



SOMERVILLE ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

Annual Report 2023

SOMERVILLE, NJ
ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION



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Mission Statement

The Somerville Environmental Commission's mission is to

— EDUCATE • ADVOCATE • PROMOTE —

best policies and practices for the Borough's environment, and the health and safety of its residents.



Who We Are

*Residents, Neighbors,
Students, Renters,
Owners...
Engaged Citizens!*



Environmental Commission

Jeffrey Lamborn, *Chair**

Helene Venizelos, *Vice Chair**

Sandra Benscoter, *Secretary*^

Larry Cleveland, *Planning Board Liaison*^

Rebecca Reitman-Garofalo, *Green Team
Chair**

Gina Stravic, *Council Liaison*^

Glen Denys*

Geoff Keiser*

Roberta Harmon^

Geri DeSapio*

* Multi-year member

^ 5+ year member

Green Team

Tania Althoff

Sarah Arif

Ava Coppola

Timarie Diehl

Pamela Dorn

Paige Greenfield*

Laura Laskowski

Caitlin Martin*

Jefry Tineo

Melissa Smith-Shell

Logan Stahl

Neil Udsen

...AND GROWING!



Relationships and Partners

Somerville

- Borough Council
- Planning Board
- Administration
- Dept of Public Works
- Recreation Department
- Downtown Somerville Alliance
- Fire Engine #1
- Girl and Boy Scouts
- Vanderveer Elementary School
- Ambee Coffee
- Turf, Surf and Earth

SOMERVILLE, NJ
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Relationships and Partners

Beyond Somerville

- ANJEC (Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions)
- Raritan and Bernardsville Environmental Commissions
- Licensed Tree Experts
- Wallace House & Old Dutch Parsonage State Historic Site
- Somerset County
- AmeriCorps
- Rutgers Cooperative Extension Water Resources Program
- American Water
- NJ Electric Vehicle Association
- RideWise NJ
- MetLife Insurance
- NJ Tree Foundation
- PSE&G
- Sustainable Jersey



AmeriCorps



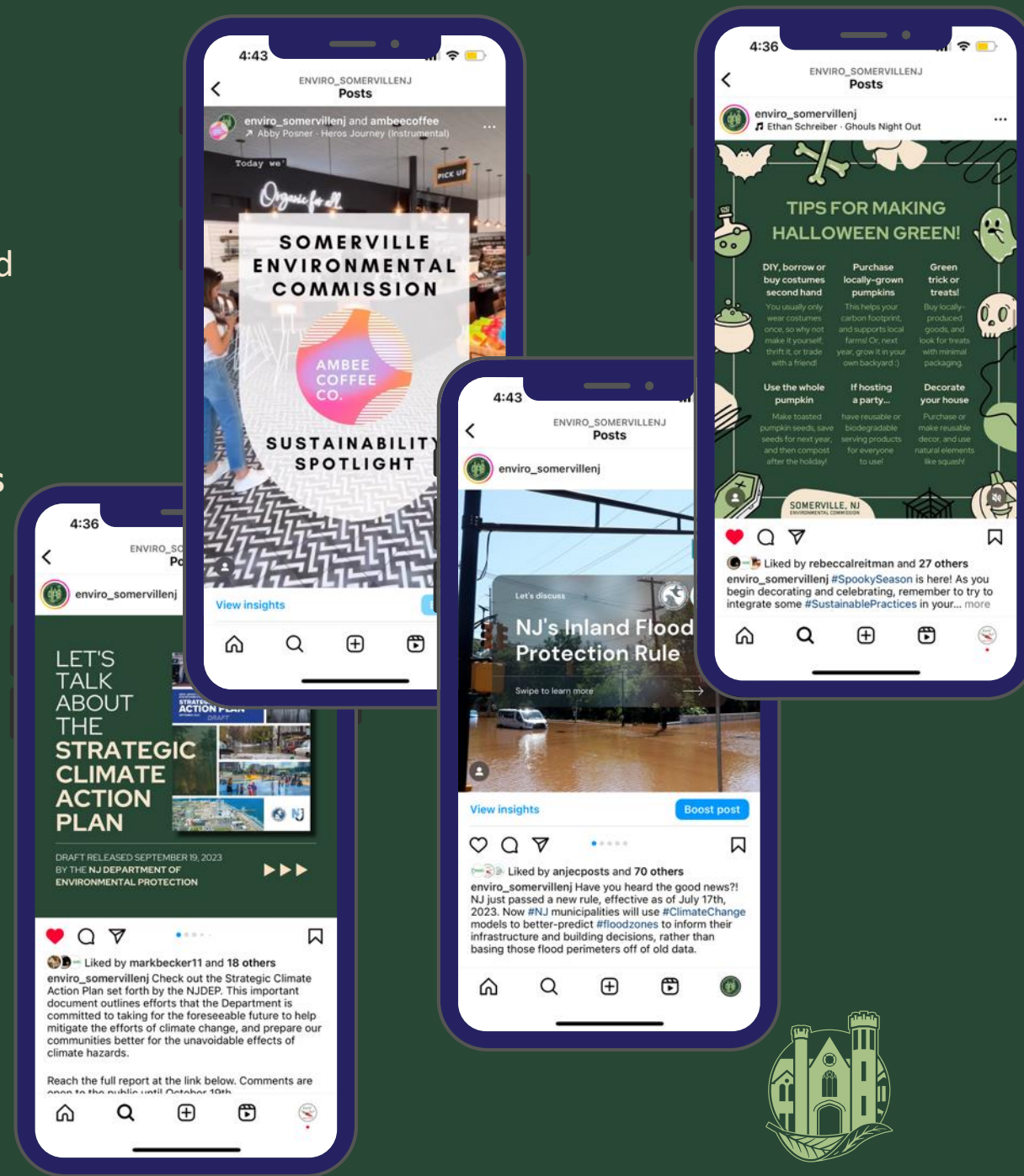
Communications & Social Media Strategy

Goal for changing our outreach strategy:

- Create an **uplifting, safe space** for environmentally-minded locals
- Provide residents with simple **strategies for integrating environmentalism in their everyday life**
- Gain a following to help **promote the EC events/initiatives** and connect with the community

Social media strategy overview:

- Keep posts and stories **light and informational**. Climate change and environmental efforts can feel oppressive; we don't want to push people away
- Highlight and focus on **local NJ environmental news** vs. federal news
- Re-post **educational content from outside accounts** to our story. This gets the information out with less time investment for our team
- Promote **green practices of local businesses**





Programs & Events

- **Earth Day Trash Clean-Up and Seedling Giveaway**
 - Held annually, educational material, 100's of seedlings given away, trash pickup coordinated with DPW, sponsors involved
- **Jay Scott Memorial Community Garden**
 - Completed first public season with 14 beds behind Fire Engine #1 on Veterans Memorial Drive, supported by Recreation Dept and grants
- **Sustainable Jersey/PSE&G Energy Efficiency Partnership**
 - Residential outreach promotion for existing programs that offer free or discounted energy efficiency upgrades.
 - Link to [Somerville Promotion Video](#)



Programs & Events – Continued

National Night Out

- Meet the Commission and Green Team, information, giveaways and how to get involved
- **Regional Environmental Commission Meeting**
 - Tapped by ANJEC to host inaugural meeting with EC representatives from 5 counties to foster regional collaboration
- **Rain Garden Pruning**
 - Regular maintenance of a designed green infrastructure installation at Carol Pager Park
- **“Town Swap” – Upcycling and Reuse**
 - 2nd annual Spring Event where curb-side items are put out by residents for others to take and make their own



Programs & Events – Continued

- **Tree Planting Grants and Volunteer Coordination**
 - 35 trees planted at Walck Park with MetLife Insurance volunteers and NJ Tree Foundation Grant
- **Electric Vehicle “Show and Tell”**
 - Partnered with NJ Electric Vehicle Assoc. and RideWise to host EV owners for Q&A during planned Street Fair
- **Vanderveer School Garden Clean-Up**
 - 30 youth volunteers kickstarted existing programs at school with weed clean-up in raised garden beds



Certifications

- Silver Certified Municipality, Sustainable Jersey (2020, 2023)
- Urban & Community Forestry Plan, NJDEP UCF



Grants & Funding

- New Jersey Tree Foundation – Walck Park Tree Planting
 - \$17,000 value in trees and volunteer time
- Sustainable Jersey – PSE&G Residential Energy Efficiency Program
 - EnergyOutreachNJ.com/Somerville
 - Promotional materials plus \$2,000 grant
- PSE&G Municipal Energy Savings Program
- NJ Clean Communities and Tree Seedling Giveaway
 - Annually for Earth Day and trash clean-up program with DPW
- Street Trees from Borough fund



\$10,000's invested into the Community



Volunteer Hours & Goals

Total Volunteer Hours: 981
equivalent to \$33,177

Summary of Environmental Commission and Green Team Goals and Efforts

2023 Goals Progress

- ☑ • Submit our Sustainable Jersey application
- ☑ • Maintain a volunteer list
- ☑ • Maintain and improve our Community Garden
- ☑ • More community engagement
- ☑ • Further engagement with the Borough and Council
- Ⓒ • Champion an updated Environmental Resource Inventory (\$)
- Ⓒ • Update our Community Forestry Plan (\$)

2024 Goals

- Continued engagement with the Borough and Council
- Creation of a Budget
- Increase Tree Canopy in Borough
- Champion Green Infrastructure
- 2023 Goal Completion



Conclusion

- We **strengthen our community by connecting with others** to tackle local challenges our Borough cannot afford due to lack of time, personnel or money
- Engaging in community service **provides residents with the opportunity to become active and closer to their community** which has a lasting, positive impact on society at large
- The EC's **active community outreach** gives the residents the opportunity to **help to enrich Somerville and have a positive impact on our local environment.**



Thank You!

Our activities and community engagement would not be possible without the support and trust of many including the Borough Council, Mayor Sullivan, Kevin Sluka, employees of the Borough, the DPW and our fellow residents. We enjoy what we do and appreciate your involvement!

Interested in becoming involved or want to learn more?

Reach us: EnvironmentalCommission@SomervilleNJ.org, on [Facebook](#) or Instagram ([@Enviro_SomervilleNJ](#)), or through the Borough administrative office.

Public monthly meetings begin at 7:30pm on the 2nd Tuesday of each month in the Somerville Civic Center at 24 Robeson Street. All are welcome!

