

## CONSERVATION ADVISORY COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT – 2021

### 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 wetlands, 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 nine members when all positions are filled, serving staggered 3-year terms. As of January 2021, Sheila Smith and Robyn O’Halloran were elected by the CAC in December to serve as chair and co-chair. Their terms are for one year per CAC bylaws.

APPOINTMENT TYPE	CAC MEMBER TERM	EXPIRATION DATE
Mayor’s Appointment	Jean Hedrick	3/15/24
Mayor’s Appointment	John Mateyko	3/15/23
Mayor’s Appointment	Vacant	
District 1	Helga Huntley	3/15/22
District 2	Beth Chajes	3/15/23
District 3	Andrew O’Donnell	3/15/24
District 4	Sheila Smith (Chair 2021)	3/15/23
District 5	Vacant	
District 6	Mary Clare Matsumoto	3/15/22

An updated CAC roster is maintained on the City’s website at [www.cityofnewarkde.us/DocumentCenter/Home/View/620](http://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 2021.

## **THE CAC'S ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2021 INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:**

### **COLLABORATION WITH THE NEWARK PARTNERSHIP**

CAC and TNP collaborated on two fledgling city-wide efforts, Public education and outreach supporting the City Council's adoption of a plan to reduce the use of non-recyclable plastic straws and a Lights Out Newark program to reduce the lighting that contributes to wild bird mortality during spring and fall migration. These efforts and other collaborations with TNP will be on going.

### **ANTI -IDLING**

The Anti-idling Law was passed by Newark City Council in 2009. The intent of the law, proposed through a CAC resolution to council, was to protect our air quality by reducing nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide and ozone in the air and to reduce greenhouse gases. The pollution from car exhaust is damaging to lungs and exacerbates respiratory illnesses such as asthma. In 2009 signs were dispersed around the city. An inventory of signs placed indicates that there are additional locations where signs still should be installed. The owner of the Park and Shop shopping center on S. Main has agreed to post signs. A design for cards to be dispersed to drivers was created for a public education effort. More signage is needed, and cards need to be printed. (Sustainability Plan Goal 4.7 B)

### **ELECTRIC VEHICLES**

CAC recommended that going forward, the city replace old vehicles with EVs as opposed to gas or diesel vehicles. Council voted to do so "whenever possible." CAC voted to contribute the remaining \$20,000 of their annual budget to the city's effort to install an additional dual-port electric vehicle charging station. The CAC will continue to support the city's efforts to electrify its fleet including police cars. (Sustainability Plan Goal 2.2 B)

### **PLASTIC STRAW BAN**

In 2020, the City Council requested CAC assistance in providing public education in support of the resolution that Newark restaurants provide single-use straws upon request only. Due to Covid-19 a restaurant tabletop flyer design was adapted into a bookmark and one thousand bookmarks were distributed at the Newark free library and to students at the Newark Charter School. A survey regarding plastic straw usage, was distributed to Newark restaurants on-line through The Newark Partnership. There were only two responses despite the survey being sent out twice. The CAC is working with the Newark Partnership and is hoping to be able to have an in-person meeting with restaurant owners to discuss tabletop flyers for use in the restaurants. Covid concerns have made outreach more difficult, but we hope to revive this effort to reduce plastic waste. (Sustainability Plan goal 4.6 B)

### **RENEWABLE ENERGY**

In January, City Council unanimously approved the CAC's recommendation to adopt an optional 100% renewable energy program for all its electric customers. The program allows Newark's electric customers to choose to pay a premium, as set by the city manager, to ensure that 100% of their electricity needs are met from renewable sources beyond those in the city's general portfolio. New customers are automatically enrolled, but may opt out, while existing customers must opt into this program. The program went into effect on May 25, following a short testing period, during which CAC members assisted city staff in verifying a smooth implementation. By September 2, 2021, 4071 new accounts had been enrolled through the automatic subscription

program (with forty-five others having opted out), and 220 residents with existing accounts had opted into the program. (Sustainability Plan goal 3.1 B)

### **PLANTING/REFORESTATION DAY**

COVID 19 restrictions have prevented the CAC from observing our Reforestation Day program 2021. The plantings from the reforestation day of Fall 2019 in Redd Park were assessed. twenty-seven out of the sixty-six plants lived (survival rate of 41%). The ground covers did better than the trees. The parks supervisor has recommended that future plantings in Redd Park be focused on establishing ground cover. The city will be looking for another site for 2022. (Sustainability Plan goal 4.3 B)

### **GREENHOUSE GAS INVENTORY**

In June, the CAC members unanimously supported the allocation of \$79,000.00 of its Green Energy Fund budget to support a comprehensive GHG (Greenhouse gas) inventory study to be conducted by AECOM. The study will establish baseline emissions levels against which future emissions reductions can be measured. The scope of the inventory will incorporate the entire geographic area within city boundaries (exclusive of the University of Delaware campus), including emissions generated by buildings, vehicles, and waste. AECOM will use the baseline year of 2018 or 2019, depending on the availability of data. Release of the inventory report is expected in early 2022. (Sustainability Plan goal 1.4 B)

### **LIGHTS OUT NEWARK**

Newark City Council adopted the CAC resolution that the city joins The University of Delaware and The Newark Partnership to institute a Lights Out Newark program. Lights Out is a nationwide initiative to turn off or dim lights at night during the spring and fall bird migration. Bird populations are falling due to environmental pressures including light pollution. The Public Works department will complete its streetlight dimming capability in 2022. This allows for a 30% reduction in street lighting between the hours of midnight and sunrise during the migration months of April, May, September, and October. (Sustainability Plan goal 3.3)

### **NEWARK POST CONSERVATION CORNER ARTICLES BY CAC**

Since December 2019, the CAC provides the Newark Post with a monthly article 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." All this year's articles can be found through a search on the Newark Post's website. According to the Newark Post editor Conservation Corner is a popular column. Topics covered in 2021 were:

**January** - *Plastic Bag Ban One Step Closer to a Cleaner Environment* - Robyn O'Halloran

**February** - *Making Newark a Great, Green Place to Live – The CAC's work in 2020* - George Irvine

**March** - *Getting Ready for Another Summer with the Spotted Lantern Fly* - Sheila Smith

**April** - *How to Get Started with Backyard Composting* - Mary Clare Matsumoto

**May** - *Newarkers Commit to Renewable Energy* - Helga Huntley

**June** - *Why You Should Convert Your Lawn into a Wildlife Habitat* – Sheila Smith

**July** - *In the Decade of Decarbonization, Everyone Has a Role to Play* - Beth Chajes

**August** - *Light's Out to Save Birds Lives* - Sheila Smith

**September** - *Taking Care of the River Edge to Reduce Flooding Risk* - Helga Huntley

**December** - *Trees and Our Healthy Community* – Sheila Smith

## **CAC GOALS FOR 2022**

1. Continue outreach efforts, including Newark Post columns and tabling at public events as possible.
2. Continue to develop collaborations with The Newark Partnership and the University of Delaware on environmental and educational initiatives.
3. Track and regularly evaluate the City's progress toward achieving its Sustainability Plan goals for Newark.
4. Continue to support the efforts to grow the City's tree canopy goal (SP goal 4.3)
5. Explore nature-based solutions to address Newark's vulnerability to urban heating and flooding (SP goals 4.3 and 4.5)
6. Promote the use of electric cars by the City of Newark and by residents to reduce carbon emissions. (SP goal 2.3)
7. Promote open space in Newark (SP goal 4.4)
8. Develop and maintain a welcome packet for new CAC members, including FOIA compliance and training opportunities
9. Investigate actions to improve conditions for biodiversity within the City's boundaries (SP goal 4.4)
10. Urge City Council to form the Newark Energy Transition committee, so that we can get serious about transitioning to carbon-free energy. (SP goal 1.3)
11. Use the forthcoming GHG inventory to formulate intermediate goals toward net-zero to propose to City Council. (SP goal 1.4)
12. Establish next steps for the renewable energy program. (SP goal 1.1)
13. Support the development of solar energy within the city by organizing a Newark-based solar tour as part of the statewide Delaware Solar Tour event in October – to be led by Ms. Chajes
14. Explore opportunities for Newark to participate in sustainability-related city coalitions e.g., Mayors & Municipal Leaders for Electrification, Ready for one hundred, RASCL (Resilient and Sustainable Communities League)