

DATE: January 7, 2010
TO: Township Committee
FROM: Nelson Dittmar, Chair
Cranford Environmental Commission
RE: 2009 Annual Report

In accordance with the ordinance that established the Commission, this will serve as our annual report to the Committee. The Commission was comprised as follows:

Members: Nelson Dittmar, Chair	Matt Polsky
Donald Ehrenbeck	John Shaw
Steven Jandoli	Rita LaBrutto (Planning
Vance Merolla	Board member)

Alternate Members: Ann Darby and Lynda Feder

Associate Members: Carol Berns, Jackie Capro, Dave DesRochers, John Hrebin,
William King, Ronald Margulis, Ana Pinto, Mary Reilly, and Daniela Shebitz

Township Committee liaison: Mark Smith

We are very proud of our accomplishments this year. We think that, in a small way, they have enhanced the quality of life and the environment in Cranford. We are very grateful for your support. We look forward to working with you in the future.

Generally, we meet monthly to discuss matters relating to the environment, including recycling, and ways in which educational information can be distributed to the people of Cranford. On a regular basis, we review the potential environmental impact of site plans submitted to the Planning Board and the Zoning Board of Adjustment, and provide comments to the Boards, as appropriate. We also review on an as-needed basis various legal notifications received under the requirements of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) regulations. Our major activities and accomplishments were as follows:

- In January, we launched a new web site, My Green Cranford. This contains information about the Commission's activities and serves as a resource guide for residents for issues relating to the environment, energy-savings ideas, and environmental events. The site has a photo gallery of wildlife seen in Cranford. There is also a resource page with links to helpful green web sites. Visitors have the option to sign up for the e-mail newsletter, which offers monthly tips and news. We have approximately 120 subscribers.

- In January, Nelson Dittmar and Ann Darby met with Mayor Robinson and Commissioner Smith to discuss and set our goals for the year. The goals were presented to the Township Committee at a workshop meeting in February.
- In May, the Township Committee passed a resolution stating that the Township wishes to pursue local initiatives and actions that will lead to certification by the Sustainable Jersey program. Sustainable Jersey is a partnership of the NJ League of Municipalities, Rutgers, the College of New Jersey, NJDEP, and the Board of Public Utilities (BPU). Over 250 communities in New Jersey have registered for the program. A Green Team was formed under the leadership of Mary Reilly. Many meetings have been held and actions have been initiated in areas ranging from municipal energy audits to community-education programs to community gardens. At a September meeting of the Township Committee, Nelson Dittmar and Mary Reilly introduced Paul VanGelder of CHA Companies who made a presentation concerning the BPU's Municipal Energy Audit Program. It is hoped that the Green Team will implement the necessary actions for the Township to be certified under the program by June 2010.
- In 2008 with the support of the Township Committee, we became a Community Partner in the Clean Energy Program of the BPU. One of the programs is Clean Power Choice. It seeks to encourage more people to choose renewable energy as an energy choice. Another is the Change the World, Start With ENERGY STAR program, which encourages residents to take actions to save energy such as switching to compact fluorescent bulbs (CFLs) and purchasing ENERGY STAR qualified products. During this year, we sought to promote these programs with the following actions and results:
 - The ENERGY STAR pledge-program year starts on Earth Day in April. For the year ended in April 2009, we reached over 250% of our goal with savings of over 1.3 million pounds of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. For the current year, we have a goal of 200 residents and 700,000 pounds of GHG emissions. As of the end of 2009, we had 58 individuals who had pledged, but we achieved 71 percent of the GHG goal.
 - We supplied Cranford Family Care with CFLs that were given to qualified needy residents with their holiday food distribution.
 - Orange Avenue School students held a fundraiser with almost 2,500 CFLs sold and over \$3,500 raised for the School.
 - We had a table at the Riverwalk flower show at which we distributed literature about the Clean Energy programs and distributed 50 CFLs. This event qualified for \$200 rebate to the Township, which we will receive from the Clean Energy Program in 2010.
 - Nelson Dittmar and Dave DesRochers attended the Community Partners Spring Kickoff meeting in March.
 - Nelson Dittmar made a presentation to the Public Affairs department of the Wednesday Morning Club about the Program and other energy-saving ideas.
- In 2005, we began to organize meetings of officials from towns in the Rahway River watershed. Because of flooding and water-quality problems, the Commission decided to heighten the awareness of other towns along the river and introduce the concept of regional planning. During 2007, the Rahway River Association assumed the responsibility for these meetings. The Association designated the year as "2009:

Celebrating the Rahway River.” Activities included watershed-wide cleanups held by many of the towns along the river. A State of Biodiversity in the Rahway River Watershed Conference was held on May 8, 2009. People from many of the towns in the watershed attended the Conference. Nelson Dittmar and Matt Polsky were among those attending.

- In May 2007, The Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions (ANJEC) awarded Cranford one of its Smart Growth Planning Assistance grants to hire consultant T&M Associates to collaborate with the Commission to develop a Conservation Element for inclusion in the municipal Master Plan. The Commission prepared the application for this grant. A project team consisting of five members of the Commission, the Zoning Officer, and a representative from ANJEC met in October 2007 with a representative from T&M to discuss topics and issues that might be included in the CE. In 2008, a draft was prepared by T&M, which the project team reviewed. The Commission then reviewed a revised draft. Comments were provided to T&M and a final draft was prepared. The CE was presented at a public meeting of the Planning Board in September 2009. After the presentation, the Board approved the new Master Plan and the CE.
- In 2005, we drafted an ordinance, which was enacted by the Township Committee, adopting the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Rating Systems for certain construction in Cranford. These systems, developed by the United States Green Building Council (USGBC), use an approach that reduces the environmental impact of construction-related activities while producing meaningful savings to the owner. In 2008, the Mayor created a committee to implement LEED-EB (for existing buildings) as required by the ordinance. The committee consists of Mark Smith, Sandra Caceres-Cardenas, Steve Robertazzi, Kelli Glasgow (a LEED-certified architect), Mike DeChiaro (a LEED-certified professional), and Nelson Dittmar. We met seven times during the year. The Community Center was selected as the review site and significant progress was made in obtaining the information necessary for the LEED-EB prerequisites. The Township became a member of the USGBC in 2008 and Sandra took a full-day LEED-EB training course in June 2009. Meetings will continue in 2010.
- The Conservation and Renewable Energy Task Force works in conjunction with the Commission. In 2008 and 2009, many of the Task Force’s recommendations have been implemented. They range from new energy-efficient lighting that was installed in the Municipal Building and in the Community Center gym to new energy-efficient windows that were installed in the Municipal Building. A Task Force recommendation to put solar panels on the library roof, but this has been deferred, but as noted below solar panels may be considered in 2010. Three meetings were held during the year.
- In January, we wrote a letter to the NJDEP providing comments on the Freshwater Wetlands Letter of Interpretation Application submitted by the owners of 215 Birchwood Avenue. We urged NJDEP to determine that wetlands exist on the property and they should be classified as an Exceptional Resource.
- Nelson Dittmar, Matt Polsky, Dave DesRochers, and Mary Reilly attended meetings of the School District’s Environmental Education Committee. At one of meetings, Dave

made a presentation about the My Green Cranford web site and the Nature Photography Workshop mentioned below. At other meetings, Nelson and Mary discussed the Green Team and the Sustainable Jersey program. Nelson is a member of the anti-idling subcommittee. Its goal is to make parents more aware of the problem and to reduce automobile idling at the schools. Bloomingdale Avenue School was chosen as the first school in the program. Signs were placed in the parking lot, and information and surveys were sent home with the students. The program was very successful. The Committee plans to expand the program to all schools during the 2009-2010 school year.

- Dave DesRochers conducted the Basics of Nature Photography workshop at the Community Center. The program, which featured three award-winning members of the Cranford Millburn Camera Club, was designed to teach the basics of photographing wildlife and landscapes and to promote the Commission and our new web site, My Green Cranford. About 25 people attended.
- Acting on our recommendation, the Township Committee passed a resolution adopting the No Net Loss of Trees policy. This policy recognizes that the protection of trees is in the best interest of the Township and encourages residents to contact the Tree Advisory Board if they have removed a tree. The Township then will replace the tree elsewhere in town.
- Following a presentation by Barbara Krause, we voted to urge the Township Committee to support a proposed resolution regarding controlling the deer population in Cranford. The Township Committee subsequently passed such a resolution.
- At our September meeting, we voted to support the Open Space Funding Question on the ballot in November and to recommend that the Township Committee pass a resolution supporting passage of the Question. Subsequently, the Township Committee declined to do so.
- In September, we joined with the Jersey Central Arts Studio and the Cranford Community Center to cosponsor an art installation at the Community Center, which makes use of recycled materials. The "Flip Your Lid for Art" project involves the collection of recycled plastic lids and their threading on a series of long strings that will be hung from the ceiling in the atrium as a temporary exhibit sometime in early 2010.
- Matt Polsky, Mary Reilly, and Nelson Dittmar met with May Li, a solar products consultant, in November, concerning the possibility of installing solar panels on one or more of the Township's buildings. May is gathering information with the help of the Assistant Engineer and is planning to make a presentation to the Township Committee in February or March 2010.
- This autumn we urged residents to forgo the use of powered leaf blowers and rake leaves on two designated Saturdays. The Rake For The Planet program was endorsed in a resolution by the Township Committee. We pointed out the benefits of raking in flyers that were posted around town and in a press release, which appeared in local newspapers.

- In June, Matt Polsky, Ann Darby, and Nelson Dittmar met with Kathleen Prunty, and two merchants to discuss the idea of holding a Green Fair. While everyone agreed that this would be a great event for Cranford, it was subsequently decided to defer this idea to another time.
- We began a project to educate the community about how to identify and control invasive plant species. We are working with a high school student on this.
- Matt Polsky was a moderator for three panels:
 - (1) The Institute for Sustainable Enterprise (ISE), Fairleigh Dickinson University (FDU), "Stretching & Going Beyond the Business Case: The Evolving New Role Of Business;"
 - (2) "Considering Clean Energy Sources 101," at the Jumpstarting the New Green Economy conference held at FDU; and
 - (3) ANJEC's Annual Environmental Congress, "Green is Good for Business," The Economics of Green.

Mary Reilly was a moderator of the Sustainable Communities panel at the Jumpstarting the New Green Economy conference. Nelson Dittmar attended this conference and the ANJEC Congress.

- At ANJEC's 40th anniversary celebration in May, we were included in a special display honoring some of the oldest Commissions in the State.
- We donated to the Cranford Public Library a DVD copy of the documentary film, *Kilowatt Ours*. This award-winning movie explores the true costs of power generation and offers solutions to today's energy problems.
- In November 2006, Mayor Aschenbach signed the US Mayors Climate Protection Agreement. Cranford is now one of over 1000 towns nationwide, including 104 in New Jersey, to sign the Agreement.
- Nelson Dittmar and Matt Polsky attended a Downtown Management Corporation meeting, in February, hosted by Kathleen Prunty and Martha Garcia to discuss the Cranford Challenge '09 program. Later in the year, we wrote a letter to the local newspapers supporting a family bike ride through town, which was an idea that came out of this program.
- Mary Reilly was a speaker at the Springfield Green Team Kickoff meeting and attended a meeting sponsored by Union County about solar power programs that are available.
- Daniela Shebitz attended the webcast of the Environmental Commission Training To Protect Natural Resources course held by ANJEC.
- In 2002, we launched an Environmental Commission web page as part of Cranford.com. The page, which is in addition to the My Green Cranford web site described above, includes information about the Commission including its minutes, environmental information and tips, and links to other environmental Internet web sites.

- We reviewed thirty-two proposed site plans and provided our comments on three such proposals in letters to either the Planning Board or the Zoning Board of Adjustment, as appropriate.

Finally, our budget for 2009 was \$2,100. Our total expenditures were \$1,638, which included \$540 for annual dues for ANJEC, \$400 of fees relating to our Internet web site and \$500 to set up My Green Cranford.

cc: Marlena Schmid, Township Administrator
Sandy Batty, ANJEC Executive Director