



EWING GREEN TEAM

*Promoting People, the Planet, and Prosperity in
Ewing*



ANNUAL RETREAT MINUTES

JANUARY 16, 2021

ATTENDANCE

Pete Boughton	Joe Mirabella*
Lisa Feldman*	Donna Morgan*
Heidi Furman*	Joanne Mullowney*
Garry Keel*	Lynn Robbins

Priya Vimalassery*
Mark Wetherbee*

OPENING

Welcome to Priya; it's official that Priya is now a member of the Ewing Green Team! At our next meeting Priya will be formally sworn in.

We still need 2 more people to join. It would be helpful if people who may be interested in joining our group start to attend the meetings. This proves their interest and willingness to help. We look for people who are going to get involved and participate and if they do it as strictly a volunteer; we see this as a good sign that they would make a good team member.

STUDENT AMBASSADOR

Our Student Ambassador Kylie is graduating this year and so has declined to participate. Lori Ruffennach, the advisor for the Environmental club at Ewing High School, has suggested a possible student candidate. He has forwarded his application to Joanne and we will need to send this to Town Council for their approval. He's a Junior at Ewing High this year.

OFFICER ELECTIONS

Reminder that at the January meeting we will vote for this year's Officers. It's an important year since it's the intermediate year before we need to recertify for [Sustainable Jersey](#), where we do our major planning for our submissions in 2022. Please consider supporting the Team by volunteering to be an officer.

Donna volunteered to take on the oversight of the SJ recertification process. This will be extremely helpful since the process requires a great deal of oversight. She has already committed to overseeing this which is very much appreciated.

Joanne M. said she will do the Annual Report. It will be a short one, as COVID seriously impacted what we were able to accomplish in 2020.

STREAM CLEAN UP 2021

Donna confirmed that she will again commit to taking on the Green Team water clean-up projects. Donna coordinated our group's efforts with The Watershed's different projects before we went into 'lock-down' and it worked out well. They helped with supplies. She also helped with our 'plogging' event. (community clean-up efforts in various neighborhoods while still maintaining our pandemic safety protocols - social distancing and wearing masks). We were disappointed with the small turnout for our group.



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WEBSITE AND FACEBOOK ASSISTANCE

Donna also helps with content on our Face Book page. Lynn Robbins also volunteered to help with our outreach and said that she would be happy to write website articles. We are grateful to both for their help.

SUSTAINABLE JERSEY CERTIFICATION

"Sustainable Jersey is a certification program for municipalities in New Jersey. It is a 501 non-profit organization that is helping New Jersey towns build a better world for future generations by supporting community efforts to reduce waste, cut greenhouse gas emissions, and improve environmental equity." ¹

Joanne will send out the link to Sustainable Jersey in advance of our next meeting, Wednesday, January 27th 7:00 pm. It's a good idea for everyone to go to their website to check out the categories and read the different requirements. They have certainly gotten much stricter in their requirements these past few years.

ROUND ROBIN SHARING OF INTERESTS

- **Pete Boughton**

Would be willing to help on the Energy Committee if Mark W. takes the lead. Pete B. has moved to Hamilton but it's great that he's still willing to help here in Ewing. Pete is going to see what the Green Team in Hamilton is doing and will share what he learns.

- **Lynn Robbins**

Interested in walking trails and open space. She has made some great progress in getting updates on what is going on in this area and is willing to take this category on for our group and SJ.

There is a Scouts trail behind the Municipal Building that Boy Scouts Troop #33 is interested in working on and would like to work with us. They would like to set a date if we can, to meet to see if this trail is considered environmentally sensitive. This would eliminate the use of power tools; we may be able to use clippers and weed-whackers (guess not power ones?)

Lynn met with Patriotic Committee members in early January to discuss trail maintenance and learned that the Township is not up for this. They would like a walking path behind Veterans Memorial Park and any help from us would be welcome, but it sounds like they don't have staff to help.

Jim McManimon had mentioned that the D & R Greenway had funds for project at Watson Park. Maybe we can suggest to Ted Forst that it would be good to create a walking trail in the wooded area.

The pandemic had caused a lot of financial hardship and cutbacks both in funds and manpower. It was mentioned that the best way to maintain trails is usage; the more walkers use it the less maintenance it requires.

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- **Priya Vimalassery**

Priya is interested in the Green Amendment/ legislation and social media. Following the October presentation by Maya van Rossum, the Delaware Riverkeeper, Priya completed Leadership training for Green Amendment as she suggested.

New Jersey needs to get 3/5's of legislator's support from the Senate and the Assembly to get an amendment on state ballot. We had hoped to get a resolution in support of the Green Amendment from

¹ Sustainable Jersey's website <https://sustainablejersey.com>



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Ewing Town Council at the end of 2020, but questions came up. Jennifer Keyes-Maloney volunteered to continue her efforts in its support in the coming year.

It was suggested that we post that our group is working on the Green Amendment on Facebook. Priya is an authorized Facebook user for our account. So, we welcome her content on our site.

Priya is also interested in the NJ single use plastic ban. She suggested that the Twp. pass an ordinance in support of the ban and supplementing it with a ban on plastic cutlery so that it would only be available to go and upon request.

Town Council is depending on the Green Team and the Environmental Commission to do public education and outreach on the statewide ban on single use plastic bags. When the state comes up with a branded outreach campaign with graphics and logos for the bag ban, it would be helpful. We have used the State's graphics for regular recycling promotion. It was suggested that we contact Steve Rinaldi, who works at NJ DEP, a Ewing resident, who may be able to help with graphics.

Priya is also interested in supporting any efforts in dealing with the litter problem in Ewing. She has noticed it's bad between Lower and Upper Ferry Roads down to River Road.

Litter Discussion

An on-going problem is people putting televisions out by the curb – and they just sit there for months – basically forever because they are not going to be picked by either recycling people or the garbage people. Electronics are not recyclable along the curb; people are either too lazy or careless to take these tv's to the recycling depot on Scotch Road or take it to the semi-annual electronics disposal event held by Mercer County's MCIA.

If we could figure out a way to go around town to pick up all the discarded tv's along the curb and properly dispose these; it would be wonderful. These must be hazardous leaking toxins into the soil. But Lisa had investigated this and due to insurance liability of someone getting hurt picking these up or damaging their vehicles; no one is willing to take this on.

It was suggested that the Township have someone go around and tag these with some sort of violation sticker assigning responsibility to property, informing them that this must be removed and responsibly recycled. Whoever puts on sticker could take picture of the TB on the property so there is a record of where this is so the property owner can't deny that they are responsible. A financial penalty could be assigned, and a letter sent to property owner. Perhaps this aggressive approach would end this blight.

Part of the litter problem is due to college students, especially when they leave housing in spring. They discard furniture and trash is piled at curb; they're gone and don't care. There are no repercussions except for the property owners.

The litter problem around Home Depot area is bad again, especially around the stream area. We had worked with The Watershed for the stream cleanup in 2019 at the site and it was very successful. We had hoped the management of Home Depot would appreciate the major clean-up and want to maintain that moving forward. But they did little to keep their parking area or the stream area clean. When any Green Team Members spoke to their management; we were not welcomed as a community partner trying to help them. Sadly, we feel Home Depot can no longer be considered a good Ewing community partner caring for Ewing's best welfare by trying to maintain green, sustainable practices.



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We need to be sensitive to the many trash issues and help clean up the Township. Litter is a major problem everywhere. If we can get the message to the children in the schools; they can turn around and teach their parents. We can use a litter campaign. Maybe we could partner with the schools and Public Works. Try to work with 'Keep America Beautiful' campaign.

- **Joe Mirabella**

Joe is interested in creating an educational campaign to the Township on how it would save money if the Township changed grassy areas in parks to meadows. He suggested we take Council Members to Baldpate Mountain to show them how the beautiful their meadows are. It would be a multi-year project, but it does offer substantial savings in gas and manpower, if Public Works no longer had to cut the massive areas of grass. It would also be beneficial for animals and insects.

Ewing already has two areas that are already in the process of meadow conversion in partnership with Mercer County last year. It is a process that takes approximately three years to complete. We need to look at these areas this spring to see if they need some weeding for invasives.

- **Heidi Furman**

Heidi would like the group to do a public campaign on the importance of people learning to 'leave the leaves' on their properties rather than raking them up, bagging them, and having them hauled away. It would be more beneficial to mulch them in place and let the leaves help 'feed' the grass. Heidi has been doing this at the historic Benjamin Temple House.

She would also like to help with trail creation and maintenance. She would like to have a trail in the wooded area behind the Benjamin Temple House; we could try to get a grant and find a partner. However, we need to find out who owns the property behind the Temple House. We don't think it's the Township; it may be TCNJ or the County.

- **Gary Keel**

Garry is hopeful that we can run the bike ride again this September, especially now that people are getting vaccinations. This event lends itself to social distancing and it can be run independent of a Community Fest celebration this year. He figures we need about \$1,000 for the shirts and other miscellaneous expenses to have the event. Joe and Mark, along with Gary will start planning after Gary is done with tax season.

- **Lisa Feldman**

Lisa and Joanne were quite pleased with the 2nd Annual Scarecrow Scavenger Hunt and will plan for the 3rd Hunt for next October. It was very well-received. We were able to give out nice cash prizes due to the generosity of some Ewing residents, mostly Green Team members, and Scarecrow Committee people. We had People's Choice winners for both categories Residents and Businesses. We made sure there were no duplicate winners so more participants got to share in the prizes.

She is still a member of the Arts Commission but not much is going on currently. If we run the Garden Tours this year, we might that we might offer some craft projects for kids like painting birdhouses. Past Garden Tours had Ewing artists working in some of the gardens on the tour. These 'plein air' artists were very well received, and the Arts Commission would again be happy to help if things move forward this spring and summer and we're able to have garden tours this year.

- **Donna Morgan**

Donna did multiple clean-ups along the Delaware River, near the Scudders Falls where a lot of kayakers and picnickers go. There continued to be litter problems throughout the area, especially with less Public Workers helping to maintain the areas. There were small groups (social distancing maintained) that helped



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Donna; Heidi helped as well. The Watershed supplied bags to help with clean-ups along the Delaware.

She serves as our liaison with The Watershed for organizing our clean-up efforts along the waterways in Ewing. The Watershed Clean Up dates for this Spring are April 17th or 18th; or 24th or 25th from 9-11:00. We can offer some suggested locations. It remains to be determined whether they will be 'community-wide' or virtual, where volunteers work individually and report in. The status of the pandemic will be the determining factor.

April is a good time to clean up along streams; it's before all the brush has developed and the leaves are sparse. It's much easier to find and pull out the litter. The group consensus was for the April 24th date, location to be determined at a later date. Donna will coordinate with The Watershed.

- **Caroline Steward**

Caroline- will continue working on making neighborhood connections. She feels that this would be particularly useful when we're trying to set up activities by neighborhoods like a community clean-up event. We could target specific neighborhoods. Caroline also thinks it's time to do another rain barrel workshop.

- **Joanne Mullowney**

Joanne plans to continue her work on wildlife habitat creation in Ewing Township. We joined the National Wildlife Federation's Community Wildlife Habitat Project and we are working to certify Ewing as a community in this project. We need to encourage more residents to certify to increase number of wildlife habitats to help us in our quest to become certified as a Wildlife Habitat Certified Community. She is working with two TCNJ professors promoting gardening for wildlife. We're always looking for more ways to interact with TCNJ. This is a great way to get involved.

Joanne would like us to work on another community building project. A holiday lighting/decorating event that was requested by several residents following the Scavenger Hunt. We would encourage all residents/businesses who have special holiday displays to sign up to participate. We would create a map of all participants and residents would be able to drive around town to view their fellow citizens' displays and perhaps vote for their favorite. This would be similar to our People's Choice awards that we give away during the Scarecrow Scavenger Hunt (prizes to be determined). Joanne will talk to Jennifer Keyes-Malone (our Council Liaison this year) to see what type of financial support we can expect.

- **Mark**

Mark said Lori Winyard was the Operations Manager at TCNJ with whom he had a great relationship, however she has left and there is a new person with whom he would like to develop a relationship. Joanne asked Mark if he would like to head up the Energy Committee as John Hoegl has moved away. He will let us know. He would like to help educate our residents about solar power. Will also try moving forward on the Community Solar program, getting the best providers locally. New this year, if we want Sustainable Jersey credits for energy actions, committee members have to take a new training course that is being run by Sustainable Jersey. Mark volunteered to take the class with our partners in the Mercer County Sustainability Coalition last fall, but it was put off due to changes in the Direct Install program. We will take it when the changes have been completed.

Our next meeting will be on Wednesday, January 27th at 7:00 PM. The meeting adjourned at 11:12 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lisa Feldman

Secretary