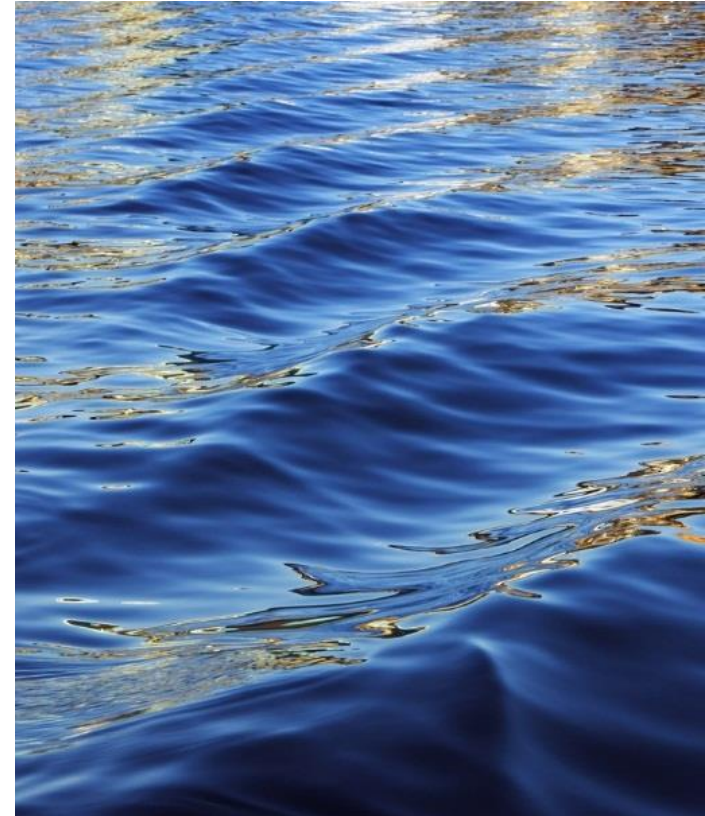


ANNUAL REPORT
of the
Franklin Township
Environmental
Commission

2022





ESTABLISHMENT, MEMBERSHIP, AND MEETINGS

*How does the Franklin Township Environmental
Commission function?*



Establishment of the Franklin Township Environmental Commission



- ◊ The State of New Jersey passed legislation in 1968 that governed the establishment, powers, and responsibilities of Environmental Commissions (NJSA 40:56A)
- ◊ In August 1974, Ordinance #676 was adopted by the Franklin Township Council
- ◊ This Ordinance established the Township's Environmental Commission and outlined its powers and responsibilities:
 - ◊ Inform residents on environmental matters and ways to protect the environment
 - ◊ Interact with neighboring Commissions and other organizations concerning regional and State environmental issues
 - ◊ Develop and maintain an inventory of environmental resources and land use constraints of the Township
- ◊ The Commission used the contents of this Ordinance, as well as guidance from the State's legislation, to create a Mission Statement and a specific set of charges to guide their work

*Sketch Credit: Barbara Pretz
ANJEC's Environmental Commissioners Handbook*



Mission and Charge



The **mission** of the Franklin Township Environmental Commission is:

“Working to preserve and protect our precious natural resources and quality of life in all parts of the Township”

The **charge** of the Environmental Commission includes:

◊ Advise/Inform/Educate

- ◊ Township Council, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Adjustment, other Township Committees, and residents about environmental policies, legislation, health impacts, conservation strategies, and sustainability

◊ Advocate

- ◊ Open space planning and preservation
- ◊ Projects and programs that encourage and advance sustainability

◊ Act

- ◊ Maintain Sustainable Jersey Certification
- ◊ Perform stream cleanups, hold educational programs, and other host other activities that promote environmental health

Charge of the Franklin Township EC (continued)



△ Create

- △ Environmental Resources Inventory and update it accordingly
- △ Workshops and public meetings to discuss important environmental legislation, policies, and more
- △ Educational information regarding current projects and problems and post regularly on the Township's website and social media outlets

△ Participate

- △ In Franklin Days and local community events to promote the mission of the Environmental Commission
- △ As requested by Township committees and boards to promote environmental health and justice, as well as conservation of natural resources

△ Review, Inspect and Research

- △ Proposed development before the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Adjustment with feedback related to tree replacement, EV Charging Stations, green infrastructure to mitigate increased stormwater runoff, bicycle access and other transportation alternatives, and more
- △ Grant opportunities to implement environmental and sustainability projects

More information about the Environmental Commission can be found at:

<https://www.franklintwpnj.org/committees-commissions/environmental-commission>



Commissioners and Board Members (2022)

- ◊ **Chair:** Paul Walitsky
- ◊ **Vice-Chair:** Walter Andrews
- ◊ **Secretary:** Dr. Theodore Chase, Jr.

- ◊ **Commissioners:**
 - Stanislav Jaracz
 - Jessica Johnson
 - Eusebio (EZ) Pires
 - Arnold Schmidt
 - Robin Suydam
 - Maria Santiago Valentin

- ◊ **Council Liaison:** Councilmember Edward Potosnak
- ◊ **Sustainability Consultant:** Tara Kenyon, AICP/PP

For More Information About the Environmental Commissioners, please visit:

<https://www.franklintwpnj.org/committees-commissions/environmental-commission/commission-members>

Subcommittees



- ◊ Subcommittees meet in between regular EC meetings to work on specific projects. This allows for dedicated time for thoughtful work to be completed on specific projects and making the EC meetings as efficient as possible.
- ◊ 4 subcommittees are established under the Franklin Township EC:
 - ◊ **Communications** – manages the EC’s communication with the public; reviews website for updates; creates content for the Township’s social media
 - ◊ **Education and Outreach** – hosts and participates in events to provide education to the public about current environmental issues, upcoming EC events, conservation measures, and more
 - ◊ **Energy and Infrastructure** – studies emerging technologies, strategies, and policies that conserve energy, generate clean energy, and/or innovate infrastructure
 - ◊ **Site Plan Review** – reviews development applications before the Franklin Township Planning Board and Zoning Board of Adjustment and provides recommendations for sustainable development, energy conservation measures, natural resources conservation, and more; Submits reports to the Franklin Township Planning Board and Zoning Board of Adjustment detailing these recommendations for inclusion in its overall project review.

For More Information About the EC’s Subcommittees, please visit:

<https://www.franklintwpnj.org/committees-commissions/environmental-commission/sub-committees>



Franklin Township Environmental Commission Meetings

- ◊ Meetings are typically held on the first and third Mondays of each month at 7:00pm
- ◊ All in-person meetings were held at the Franklin Township Municipal Building, located at:
475 DeMott Lane
Somerset, NJ 08873
- ◊ The Environmental Commission held 4 virtual meetings (January – March), and 17 in-person meetings (April – December), for a total of 21 meetings.

More information about Environmental Commission meetings can be found at:

<https://www.franklintwpnj.org/committees-commissions/environmental-commission/upcoming-past-meetings/-toggle-all>

DATE	LINK TO MEETING	DATE	LINK TO MEETING
January 24 VIRTUAL	https://www.franklintwpnj.org/Home/Components/Calendar/Event/19295/2439?toggle=all&npage=4	August 1	https://www.franklintwpnj.org/Home/Components/Calendar/Event/20091/2439?toggle=all&npage=3
February 7 VIRTUAL	https://www.franklintwpnj.org/Home/Components/Calendar/Event/19295/2439?toggle=all&npage=4	August 29	https://www.franklintwpnj.org/Home/Components/Calendar/Event/20034/2439?toggle=all&npage=3
March 14 VIRTUAL	https://www.franklintwpnj.org/Home/Components/Calendar/Event/19454/2439?toggle=all&npage=3	September 12	https://www.franklintwpnj.org/Home/Components/Calendar/Event/21667/2439?toggle=all&npage=3
March 21 VIRTUAL	https://www.franklintwpnj.org/Home/Components/Calendar/Event/19455/2439?toggle=all&npage=3	September 19	https://www.franklintwpnj.org/Home/Components/Calendar/Event/20093/2439?toggle=all&npage=2
April 4	https://www.franklintwpnj.org/Home/Components/Calendar/Event/20016/2439?toggle=all&npage=3	October 3	https://www.franklintwpnj.org/Home/Components/Calendar/Event/20094/2439?toggle=all&npage=2
April 18	https://www.franklintwpnj.org/Home/Components/Calendar/Event/20085/2439?toggle=all&npage=3	October 17	https://www.franklintwpnj.org/Home/Components/Calendar/Event/20097/2439?toggle=all&npage=2
May 2	https://www.franklintwpnj.org/Home/Components/Calendar/Event/20086/2439?toggle=all&npage=3	November 7	https://www.franklintwpnj.org/Home/Components/Calendar/Event/20095/2439?toggle=all&npage=2
May 16	https://www.franklintwpnj.org/Home/Components/Calendar/Event/20087/2439?toggle=all&npage=3	November 21	https://www.franklintwpnj.org/Home/Components/Calendar/Event/20098/2439?toggle=all&npage=2
June 6	https://www.franklintwpnj.org/Home/Components/Calendar/Event/20088/2439?toggle=all&npage=3	December 5	https://www.franklintwpnj.org/Home/Components/Calendar/Event/20096/2439?toggle=all&npage=2
June 29	https://www.franklintwpnj.org/Home/Components/Calendar/Event/21306/2439?toggle=all&npage=3	December 19	https://www.franklintwpnj.org/Home/Components/Calendar/Event/20099/2439?toggle=all&npage=2
July 18	https://www.franklintwpnj.org/Home/Components/Calendar/Event/20090/2439?toggle=all&npage=3		



ACTIVITIES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

What did we achieve in 2022?





1. Development Review

- ◊ In 2022, the Franklin Township Environmental Commission reviewed **28** development applications before the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Adjustment

- ◊ **The process of site plan review is completed as follows:**
 - ◊ The Chairman and Sustainability Coordinator divide the plans among Committee members for the upcoming meeting, who review the site plans and application materials
 - ◊ Mapping analysis to identify natural resources and environmental constraints is performed using the New Jersey Conservation Foundation's Conservation Blueprint (<https://njmap2.com/>) and the Township's Spatial Data Logic platform (<https://www.sdlportal.com/towns/nj/somerset/franklintwp>)
 - ◊ Recommendations are developed using the Green Land Development Checklist, which guides the reviewer through a variety of environmental concerns and constraints that may impact the property and surrounding areas. These recommendations are shared with the full Commission at a regularly scheduled EC meeting.
 - ◊ Additional recommendations from the EC are added into a Report
 - ◊ The final draft is then conveyed into a Memorandum to the Secretary for the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Adjustment, and included in the application materials before the Planning Board or Zoning Board of Adjustment

What Were Some of the Recommendations Made for Land Development Applications?



Solar Panels

Green Roof/Cool Roof
Technology

Increased Tree
Plantings/Conservation
of Existing Tree
Canopy

Anti-Idling Signage

Bicycle Racks and
Simple Repair Stations

EV Charging Stations

Pervious Pavement

Rain Gardens

Reduction in Onsite
Impervious Coverage

New to Site Plan Review: Requirements for Solar-Ready Warehouses



- ◇ According to NJSA § 52:27D-123.19, “any newly constructed warehouse for which an application for a construction permit has not been declared complete by the enforcing agency before July 1, 2022 shall be a solar-ready building”, meaning that the building has a “solar-ready zone”.
- ◇ A “solar-ready zone” is a section of the roof or overhang that is reserved for the future installation of a solar photovoltaic or solar thermal system, comprised of a minimum of 40% of the roof area.
- ◇ For the purposes of this legislation, only warehouses of 100,000 square feet or more are subject to this requirement.
- ◇ The EC recommends solar-ready zones on all warehouses and large buildings, regardless if they meet the minimum building size criteria
- ◇ Beginning on July 1, 2022, the EC began incorporating this requirement and the approximate calculation into of the roof area into its Site Plan Review Reports, leading to the requirement of **545,290 square feet of reserved roof space (“solar-zone”)** on 4 eligible warehouse applications between July and December 2022 alone!

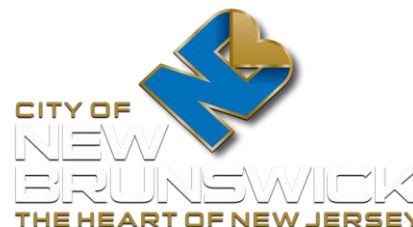


Photo Credit: AP Photo/J. Pat Carter



2. Stream Cleanup Events

- ◊ The Franklin Township Environmental Commission partnered with the Lower Raritan Watershed Partnership and the New Brunswick Environmental Commission to perform a much-needed stream cleanup at Mile Run on April 9, 2022:
 - ◊ Event was advertised on the Township's website and social media in English and Spanish, as well as on the LRWP
 - ◊ Approximately 3,325 pounds of trash was collected in 133 trash bags
 - ◊ Approximately 780 pounds of recyclables was collected in 52 trash bags





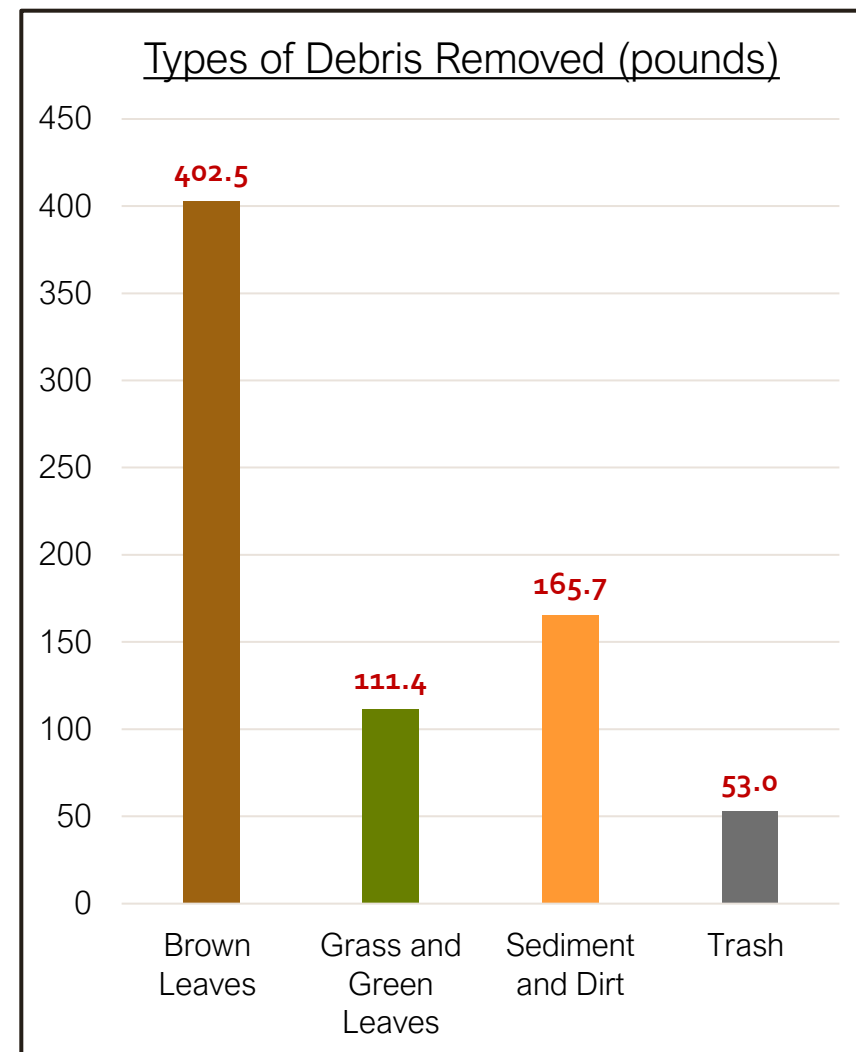
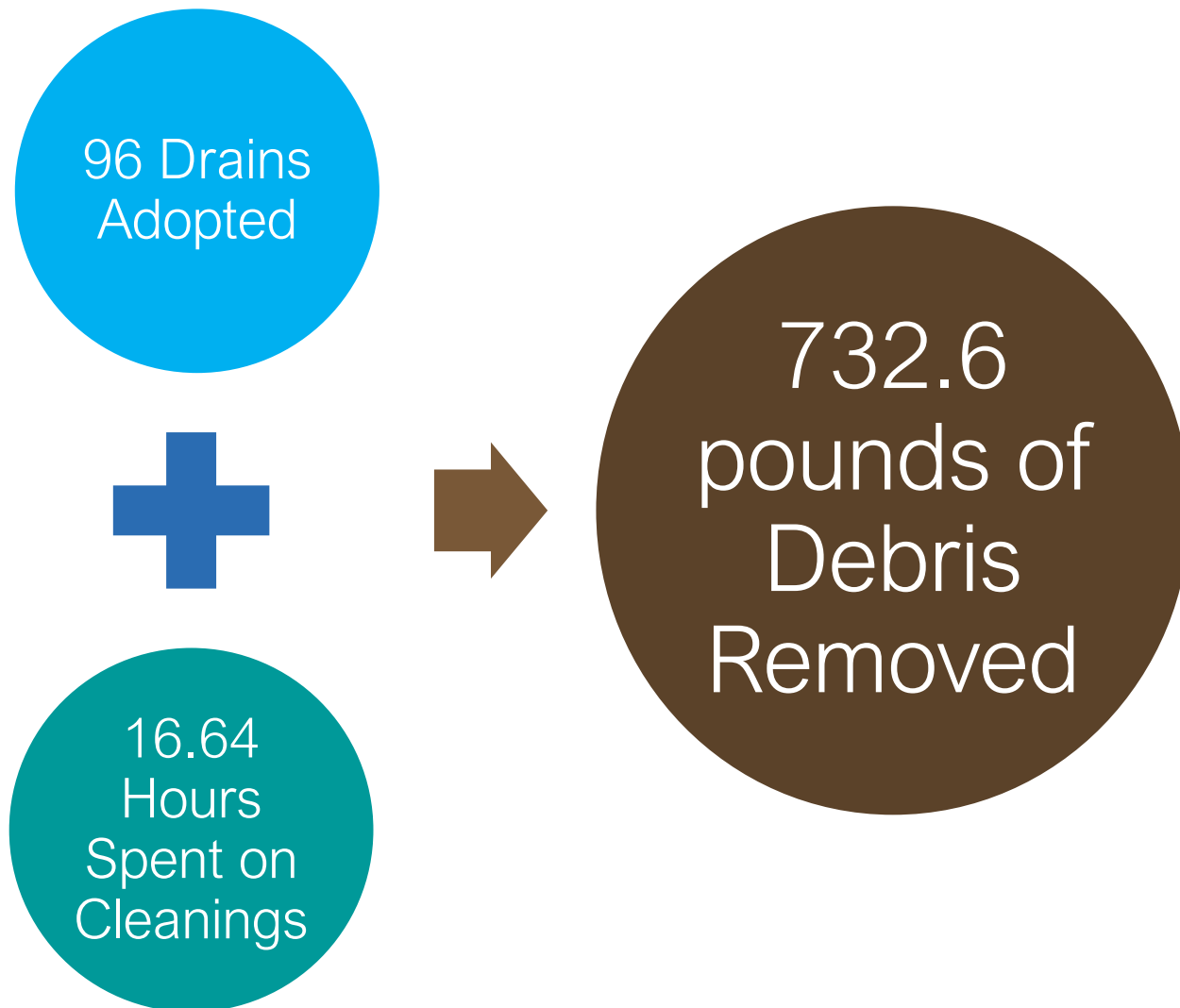
3. Adopt-A-Drain

- ◊ Franklin Township implemented the national Adopt-A-Drain (AAD) Program in June 2022.
- ◊ AAD encourages residents to “adopt” a storm drain, keep it free of debris, and report on their cleanings. Cleanings are recommended to be done monthly or before an anticipated storm, and require only a broom/rake, gloves, and a trash bag.
- ◊ The website is tailored to Franklin Township and allows adopters to register and report cleanings quickly and easily.
- ◊ Implementation of the AAD reduces the amount of debris entering our waterways which reduces non-point source pollutants and flooding.
- ◊ AAD reduces the workload of the Department of Public Works staff because these drains do not need to be cleaned as part of their scheduled work. This saves the Township money!
- ◊ AAD Programs can be used to satisfy some of the required criteria for public education as part of the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permitting process.

More information about Franklin Township’s Adopt-A-Drain program can be found at:
<https://www.franklintwpnj.org/committees-commissions/environmental-commission/adopt-a-drain>



Results of Adopt-A-Drain in 2022





4. Local Health Assessment and Action Plan

- ◊ In 2022, Franklin Township obtained a technical assistance grant from Sustainable Jersey to develop a *Local Health Assessment (LHA) and Action Plan (LHAP)*.
- ◊ The LHA examines existing statistical data (Census, New Jersey Departments of Environmental Protection, Agriculture, Health, Transportation, and more), results from a Community Survey, and feedback obtained through Focus Groups to create a Demographic Profile and Assessment of real and existing health conditions in Franklin Township.
- ◊ Following the completion of the LHA, the Township will develop the LHAP which will identify specific projects, programs, and policies to address the findings of the Assessment.
- ◊ The overarching goal of this project is to identify Health Disparities across the municipality and recommend mitigation strategies to address these disparities to achieve Health Equity.
- ◊ The EC has been instrumental throughout this project by:
 - ◊ Holding seats on the Steering Committee
 - ◊ Organizing and facilitating Focus Groups
 - ◊ Promoting the Community Survey
 - ◊ Providing feedback during various stages of the project



5. Sustainable Jersey Recertification



- ◊ Sustainable Jersey is a “network and movement of municipalities, schools, and school districts working together collectively to bring about a Sustainable New Jersey”. A voluntary Certification Program is in place which allows municipalities and schools to document their actions across over 18 categories and be recognized as a Sustainable Jersey community. Certified municipalities and schools have priority access to grants from the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities, as well as pass-through funding and technical assistance from Sustainable Jersey. Since its inception in 2011, 466 municipalities have registered with Sustainable Jersey, with 199 of those municipalities earning Certification.
- ◊ Franklin Township registered with Sustainable Jersey in 2009, was Certified at the Bronze level in 2010, and has been Certified at the Silver level since 2016.
- ◊ On October 6, 2022, Franklin Township was recertified at the Silver-level, which is the highest level available. (420 points submitted – requirement for Silver = 350 points). The next recertification is required in 2025.
- ◊ Completion of the Local Health Assessment and Action Plan, plus the implementation of 3 recommended projects will earn the Township a “Gold Star in Health”, which is the premiere status in the Certification Program to date.



Examples of Approved Actions in the 2022 Sustainable Jersey Silver Certification

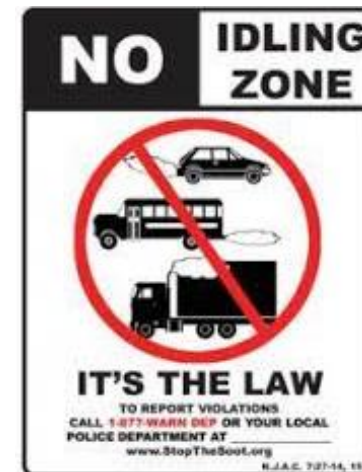


Category	Action	Project/Program
Arts and Creative Culture	Establish a Creative Team	Cultural Arts Council and its events/programs
Energy	Public EV Charging Infrastructure	Installation of EV Charging Stations at Municipal Complex
Innovative Community Projects	Innovative Stormwater Management	Adopt-A-Drain Program
Innovative Community Projects	Innovative Grasslands Management	Grasslands Management Plan, Targeted Mowing, and Prescribed Burns
Land Use and Transportation	Green Infrastructure Planning	Development of the <i>Green Infrastructure Action Plan</i>
Natural Resources	Natural Resources Inventory	Update of the <i>Environmental Resources Inventory</i> (2019)
Public Information and Engagement	Improve Public Engagement in Planning and Zoning	Use of digital meetings during Covid-19 Pandemic; Targeted website updates
Waste Management	Reusable Bag Education Program	Education and outreach related to the Plastic Bag Ban



6. Anti-Idling Ordinance

- ◊ The EC began drafting an Anti-Idling Ordinance that adheres to the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's rules already in place (NJAC 7:27-14 and 15), and identifies priority sites where idling should be monitored, and the rules of anti-idling enforced.
- ◊ The Franklin Township draft Ordinance includes:
 - ◊ 15 priority sites identified including schools, convenience stores, warehouses, athletic fields, and more
 - ◊ All new facilities proposed after the date of the adoption of the Ordinance must install anti-idling signage
 - ◊ Specific areas where anti-idling signage should be installed is included (entrance/exit of site, at office door, parking areas, every 4th bay for warehouses)
 - ◊ Within 90 days of the date of the adoption of the Ordinance, all facilities owned and operated by the Township of Franklin must install anti-idling signage
 - ◊ Owners of commercial entities and other eligible facilities who post anti-idling signage are not subject to violations and fines imposed by the Somerset County Health Department and/or NJDEP for vehicles observed idling at their places of business. Without signs, businesses are also subject to fines.
 - ◊ Outside contractors would receive priority consideration if they submit a proposal that includes the use of electric vehicles
- ◊ The EC submitted a final draft Ordinance for review of the Franklin Township Attorney in February 2023.



7. Amendments to the Franklin Township's Trees Ordinance



- ◊ The EC, along with the Shade Tree Commission, has been very concerned with the declining tree canopy in Franklin Township, especially because of the rapidly increasing warehouse development in the municipality.
- ◊ In December 2022, the EC sent a memo to the Township Manager detailing recommendations for amendments to the Township's Trees Ordinance (Ordinance #4100-15; Municipal Code § 222.1 - § 222.24):
 - ◊ Changing the definition of “tree” to include those that are 2.5” or more in diameter at 3’ above the base of the trunk (the current ordinance defines a tree at 4” or more in diameter)
 - ◊ Reinstating the 25% cap on the amount of the “in-lieu of contribution” to the Shade Tree Fund that a developer can make instead of planting the required replacement trees
- ◊ The Franklin Township Council introduced an amendment to the Trees Ordinance in December 2022 (adopted in January 2023) **increasing the amount per tree required for payment to the Shade Tree Fund as part of land development applications from \$30.00 to \$300.00**
- ◊ The EC established a Joint Subcommittee with members of the Shade Tree Commission to perform a comprehensive review of the Trees Ordinance and draft a new Trees Ordinance that actively protects the tree canopy, mitigates the negative impacts of impervious coverage (stormwater runoff, heat islands, etc.), and establishes a policy for maintenance of trees. The first meeting took place in December 2022.
- ◊ The NJDEP announced its release of a Model Tree Ordinance which will address new requirements in the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permitting. Following the adoption of this Model Ordinance, the Joint Committee will resume its work.



8. Education and Outreach

- ◊ The EC began educating the public about the Plastic Bag Ban in 2021 and continued to do so through the enactment of the Ban in May 2022. EC members attended various events, distributed reusable tote bags, and posted information on its webpage and social media platforms.
- ◊ In September 2022, the EC held a public information session about the upcoming ballot question regarding the creation of a municipal energy aggregation program. 49 people attended to hear a presentation from Gabel Associates (municipal energy consultants) to learn what the program entails, what the benefits are, and how it will be rolled out.
- ◊ Email addresses from attendees at events and meetings throughout the year were collected to create an “EC Mailing List” which is now used to disseminate information about upcoming events and current topics to those interested in the EC’s work.
- ◊ Throughout the year, the EC posted information on the Township’s social media regarding:
 - ◊ Environmental New Years Resolutions
 - ◊ Water Conservation
 - ◊ Reduction in Single-Use Plastics
 - ◊ Adopt-A-Drain



Energy Aggregation Information Session (September 29, 2022)



Expenditures

Costs incurred during 2022





Expenditures in 2022

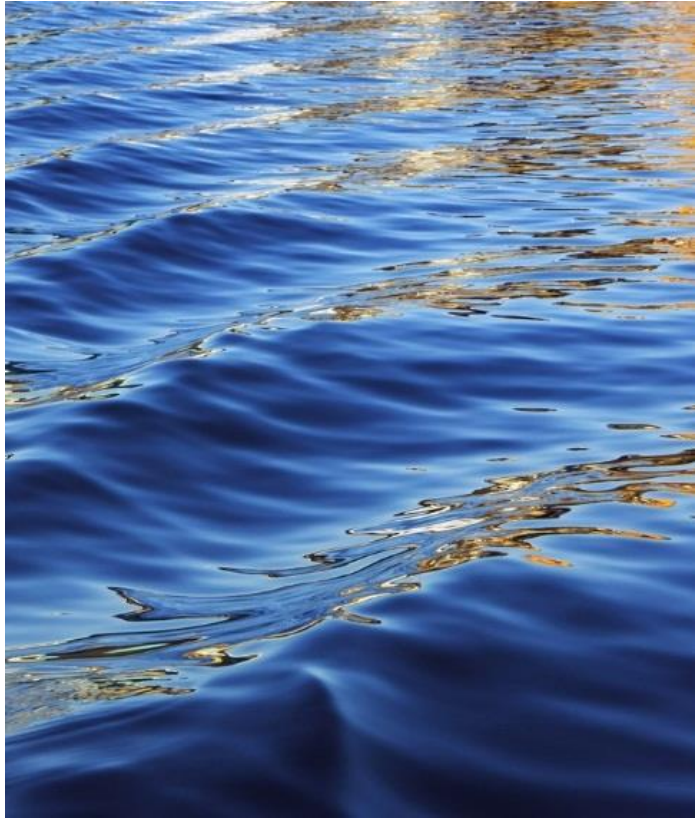
- ◊ The Franklin Township Environmental Commission has a budget within the Planning Board's budget
- ◊ The EC historically incurs expenses for ANJEC membership and the costs of plaques for recipients of the Environmental Stewardship Award
- ◊ In 2022, costs incurred by the EC included:

Expense	Date Expense Incurred	Total Cost (2022)
ANJEC Annual Membership	April 13, 2022 (need from Mark)	\$375.00
Sustainability Coordinator	January 2022 – December 2022	\$10,000.00 (full contract billed)
TOTAL EXPENDITURES (2022)		\$10,375.00



Vision for 2023

What is the Franklin EC planning to work on this year?





Projects Proposed for 2023 and Beyond

Project	Benefit	Anticipated Completion
Finalization of Anti-Idling Ordinance	Reduction in air pollution; Public education	September 2023
Finalization of Recommended Amendments to the Trees Ordinance	Protection of the Township's tree canopy; Mitigation of heat island effects; Management of stormwater runoff	December 2023
Waste Audit at Franklin Township Municipal Building	Analysis of waste generated at the Municipal Building; Education of Staff and the public regarding proper disposal and reduction of waste	December 2023
Green Building Ordinance	Requirements for solar panels on large buildings	Early 2024
Community Energy Plan	Analysis of energy usage in the municipality; Recommendations for energy conservation	May 2024*
Support of Local Health Assessment and Action Plan	Continued provision of feedback and assistance; Promotion of LHA Report	September 2024*
Sustainability Element of Franklin Township Master Plan	Plan to incorporate sustainability as a standard of practice for all municipal departments and facilities	Mid-Late 2024

* *Grant Funded Project*



More for 2023 and Beyond

- ◊ In addition to the projects listed on the previous slide, the Franklin Township EC continues to research and develop projects related to:
 - ◊ Mitigation of the Heat Island Effect and Management of Heat/Cold in Extreme Weather Events
 - ◊ Innovative techniques for the generation of clean energy
 - ◊ Conserving and enhancing the quality of natural resources
 - ◊ Resiliency to the effects of Climate Change
 - ◊ Stormwater Management
 - ◊ Partnerships with other Franklin Boards/Commissions/Committees, as well as outside entities

- ◊ In the upcoming year, the EC wants to focus on working directly with interested Franklin residents through its subcommittees

- ◊ The EC will continue to meet on the 1st and 3rd Mondays of each month at 7:00pm at the Franklin Township Municipal Building



For More Information:

Website: <https://Franklintwpnj.org/environmental>

Email: Environmental.Commission@franklinnj.gov

Facebook: [@TownshipofFranklin](#)

