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**CHATHAM BOROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL  
COMMISSION'S 2015 ANNUAL REPORT**

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2015 was another transitional year for the Environmental Commission. After several years of being the Chair of the Commission, John Tancredi decided it was someone else's turn to "step up to the plate" and Len Resto became the Chair. Kate Murphy became Vice-Chair. I would be remiss if I didn't thank John for his leadership and the outstanding job he did in leading the Commission. He did the job ably and I admired the "zen" like calm with which he handled any situation. I am thrilled he will remain on the Commission.

In September, 2015, Richard "Dick" Plambeck, who had served numerous years on the Environmental Commission, updated the Environmental Resource Inventory, developed the Explore Chatham series of walks, and later the Explore Chatham photography contest, among many, many other accomplishments, left the Commission to retire and move to Delaware. The entire Commission took Dick and his wife, Barbara, to a special dinner honoring Dick and his many, many accomplishments. Dick was also awarded the Hornaday Award by the Boy Scouts in recognition of his lifetime of service to scouting. The Environmental Commission had written a letter of recommendation to the National President of the Boy Scouts supporting this great honor. Dick's leaving the Commission is a huge loss to the Borough. He is and will be missed. Early in 2015; however, we gained two new members, Ben Lampert and Brendan Keating. Ben quickly took on the task of becoming the Commission's Secretary and Brendan was heavily involved in his efforts opposing the Pilgrim Pipeline project.

### **Projects Requiring Environmental Commission Approval**

There were no projects presented to the Commission from either the Planning Board or the Zoning Board of Adjustment for review and approval of the Environmental Commission in 2015.

### **Member Outreach**

Chatham's lifeblood is volunteerism. So it is with the Environmental Commission. The Commission continued its presence at the Farmer's Market as well as participating in the Fishawack Festival and the "new" Sustainability Fair, held on September 12, 2015. This fair was a combination of efforts between the Mayors' Wellness Committee and the former Green Fair sponsored by the Environmental Commission. Because of our intense recruitment efforts, we enter 2016 with a full complement of Commissioners for the first time in many years.

### **Commission "Service" Days**

1. **Spring Clean-Up**: A trail clean-up of the Shepard Kollock trails along the Passaic River took place on April 11, 2015. Unfortunately, volunteer turnout was light and not nearly as much could be accomplished. Much has yet to be done.
2. **Kelley's Pond**: After the annual Fishing Derby was well over, John Tancredi explored the area in and around Kelley's Pond and reported that the area is in need of a good clean-up, especially the restoration of the trail coming in from Jackson Ave. with the putting down of wood chips. This needs to be a priority in 2016.

3. **Rain Garden at Memorial Park:** Carl Cappabianca continues to be the maintenance keeper of the Rain Garden frequently stopping by during his runs through town and arranging for any new plantings needed in the fall. The Garden looks great.

### **Scout Projects**

1. **Erik Britt- Benches- Kelley's Pond Area:** Erik Britt appeared before the Environmental Commission seeking permission to construct benches and a kiosk at Kelley's Pond as his Eagle Scout project. Commissioners backed the idea and suggested the benches be anchored to avoid theft and vandalism.
2. **Van Benedict- Restoration of Trails at Wuhala Woods:** Van Benedict's Eagle Scout project involved restoring the trails at Wuhala Woods, which after 4 years of neglect, had essentially disappeared. The Commissioners made some suggestions; but, backed the project. Van completed the project in December, 2015 and it is a vast improvement over what was there just two months prior.

The Environmental Commission is proud of these young leaders who have stepped forward to provide Chatham with environmental improvements which will serve the community for years. In addition, the Commission is grateful to the Boy Scout troops, as well as the Girl Scouts, who have been so supportive of the Environmental Commission.

### **Eco-Film Series**

Kate Murphy continued her efforts in providing topical content in the Commission's ongoing Eco-Film series. These films are presented at the Library of the Chathams mainly on the first Thursday of each month. Attendance has ranged from a low of 4 individuals to a high of 23. In 2016, the Commission will try a new approach by making the Eco-Film series all about catering to children. We will experiment with programs at the Library on selected Saturday mornings for children age 7 and under and see if we cannot boost attendance.

### **Recycling**

Dick Plambeck reported that Chatham remains at the top of the list in terms of recycled tonnage according to MCMUA reports. We rank #1 in Morris County on a "per resident" basis for the amount recycled per person. The MCMUA has spoken with the Commission indicating that they are seeing more and more glass bottles/jars broken when being recycled, which makes the job of recycling tougher or impossible. MCMUA cautions residents to not throw glass jars/bottles into the recycling bin to avoid breakage. Another source of problems has to do with dirty bottles/jars of glass and plastic containers. The biggest "offenders" are jars of jams, jellies and peanut butter. If not rinsed or cleaned out, the plastic cannot be lifted by the air machines used to segregate plastic from glass. It forces MCMUA to have to manually separate items or send such items into regular trash and takes away from our recycling tonnage credit.

## **Sustainability Fair (Formerly the “Green Fair”)**

The former Annual Green Fair of the Chathams was combined with the Mayors’ Wellness Committee’s “Wellness” Fair and called a “Sustainability Fair” and was held on September 12<sup>th</sup>. Over 25 vendors participated along with several entertainers and the venue was changed from the area around the Gazebo at Reasoner Park to the South Parking Lot of the Train Station next to the Farmer’s Market. The end result was traffic from the Farmer’s Market gravitated to the Sustainability Fair and all vendors were patronized. Vendors felt the new venue was better than Reasoner Park since in the event of rain, they didn’t have to deal with mud. We intend to continue the Sustainability Fair in 2016.

## **Grants**

1. ***\$2,000 Sustainable Jersey Grant- Various:*** In 2014, the Commission applied for and was awarded a \$2,000 Sustainable Jersey grant to fund various Commission initiatives. These included items such as Anti-Idling signs, course expenses and a Direct Install initiative. During 2015, Sustainable Jersey granted us an extension to use the grant monies and we will use the funds for the Direct Install breakfast and the Environmental Commission’s first ever “Eco-Friendly” awards.

## **Explore Chatham Photo Contest**

Dick Plambeck conducted the successful “Explore Chatham Photo Contest” where any resident was able to participate and submit photos for consideration. The awards were made on March 14<sup>th</sup> at the Firehouse and Kate Murphy assisted in the judging of submissions. We will be planning on having this as an annual event.

## **Environmental Resource Inventory (ERI) Update**

Prior to his departing for Delaware, Commissioner Plambeck updated sections of the ERI which was submitted to the Planning Board for inclusion in the Borough’s Master Plan. Given that the Master Plan is due for its update in 2016, we are holding off having the updated ERI included in the current Master Plan until the update is completed in 2016.

## **Solar Energy**

After years of waiting, the Morris County Board of Chosen Freeholders approved the funds needed to install Solar Panels on the roof of Chatham High School. It is anticipated that the panels will provide a very significant portion of the school’s energy needs and that the project will pay for itself in less than two years.

## **Awards**

As mentioned previously, Richard “Dick” Plambeck received Scouting’s highest tribute, the William T. Hornaday Gold Badge Award, for his many years of service to Scouting and to the environment and his community.

DPW’s Stan Serbanica received an award from MCMUA in recognition of the Borough’s exemplary recycling program. Stan is to be commended for leading the recycling effort year in and year out.

### **Sustainable Jersey**

In 2015, Chatham needed to re-apply for either Bronze or Silver Certification from Sustainable Jersey. Chatham had last applied in 2012 and had received Silver Certification plus earned the Champion Award that year for having accumulated the most points possible for medium-sized communities between 10,000 and 39,999 residents.

In 2013, the Green Initiatives Committee was absorbed into the Environmental Commission as a “Green Team” sub-committee. The sub-committee, with assistance from the Environmental Commission, kept Sustainable Jersey activities on-track for its 2015 certification. I am pleased to report that not only did we maintain our Certification; but, we did so at the Silver level and we, again, earned the Champion Award in our category earning 505 out of a possible 550 points. This is an incredible achievement when you consider that other municipalities have paid staff who are solely responsible for Sustainable Jersey! We received our awards and recognition at the Sustainable Jersey Annual Luncheon held in conjunction with the New Jersey League of Municipalities Convention in Atlantic City. Mayor Harris accepted the awards on behalf of the Borough.

### **Pilgrim Pipeline**

The Advisory Committee gained a new member in Bill Fuller, who has expertise in the oil & gas industry; but, lost a key member in Dick Plambeck upon his retirement and move to Delaware. We continue to seek qualified members to serve in 2016. The Committee held two conference calls with Pilgrim Pipeline officials who responded to the questions we posed to them. We had shared with them, in advance, the likely topics we were to address without sending specific questions. The sessions were useful in determining what Pilgrim was thinking as of the point in time that we spoke with them. Locally, Chatham Citizens Against the Pipeline continues its outreach effort opposing the pipeline. On 2/25/15, a major rally was held in Madison, led by former Governor Dick Codey, as well as other significant elected officials, in opposition to the pipeline. I was unable to attend as I was on a business trip in Europe; however, Brendan Keating kindly filled in and provided an excellent presentation on the pipeline, the potential impacts and what people can do.

During the spring, 2015, Vice-Chair Kate Murphy and Commission Liaison Alida Kass attended a meeting of the Alliance for Action where representatives of Pilgrim Pipeline were speaking. They spoke of the great value of the pipeline and how it would benefit New Jersey and bring “many” union jobs to the state. There was nothing new presented that hadn’t been presented previously.

As 2015 moved on, more and more municipalities either directly or indirectly impacted by the Pilgrim Pipeline passed resolutions in opposition to the Pipeline. The N.J. State Assembly passed a resolution in opposition; however, the Senate bill remains bottled up. Some municipalities have changed their land-use laws banning pipelines as a “permitted use”. In Chatham Borough, we believe our Land-Use Laws are such that anything that is not stated is not permitted and we have rejected efforts to change our law.

On two occasions, the Environmental Commission wrote to the CEO of PSE&G urging them in our first letter to not allow Pilgrim the use of the PSE&G right-of-way for their project. When PSE&G preliminarily denied Pilgrim that right, the Environmental Commission wrote to the CEO of PSE&G thanking them for their stance and imploring them to stand firm.

On behalf of the Environmental Commission, I express our appreciation for being able to serve Chatham in our capacity as environmental stewards and for the cooperation we receive from Borough elected officials and Borough government.

Respectfully submitted,

Len Resto  
Chair  
Environmental Commission  
December 31, 2015

Cc: Kate Murphy- Vice-Chair