our feedback on these projects is mainly to push for increased passive measures and innovative solutions.

Enforcement. The EC was instrumental in documenting and reporting a high-volume water pump that was installed on Peddie Lake. This was illegally placed without Borough or DEP approvals. Working closely with the DEP we managed to have the pump, all associated wiring and plumbing removed as well as the lake bank repaired. This was a huge effort by our members and their special relationships with the DEP



High volume pump illegally installed on Peddie lake with associated water boom.

Fundraising. We are looking to work with Parks and Rec to develop several high priority items. They include:

- A permanent home for the pedal boats near the boat dock in 2020. This has been an EC priority and now working with P&R we will be able to get it done
- We have introduced the idea of resurfacing the walkways on the Roger Cook Greenway. Both commissions have brought this up and now we will work together on completing it.
- Replace the sidewalks in Association Park. The hazardous sidewalks were not funded by the grant that was applied for but working with the town and P&R we will get it done.
- Working with the Watershed Academy, develop and install a \$35,000 raingarden and associated water conservation methods. We are grateful to the Watershed for pursuing this grant and including our Environmental Commission in your work.

Community Gardens. We had mixed results this year due to the weather. The gardens at the Housing Authority were a great success, with expanded planting areas and one resident acting as the “overseer” of the gardens. The community gardens on Bank street suffered a terrible flooding event early in the planting season, putting the entire garden under 2 feet of water. The wet season let up and allowed the Bank Street gardens to come back to life. Preparations are underway for the 2020 season.

Tree and Plant tagging. The Environmental Commission used our tree identification seminar with arborist Kevin Scibilia this year to document and map every tree in Association Park. Aluminum tags were purchased and placed on the specimen trees in the park. The EC has a goal to identify every tree and significant plant in each of the 4 main parks and identify them. We have a goal of making Hightstown a living Arboretum that visitors or residents will be able enjoy for years to come.

Outreach. The Environmental Commission was very successful this year in reaching out past its membership to the local community. Meadow Lakes and Peddie have become regular contributors, as well as a strong contingent from the Community. Meeting normally have 12-15 people attending. We have also reached out to Allentown Borough and their EC chair, Nancy Tindall (and former chair of ANJEC) attended and observed one of our meetings. We are pleased that Allentown has now registered for the Sustainable Jersey program, and we have offered any assistance needed to help them in the process.

The EC participated in 5 community events this year, The Mercer Green fest that was hosted by the Lawrence Green Team and the Mercer County Association. This event that was attended by over 1000 people was very successful and we plan to attend again.



Allen Keith LePrevost, Chair

David Zaiser, Shade Tree Commissioner



The second was the St Anthony's Green Fest, not well attended and we are discussing participation for next year. The third was the Hightstown Harvest Fest. Always well attended the EC will participate every year.

The fourth was the "shredding event" now an annual tradition, we were able to shred over 2100 pounds of papers from residents and businesses of Hightstown, but we also held a Stream Clean-up day the help of the Watershed Academy. Both events were well attended and were a great success.



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We also held our annual tree planting event in Association Park. This was a great day for the EC as we planted a beautiful “Princeton Elm” in the park.



The EC also created numerous pieces for the Mercer County Coalition and chaired the recycling committee. Although the Borough was unable to fund flyers and tote stickers for every resident, we are pleased they are using our materials on their website to promote recycling. Our efforts, along with the coalition have moved Mercer County to address recycling and create new materials and brochures that are available on the Mercer Website.

Looking forward, the EC is already planning an aggressive agenda for 2020, addressing small business energy efficiency, recycling compliance, increasing tree cover, strengthen our storm water regulations and water conservation.