

DATE: January 5, 2009
TO: Township Committee
FROM: Nelson Dittmar, Chair
Cranford Environmental Commission
RE: 2008 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 Carol Berns

Associate Members: Jackie Capro, Dave DesRochers, Lynda Feder, Edward Helmstetter, John Hrebin, William King, George McDonough, Ronald Margulis, Daniela Shebitz, and William Wilson

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 February, the Township Committee passed resolutions supporting our recommendation to become a Community Partner in the Clean Energy Program of the Board of Public Utilities (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 ENERGY STAR Change the World program, which encourages residents to switch to energy-saving

- compact fluorescent bulbs (CFLs). During the year, we sought to promote these programs with the following actions:
- The Mayor issued a Proclamation designating May as Clean Energy Month.
 - Three events were held distributing free CFLs at the Post Office and the October Street Fair. Over 1,000 bulbs were given out.
 - A community-wide distribution day was held. Over 75 people participated handing out over 1,500 bulbs.
 - Publicity appeared in the local newspapers, TV 35, the DMC e-newsletter, and Cranford.com about each of the above.
 - We handed out Clean Power Choice and CFL pamphlets at the May Street Fair.
 - Orange Avenue School students held a fundraiser with over 3,900 CFLs sold and \$3,800 raised for the School.
 - To promote the programs, Nelson Dittmar
 - appeared on an hour-long program on TV 35 to discuss the programs and other energy-savings ideas;
 - made a presentation to the faculty and a second-grade class at Hillside Avenue School; and
 - made a presentation at a program conducted by the Hanson Park Conservancy.
 - The Director of the Gill Senior Housing distributed CFL brochures at a meeting of the residents and gave each resident two free bulbs.
 - Nelson Dittmar and Dave DesRochers attended a training session in September for the Community Partner 2008 Change the World Challenge.
 - During the year, 13 residents enrolled in the Clean Power Choice Program.
- 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. They held monthly meetings in 2007 and 2008. The Association designated the year as “2008: Celebrating the Rahway River.” Activities included monthly walks and hikes; watershed-wide cleanups held by ten towns. A State of the Rahway River Watershed Conference was held on January 12, 2008. Over ninety people from many of the towns in the watershed attended the Conference. Mayor Puhak, Township Engineer Marsden, and four members of the Commission 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. A draft was prepared by T&M, which the project team reviewed in January and provided comments to T&M. The Commission at a special meeting in March then reviewed a revised draft. Comments were provided to T&M and a final draft was prepared. The CE is ready for

presentation at a public meeting once the Master Plan has been presented at a public meeting.

- 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, Kelli Glasgow (a LEED-certified architect), and Nelson Dittmar. We met four times during the year. The Community Center was selected as the review site and progress was made in the review of the LEED-EB prerequisites. The Township became a member of the USGBC. Meetings will continue in 2009. During 2008, Nelson Dittmar responded to numerous requests, including surveys, from municipalities and organizations seeking information about the LEED ordinance. These included a consulting firm in Vancouver, Canada, the City of Flagstaff, Arizona, the City of Orange, New Jersey, and the University of Wisconsin,
- The Conservation and Renewable Energy Task Force works in conjunction with the Commission. We believed that many of the Task Force's recommendations were very good and should be implemented. In February, Task Force member Steve Andelfinger met with the Township Committee. Steve demonstrated that the payback period on the investment for replacing lighting would be short. As a result, new energy-efficient lighting was installed in the Municipal Building and lighting in the Community Center gym will be installed in the near future. In addition, as recommended by the Task Force, ten new energy-efficient windows were installed in the Municipal Building. Further, acting upon a Task Force recommendation, Commissioner Smith was able to obtain a \$13,000 refund from PSE&G for overpayment of electric bills relating to the installation of LED bulbs in traffic lights five years ago. The Township also considered a Task Force recommendation to put solar panels on the library roof, but this has been deferred. Four meetings were held during the year.
- Over the last three years, we have urged the Township Committee to pass a Stormwater Control Ordinance recommended by the Township Engineer. In November, the ordinance was adopted. We believe that this is a significant action in that it requires mitigation of the effect of stormwater resulting from developments and site improvements that increase impervious surface by more than 450 square feet.
- We cosponsored an event, Save Our Earth Expo, which was organized by Becky Hoeffler, a high school senior. The event featured many exhibits and speakers, including Lisa Jackson, Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Protection. We distributed information about the Clean Energy Program.
- Jackie Capro prepared a flyer warning of the dangers of automobile idling to schoolchildren and the environment. The flyers were sent home with the 2,650 children in grades K through 8.

- One of goals this year was to increase the use of the recycling center. In December, Mayor Puhak, Warren Hehl, and Nelson Dittmar met with representatives from Goodwill Industries to explore the possibility of placing a container at the recycling center to collect textiles. Warren and Nelson subsequently met with the Township Committee, which later adopted a resolution supporting the program.
- Matt Polsky and Nelson Dittmar attended A Green Economy for Mayors meeting hosted by The New Jersey Conference of Mayors. Speakers included Lisa Jackson, and Joseph Doria, Commissioner, NJ DCA. They reported about the meeting to the Township Committee at a workshop meeting on March 24.
- Nelson Dittmar and Matt Polsky attended meetings of the School District's Environmental Education Committee. At one of meetings, Nelson made a presentation about the Clean Energy Program. Nelson is a member of the anti-idling subcommittee. Its goal is make parents more aware of the problem and reduce automobile idling at the schools. Bloomingdale Avenue School was chosen as the first school in the program. Signs will be placed in the parking lot, and information and a survey will be sent home with the students. Matt, who is an original member of this six-year old committee, explained the history and original vision of the Committee to the new Committee Chair.
- Nelson Dittmar made a presentation to the St. Michael School LEGO League students about energy-savings ideas and the Clean Energy program.
- Matt Polsky worked with Downtown Management Corp. to publicize downtown businesses taking green actions in their on-line newsletter.
- Nelson Dittmar spoke at the lunchtime periods to the students at Hillside Avenue School about benefits of using reusable water containers and bags. This was in conjunction with the school's Trashless Lunchroom Challenge week.
- Graduate students from the Bloustein School at Rutgers University made a presentation regarding the Rahway River Greenway in December at the Cranford Community Center. The presentation included recommendations for policy, design, and implementation strategies. Nelson Dittmar and Dave DesRochers attended. The Rahway River Association sponsored the project and will be working with Rahway River communities regarding implementation of the recommendations.
- In December 2007, the Commission submitted an application to the Rutgers Cooperative Extension Water Resources Program. The personnel from Rutgers would work with communities to help educate residents about the importance of water conservation with the goal of reducing residential water use by ten percent. We were not selected for the program.
- Steve Jandoli developed a proposal for the Township to adopt a No Net Loss of Trees policy. This would involve a voluntary program for residents to call DPW when they remove a tree. DPW personnel would then plant a tree in replacement somewhere in

town. We discussed this with the Township Committee in 2008 and plan to continue discussions in 2009.

- In November 2006, Mayor Aschenbach signed the US Mayors Climate Protection Agreement. Cranford is now one of over 900 towns nationwide, including 98 in New Jersey, to sign the Agreement.
- In 2006, the mayor of Highland Park formed the NJ League of Municipalities Mayors' Committee for a Green Future. Matt Polsky attended a January 2008 meeting of this group and reported about it to the Township Committee on March 24.
- One of our goals for this year was to write a Green Purchasing resolution. We researched items for inclusion in such a resolution. We plan to complete the resolution next year.
- An additional goal was to write a resolution requiring hybrid cars and other environmentally protective vehicles be considered whenever any Township vehicles are needed or purchased. Commissioner Smith working with John Shaw drafted a resolution, which was adopted the Township Committee.
- Another goal was to create a policy or a resolution regarding programmable thermostats in all Township buildings. This has been deferred due to an outdated computer system that controls the heating system.
- Nelson Dittmar attended a public presentation on the Riverfront Redevelopment Project and made comments about the green building aspects of the project.
- Nelson Dittmar attended an ANJEC Workshop on Municipal Energy Audits and Emissions Inventories on April 28.
- Robie Wood of JPR Wood Architects & Builders, a Cranford firm, made a presentation to the Commission about the Eco-Cape house that it recently refurbished in Garwood. It is the first home to achieve LEED gold status in New Jersey. Nelson Dittmar and Matt Polsky attended the subsequent ribbon-cutting opening ceremony.
- Members of the Commission operated a table at the Street Fair in May. Environmental information was distributed to the public.
- Daniela Shebitz attended the Union County Green Conference on October 3.
- Ron Margulis, Bill King, and Dave DesRochers attended in person or by webcast the Environmental Commission Training To Protect Natural Resources course held by ANJEC.
- Matt Polsky was named an advisor to ANJEC on its Sustainability initiative.

- In 2004, we began to publish a periodic, environmental-education column in the local newspapers. The topics covered this year included the Clean Energy Program and dangers of automobile idling.
- In 2002, we launched an Environmental Commission web page as part of Cranford.com. The page includes information about the Commission, environmental information and tips, and links to other environmental Internet web sites. During the year, we continued to update the web page and we added the Commission's Natural Resources Inventory. In October, Dave DesRochers and Nelson Dittmar met with the owners of Cranford.com to discuss the feasibility of setting up a new website that would be called MyGreenCranford. It would offer environmental tips, be user friendly, and hopefully, get more members of the community involved. We plan to proceed with this in 2009.
- We reviewed forty-three proposed site plans and provided our comments on fourteen such proposals in letters to either the Planning Board or the Zoning Board of Adjustment, as appropriate.
- Nelson Dittmar, Dave DesRochers, and Matt Polsky attended the Annual Environmental Congress held by ANJEC. The theme of the Congress was Strategies for Sustainable Communities. Matt made a presentation on a new Energy Master Plan for New Jersey. He also commented to the BPU on a draft of the Plan.

Finally, our budget for 2008 was \$1,500. Our total expenditures were \$1,487, which included \$530 for annual dues for ANJEC, \$400 of fees relating to our Internet web site and \$300 for printing copies of our Natural Resources Inventory.

cc: Marlena Schmid, Township Administrator
Michael Plick
Robert Puhak
Sandy Batty, ANJEC Executive Director