



FANWOOD ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

# ANNUAL REPORT OF THE

# FANWOOD ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

# 2019

## **INTRODUCTION**

Under the New Jersey Municipal Land Use Law, each municipality in New Jersey is empowered to form an environmental commission via ordinance. Fanwood created its Environmental Commission circa 1972. Under the enabling legislation a commission can have up to seven regular members and two alternates, which are appointed by the mayor. A member of the commission is to be appointed to the municipal planning board. The mayor and council also select a member of the council to be the liaison between the commission and the town government. A commission may also name “associate members”—that is, people with no formal responsibility with the commission, but who have worked with the commission as volunteers and have performed special and/or unique services for the commission and the town’s environment.

### **Commission responsibilities**

The Commission is an advisory board to the Mayor and Council and the town in general for environmental issues. The Commission is in charge of keeping a town’s Open Space Inventory and for preparing an Environmental Resource Inventory (ERI), which the Fanwood Environmental Commission (FEC) has done several times (1976, 2007, with a current edition pending). The FEC also reviews development plans from the Planning & Zoning Board and provides comments on environmental concerns. The FEC can also accept land and easements in its name on behalf of the Borough and can suggest ordinances and related regulations for environmental and health protection of its citizens. The Commission can also apply for grants to help with various projects.

In Fanwood, the FEC also works with Borough officials to oversee the 8-acre Nature Center located between Cray Terrace and LaGrande Avenue. The Nature Center provides an opportunity for recreation in a “green” and “quiet” setting for hiking, bird watching, plant observation, photography, educational programs in an “outdoor” classroom, and similar activities. The Commission provides guidance and direction for the Nature Center Caretaker. Further, the FEC often works with Girl and Boy Scouts and other civic groups on environmental stewardship projects in the Nature Center and elsewhere in town which may include spreading wood chips on trails, removing invasive plants, erecting informational signs, repairing or constructing boardwalks, creating pollinator habitats, and so forth.

## **Commission members—2019**

Eric Gaulin – Chairperson  
Gary Szelc – Vice Chairperson  
Margaret Chowdhury  
Phyllis Sandrock Sandy Redder  
Michael Lambaugh  
David Schwartzberg – Alternate Member  
Kevin Boris – Planning Board Liaison  
Kathy Mitchell – Borough Council Liaison

---

**Meetings** – FEC meetings are held the third Thursday of every month starting at 7:30 in the upstairs, second floor meeting room of the Community House (“The Old Train Station”). They are open to the public.

## **ACTIVITIES**

**Earth Day/Clean Communities Day (April 2019)** – As it does every year, members of the FEC participated in the annual event hosted by the Borough of Fanwood, cleaning up trash from the stream within the Nature Center, and other parts of Fanwood. A member of the FEC also participated on the planning committee.

**Garden Talk and Cleanup (June 2019)** – Three gardens located at the grounds of Fanwood Borough Hall (rain garden, butterfly garden, pollinator garden) were the subject of a garden talk and cleanup, lead by members of the FEC in June. Several members of the public came to listen to a seminar by Margaret Chowdhury and aid in the clean up of the gardens.

**Fanny Wood Day (September 2019)** – Like the above, the FEC had a booth at this annual celebration and provided information in the form of displays and handouts and answered questions from the public. Additionally, Environmental Commission ran educational demonstrations, using a watershed model purchased with grant funds from NJ American Water.

## **NATURE CENTER**

**Replanting Project (February to June 2019)** – During April and May 2019, volunteers from local high schools and scout groups, along with members of the Environmental Commission manually cleared approximately 20,000 square feet of forested area within the Nature Center of fallen trees and invasive species such as multiflora rose and stilt grass, to facilitate planting. Due to the location of the planting area adjacent to the stream and location near residential properties, the planting area was inaccessible to heavy equipment. Fallen timber and removed vegetation were carried by out carts, wheelbarrows and by hand (approximately 400) feet out of the Nature Center for recycling by the Fanwood Department of Public Works (DPW).

At the end of the clearing activities, approximately 600 feet of protective deer fencing was erected around the perimeter of the planting area by members of the Environmental Commission and other volunteers.

At the beginning of June 2019, a total of 159 trees and shrubs were planted within Test Plot A, after which time the deer fence was sealed. Care of the plants and fencing was performed by the Commission throughout the year.

**Trail Identification Signs (Summer 2019)** – the Commission worked with Jack Eckstein, a Boy Scout and Eagle Scout Candidate to install a series of “you are here” trail signs throughout the Nature Center. Jack designed the signs, and they were manufactured by the Union County Sign Shop.

**Trail Boardwalk (Summer 2019)** – The Commission worked with Tim Roden, a Boy Scout and Eagle Scout Candidate to install 65 feet of wood boardwalk in the Nature Center, through an area frequently impassable due to water. The project was financed by a grant from the Association of NJ Environmental Commissions (ANJEC).

**Edibles Plant Walk (September 2019)** – As she has several times, Debbie Naha, park naturalist, teacher, and nutritionist conducted a plant walk through and near the La Grande Park to identify wild edible plants (and plants to be avoided). This walk was open to the public and attracted a number of participants from Fanwood and surrounding communities.

**Trail Boardwalk (Winter 2019)** – The Commission worked with Aiden Christman, a Boy Scout and Eagle Scout Candidate to install 65 feet of wood boardwalk in the Nature Center, continuing off of Tim Roden’s boardwalk project. The project was donations Aiden collected.

## **OTHER**

### **Other Acknowledgements and Supporters**

Fanwood Public Works Department—PW personnel were invaluable in helping the Commission with several projects including labor and supplying tools.

**Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions (ANJEC)**—The FEC is a long standing member of ANJEC, the umbrella organization for environmental commissions throughout the state. The FEC has participated in workshops, the annual meeting, and other educational events sponsored by ANJEC.