

# GLEN ROCK ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION REPORT FOR 2023



## **GREC Responsibilities**

NJ State Legislation in section 40:56A established Environmental Commissions empowered to “study and make recommendations concerning open space preservation, water resource management, air pollution control, solid waste management, noise control, soil and landscape protection, environmental appearance, marine resources and protection of flora and fauna.”

Today the GREC and other environmental commissions are involved in a broad range of activities, such as:

- Advising their governing bodies and boards of health on a variety of environmental issues,
- Informing and advising municipal planning and zoning boards about environmental impacts of proposals for development,
- Informing residents on environmental matters and ways to help protect the environment,
- Interacting with neighboring commissions and other organizations to tackle regional and state problems, and
- Helping to explain to other local officials and residents the programs and regulations of the NJ DEP and communicate local concerns to the NJ DEPC.
- Maintaining the borough certification by Sustainable Jersey due every 3 years.

## **2023 Accomplishments**

### **GREEN BUSINESS RECOGNITION AWARD PROGRAM**

- Created a new Green Business Recognition award program
- Points are awarded for various environmental measures:
  - Reduction of plastic
  - Reduction of energy use (electricity, gas)
- Three levels of achievement and award: Bronze, Silver, Gold.
- Businesses are recognized with:
  - Certificate, sticker, acknowledgement by GR Council, and on website.
- Visited GR businesses to publicize the program. (More than 10 visits were made to Glen Rock retail businesses to publicize the program.)

- Two awards were made during 2023:
  - Plantwich – Bronze
  - Giannella’s Subs – Silver.
- Will be voting on a third in early 2024. This is a continuing project.

### SUSTAINABLE LANDSCAPING

- Conducted an outreach program for electric battery operated leaf blowers.
- The battery powered leaf blower donated by GREC to the Library in 2022 has been a popular item.
  - Available for public loan in the “Library of Things”.
- Public talk presented at the Library about the advantages of electric battery operated leaf blowers.
  - Elimination of pollution products from gasoline combustion.
  - Quieter operation healthier for equipment operators.
  - Subcommittee is looking into suggestions for potential regulation of gasoline powered leaf blowers.

### GREEN BUILDINGS

- GREC and the Glen Rock Planning Board established a non binding Green Building Development Checklist as part of the development application to the Planning Board with the goals of:
  - Serving as a reference list of sustainable practices for developers
  - Educating homeowners for more sustainable buildings
  - Data will be compiled by GREC and provide information to Planning Board related to increase of sustainable buildings
  - To be submitted with development applications to the Planning Board as a non-binding checklist
  - Will provide useful information to the Planning Board
  - Being finalized in 2024.

### BOROUGH-WIDE CLEANUP

- GREC organized and led the 6<sup>th</sup> annual Borough wide cleanup event (May 20).
- This will be an annual event for GREC going forward.
- A good turnout despite cloudy weather, with around 50 participants at 7 sites.

## ENERGY

### PSE&G PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

As part of Glen Rock's ongoing commitment to sustainability and lowering greenhouse gases, GREC received a partnership grant from PSE&G to do outreach and education to enhance residential energy efficiency. This included:

- A mailing from the Mayor highlighting the advantages of having an energy audit
- Created a web page for inquiries from the public about energy-saving programs
- Created a publicity video, available on YouTube
- A public info-session held at the Library in early 2024, which received a large public attendance.

### COMMUNITY SOLAR

Community Solar is now available for Glen Rock residents which will enable them to subscribe and receive a financial credit on their utility bill. Work included:

- Established by Council resolution
- GREC Provided publicity and outreach
- Public participation in the program is now in effect.

### ELECTRIC VEHICLES

- GREC participated in the July 4<sup>th</sup> parade with a procession of electric vehicles
- Glen Rock has now purchased two Nissan Leaf electric vehicles for municipal use.
- Electric car chargers installed at the Main Line Station parking lot remain in use and available to the public. The chargers were installed under the It Pays To Plug In Program sponsored by the NJ DEP.

## BERGEN COUNTY LIAISON

- GREC is working with the SJ Bergen Hub on two projects:
- Single use plastic committee to develop a strategy for outreach to businesses that will be impacted by the new state law, banning food establishments from providing food contact Styrofoam, and also banning single-use plastic bags and paper bags (for stores over 2,500 sf).
- GREC is part of a food waste feasibility study to determine priority actions for implementing measures to reduce greenhouse gases and sequester carbon from food waste. Work will be ongoing into 2024.
- GREC is looking into new concepts to allow local restaurants to offer reusable carry-out containers instead of Styrofoam ("Skip The Stuff"). We are developing examples of such material with vendors and costs to make available to our local businesses.

## STYROFOAM RECYCLING

- After looking into several alternatives, including making use of a Styrofoam densifier furnished by the County for use by participating municipalities, a plan was adopted for Glen Rock to utilize the densifier in Ridgewood. An agreement was established with Ridgewood for disposal of Styrofoam from Glen Rock. A schedule has been established for holding four Styrofoam collections per year. The first two collections, in October 2023 and January 2024 were highly successful..

## OUTREACH EVENTS

- Earth Day/Green Week events
- Partnered with the Shade Tree Advisory Committee (STAC) and the Glen Rock Arboretum on a public event on May 21, 2023
  - GREC/STAC tables:
  - Reusable bag giveaway, flyers on Plastic-Free Glen Rock, Mosquito control, Composting, EVs.

GREC participated in the July 4<sup>th</sup> parade with a procession of electric vehicles to support the transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy as well as distributing flyers for the new IRA rebates for energy efficiency. Posters on the electric cars highlighted their environmental advantages and features.

- Outreach Info-Session event at the Library (January 2024):
  - Energy Efficiency, Home Energy Audits, presented by Ceil Power
  - Sustainable Landscaping, presented by Lois Kraus
  - Community Solar- education and announcement of availability to Glen Rock residents
  - Flyer presentations: GR Recycling Chart, Styrofoam collections, Prescription Drug Disposal, Water Bottle Filling Stations
  - Give-Aways: Reusable Shopping Bags, LED Bulbs, Night-Lights.

## TREE PROTECTION ORDINANCE

- Worked with STAC, Mayor & Council, and Borough staff to prepare an ordinance to protect the GR tree canopy.
- Work is continuing with the need to assess what is required for the new MS4 guidelines.
- Worked with STAC on any concerns about trees raised by residents.

## ADMINISTRATIVE

- Performed work toward recertification of GREC by Sustainable Jersey.
- Changes in GREC membership:

- Sylvia Rabacchi & Ken Jones relocated, Lesley Elton left,
- David Lindley joined (1/2024).

### CURRENT MEMBERSHIP (2024)

MEMBERS: Ben Meyer, Elaine Silverstein, Michelle Tyler, David Lindley, Scott King (Planning Board liaison), Amy Martin (Council Liaison).

ALTERNATES: Sara Froikin-Gordon, Candy Hall.

### 2024 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

#### Public Information & Engagement

1. Advise the Borough Council, Planning Board and Municipal officials on environmental issues and the environmental impacts of Borough policies and actions.
2. Participate in municipal events such as the July 4th parade, Earth Day, and similar events to provide greater public environmental familiarization.
3. Continue our efforts to educate and involve the community in protecting the environment.
4. Continue with the community education campaigns to educate residents and promote sustainability about sustainability literacy and sustainable choices and behaviors.
5. Use social media to educate and engage the community with GREC and Green Team initiatives.
6. Continue to increase environmental expertise of Commissioners through attendance at workshops, seminars and community fairs.
7. Invite public participation and add new members to GREC and the Green Team.

#### Natural Resources

8. Continue with the annual Borough-Wide Cleanup program.

#### Energy

9. Support the current and future Borough Community Solar program.
10. Research opportunities to partner with other municipalities for the next Renewable Energy Aggregation program to obtain better energy pricing for Borough residents.
11. Continue to monitor the use of the municipal electric vehicle charging stations and institute improvements where needed.
12. Establish a community energy plan.

#### Waste Management

13. Continue the Styrofoam collection drives in coordination with the Glen Rock DPW.
14. Expand recycling opportunities for residents in the Borough.
15. Improve recycling education.
16. Advance education and outreach on backyard composting.
17. Advocate for reduction of plastic use by residents and businesses (“Skip the Stuff”).

#### Local Economies

18. Continue to seek and accept additional participants into the Green Business Certification program.

#### Land Use

19. Provide monitoring and feedback to the Planning Board for the Green Development Checklists received by the Planning Board from development applicants.
20. Continue to review applications to the Planning Board and submit comments on any environmental issues.

#### Sustainability & Climate Planning

21. Work towards providing Glen Rock with a new ordinance to regulate tree removal and replacement, as a cooperative effort with the Shade Tree Committee (STAC).
22. Work with Glen Rock stakeholders to ensure stormwater regulations and ordinances are up to date and assess whether these regulations need to be expanded in the areas of Glen Rock where there are vulnerabilities or deficiencies.
23. Work toward maintaining Sustainable Jersey recertification.
24. Identify new opportunities that can lead to a reduction of our community carbon footprint.
25. Continue the partnership with other SJ Bergen county environmental commissions and green teams through the Bergen County Hub.
26. Pursue grant applications to help fund activities that will benefit environmental concerns in Glen Rock.
27. Identify additional Actions selected for SJ recertification to expand our efforts in promote sustainability.

#### Health & Wellness

28. Explore the possibilities of regulation of gasoline powered leaf blowers.