

The City of Newark

Conservation Advisory Commission

Annual Report for 2020

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CAC Accomplishments Summary - 2020

This report summarizes the work of the City of Newark's Conservation Advisory Commission in 2020. The CAC achieved two-thirds of its goals for 2020, which is an accomplishment in and of itself given that we had to work virtually after our March meeting due to the global pandemic. Our success in 2020 is because of the good efforts of CAC members, City staff, and community partners.

It should be noted that the CAC uses the City of Newark's new Sustainability Plan as a guide for our annual goals and activities. The CAC was an active and important contributor to the creation of Newark's first ever sustainability plan in 2019. After its adoption by City Council in November 2019, the CAC was tasked with monitoring and encouraging progress toward its goals. Although the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic this year have slowed non-essential activities across the city, the CAC's accomplishments described in this report advances the implementation of the *Sustainability Plan for Newark*.

The CAC's achievements in 2020 include the following:

1. **Help Citizens Take Conservation Actions:** The CAC continues to raise citizen awareness about the importance of conservation by: 1) partnering with the Newark Post to publish a monthly Conservation Corner article written by a CAC member; 2) creating social media posts on the city's Facebook page; 3) participating in City outreach efforts such as Newark Community Day (canceled in 2020 due to the pandemic.)
2. **Promote the Planting of Native Trees & Shrubs:** CAC was unable to organize the 3rd annual Newark Reforestation Day due to the pandemic. Instead, the CAC implemented a small effort to plant native shrubs and trees at Curtis Mill Park. The CAC also provided input to the Parks and Recreation Department on the re-writing of the Landscape Screening and Treatment Ordinance, both through representation on the task force and as a body considering the final ordinance. (November meeting)
3. **Reduce Plastic Straw Use in the City:** The CAC provided guidance to the City Manager's Office about a City Council resolution to encourage city restaurants to reduce the use of plastic straws in order to decrease the straws heading to landfills. The CAC also worked with city staff to create fliers for an information campaign to encourage less straw usage. (January and November meeting)
4. **Raise Citizen and Police Department Awareness of Newark's Anti-Idling Ordinance for Clean Air:** The CAC discussed with the Newark Police Department the challenges to enforcing the ordinance. The CAC also began a social media campaign to discourage idling. Idling continues to be a contributor to air pollution in the city.
5. **Green the City's Building Code:** In August, the CAC recommended that City Council accept the revisions to the city's Building Code developed by the Green Building Subcommittee of the Planning Commission in order to foster the construction of more sustainable buildings. (February & August meetings)
6. **Promote Green Energy in the City:** In May, the CAC allocated \$80,000 of its \$100,000 Green Energy Funding for 2020 to partially pay for the city's Seiberlich Trane Energy Efficiency Solar Project. The CAC also provided the Planning Department with names of potential members of

the city's new Newark Energy Transition Commission. In addition, the CAC discussed the citizen-generated idea of allowing Newark's electricity customers to purchase 100% renewable energy.

7. Other Work of Note:

- **Support an Innovative Food Waste Recycling Grant Proposal at UD:** The CAC provided a letter of support for a UD proposal to the National Science Foundation to divert food waste from landfills.
- **Research Newark's Animal Sheltering Ordinance:** The CAC researched this ordinance to see if it needs to be updated as it seems to prohibit citizens to have bird feeders, bat houses and/or bee hives.

Additional details about each of these accomplishments are below. More information can be found in the CAC meeting minutes that are available on the City's website and from the City Secretary's office. The minutes contain detailed descriptions of the presentations to the CAC and of the CAC's discussions.

Help Citizens Take Conservation Actions

- (a) **Newark Post Conservation Corner Articles by CAC:** Since December 2019, the CAC provides the Newark Post with a monthly article about conservation issues facing the city to increase public awareness about conservation issues and suggest actions that citizens can take to increase the city's sustainability. The articles are called "Conservation Corner" and are read each month by up to 2,000 readers, according to the editor of the Newark Post. Topics covered include: Newark's Sustainability Plan and sustainability attitudes, renewable energy, electric cars, anti-idling, storm water, plastic pollution, recycling, habitat and conservation landscaping, reforestation and environmental impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. All of this year's articles can be found through a search on the Newark Post's website. We plan to continue to make submissions in 2021.
- (b) **CAC Facebook Posts:** Since January 2020, the CAC is creating monthly social media posts on the City of Newark's Facebook page to provide citizens with how they can increase the city's sustainability and with information about the City of Newark's conservation policies. CAC member, Robyn O'Halloran, coordinates posts with the city's chief communication officer, Jayme Gravell, to develop a social media distribution plan. CAC has posted about the monthly conservation corner article topics, an infographic to raise awareness about City Council's resolution to reduce straw usage in the city, and the city's anti-idling ordinance and why it matters.
- (c) **Community Day:** The CAC made plans to have a table at Community Day like every year in order to hear from citizens about the sustainability concerns and raise awareness about conservation issues. In July, the CAC approved the purchase of \$1400.00 in conservation themed items (reusable shopping bags, reusable straws and CAC branded phone wallet) to distribute at Newark Community Day. Unfortunately, Community Day was canceled and the CAC will use these items at the so the CAC will use these items at the next event.

Promote the Planting of Native Trees and Shrubs in Newark

- a) **Newark Reforestation Day** - Due to the pandemic, the CAC was unable to host the third annual Newark Reforestation Day in November 2020. The reforestation day is the result of a CAC recommendation passed by City Council in March 2018. We look forward to planning the 2021 reforestation day.
- b) **Curtis Mill Planting by CAC** – In July, CAC member Sheila Smith presented the commission with a project to improve wildlife habitat at the water treatment works facility adjoining the city’s Curtis Mill Park. Smith proposed planting a variety of native trees, shrubs, perennial grasses and wildflowers on the perimeter of pond 3. CAC approved \$400.00 to pay for 6 trees, 5 shrubs and a variety of perennials. The layout plan was coordinated with Tim Filasky, Director of Public Works & Water Resources, and included two large perennial beds as well as 3 keystone plants which are plants valued for supporting native insects. It was implemented by CAC members Sheila Smith and Mary Clary Matsumoto, with the help of a community volunteer.
- c) **Updated Landscape Screening and Treatment Ordinance.** CAC member Sheila Smith was an active member in the task force asked to develop revisions to the Landscape Screening and Treatment Ordinance to ensure the preservation of trees and especially forested areas on newly developed plots to the extent possible. The CAC recommended that City Council accept the revisions to the ordinance, which will improve the retention and replacement of trees and shrubs during development projects within the city. This is the culmination of roughly a year of input from the CAC to the City’s Parks and Recreation Department as it worked on updating and revising the ordinance.

Reduce Plastic Straw Use in the City

- a) **Straw Resolution Researched and Recommended for Approval by City Council:** In December 2018, the CAC invited the Newark Charter School’s marine science club to present their research into proven public policies designed to decrease the use of single-use plastic straws. In early 2019, the CAC recommended that City Council consider one of three policy options: 1) ban the distribution of single-use disposable plastic straws at restaurants and other food service establishments; 2) adopt a city-wide policy whereby restaurants and food establishments only provide straws on request; 3) phase in the ban over a 2 year period while starting with the request-only option. City Council chose option 2 and requested that CAC provide assistance to the City Manager’s Office to draft a resolution encouraging restaurants and other food service establishments to only provide straws by request. In 2020, the CAC provided input and guidance to the City Manager’s Office, which resulted in the City Council passing a Resolution Requesting that Restaurants and Commercial Establishments in the City of Newark Distribute Single-Use Plastic Straws by Request Only.
- b) **Citizen Education about the City’s Straw Resolution:** Council requested CAC assistance in tracking the impact of the resolution on the use of single-use plastic straws and in raising restaurant and citizen awareness about the resolution. CAC partnered with the City Manager’s Office to create a printed and virtual information flyer and social media posts

about the straw resolution that can be used to raise awareness of the resolution and steps restaurants and individuals can take to stop using plastic straws. In December, the CAC approved the expenditure of \$500 to print bookmarks about the straw resolution and the negative environmental consequences of single-use plastic straws that can be distributed at the Newark Free Library. Further, the CAC is preparing a database of straw usage by restaurants in Newark that can be used to track the impact of the straw resolution.

Raise Citizen and Police Department Awareness of Newark’s Anti-Idling Ordinance to Help Clean our City’s Air

- Idling (gas burning) cars remains a problem in the city. The CAC reached out to the Newark Police Department to understand the challenges related to enforcing the city ordinance. In addition, the CAC started an anti-idling social and print media public education campaign in partnership with the City Manager’s Office to raise awareness about why idling is bad for the environment and public health.

Update the Green Building Code

- The Green Building Code Work Group, established by the Planning Commission, developed revisions to the provisions in the zoning code for green building practices. These revisions put into our law some of the sustainable practices recommended by the Sustainability Plan. Over the course of several meetings, the CAC provided feedback and ultimately added its positive recommendation. City Council adopted the proposal in September 2020.

Promote Green Energy in Newark

- a) **Partially Fund the City’s Energy Efficiency Solar Project.** In July, the CAC committed \$80,000 of its 2020 Green Energy Fund budget to support the City’s contract with Seiberlich Trane to improve the energy efficiency of its operations and install solar panels on city buildings. Both of these moves are major components of the Sustainability Plan.
- b) **Help Form the City of Newark’s new Newark Energy Transition Commission.** The CAC assisted the Planning and Development Department to refine the role of the Newark Energy Transition (NET) Commission envisioned by the Sustainability Plan. We also submitted a list of proposed members for the NET Commission in May and again in July.
- c) **Consider the Merits of Allowing City Electricity Customers to Purchase 100% Renewable Energy.** The CAC considered an idea provided by a citizen whereby new customers would automatically be opted in for 100% renewables with an option to opt out while existing customers would need to request to opt-in.

CAC Creation Ordinance – 1977

City ordinance 77-56 created the CAC in November 1977,

“to advise in the development, management, and protection of its natural resources with appropriate consideration of Newark’s human and economic resources. The Commission shall concern itself with conservation in its broadest sense and may, among its activities: (a) Recommend to City Council a program for ecologically suitable utilization of all wet lands, valley streams, and flood plains and other land areas, the condition and use of which will affect

the environmental quality of life in the City of Newark; (b) Shall file an annual report; (c) Maintain informal liaison with the Planning Commission, the Parks and Recreation Department, the City Manager, and the City Council, and cooperate with other public and private bodies organized for similar purposes; (d) In addition to the foregoing, carry out any other duties, tasks, or responsibilities, consistent with the objectives of this Commission assigned to it by resolution of City Council.”

Ordinance 77-56 gave examples of programs that may be considered by the Commission, such as street tree replacement; improved recycling; beautification plans for volunteer groups; guidelines for multiple use of open space and public areas; community gardens; energy conservation; and review of Zoning Code amendments to encourage conservation, and also stated that “the above list shall not, however, limit the program which the Commission may undertake or be requested to undertake.”

CAC Membership

The CAC has 9 members when all positions are filled, serving staggered 3-year terms. As of January 2021, the CAC is missing two members. The volunteers serving on the CAC are listed below. George Irvine served as chair throughout 2020, while Bob McDowell served as co-chair. Sheila Smith and Robyn O’Halloran were elected by the CAC in December to serve as chair and co-chair, respectively, in 2021. Their terms are for one year per CAC bylaws.

Appointment Type	CAC Member	Term Expiration Date
Mayor’s Appointment	vacant	
Mayor’s Appointment	Beth Chajes	3/15/21
Mayor’s Appointment	Robyn O’Halloran (Co-Chair, 2021)	3/15/22
District 1	Helga Huntley	3/15/22
District 2	vacant	
District 3	Bob McDowell (Co-Chair, 2020)	3/15/21
District 4	Sheila Smith (Chair, 2021)	3/15/20
District 5	George Irvine (Chair, 2020)	3/15/21
District 6	Mary Clare Matsumoto	3/15/22

An updated CAC roster is maintained on the City’s web site at www.cityofnewarkde.us/DocumentCenter/Home/View/620 (pdf format). Secretarial services are provided to the CAC by a member of the City Secretary’s office; Nichol Scheld served as secretary to the CAC in 2020.

CAC Goals for 2021

For 2021, the CAC is planning to:

- Continue the CAC’s Outreach & Education efforts via social media posts on the city’s Facebook page, presence at Newark’s Community Day, and monthly articles in the Newark Post (on-going goal.)
- Continue to grow the Newark Reforestation Day for the Fall 2021 by getting more tree donations and involvement of volunteers from corporations and organizations (on-going goal.)
- Recommend to City Council that it give customers the choice to only purchase 100% renewable electricity and that all new customers be automatically enrolled in the program, with an option to opt out.

- Assist city staff with increasing and tracking Newark restaurants' voluntary compliance with the city's new straw reduction resolution.
- Promote the Better Newark Award, as part of the CAC's outreach efforts, so there is greater citizen interest in conservation behavior. We may re-name it the Newark Sustainability Award.
- Educate the public about the importance of riparian buffer zones (hold over goal from 2020.)
- Promote the use of electric cars by the City of Newark and by residents to reduce carbon emissions and increase revenue for the City via increased electricity sales.
- Promote open space in Newark (hold over goal from 2020.)
- Continue to train more of its members on FOIA by coordinating with the City Secretary's Office, following the recommendation of the 2016 Boards and Commissions Review.
- Evaluate the City's progress toward achieving its Sustainability Plan for Newark.