

The Borough of Metuchen

May 4, 2020



Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions

2020 Open Space Stewardship Grants for Environmental Commissions

Centennial Park Rehabilitation and Invasive Species Project

Section I

Application Form

2020 ANJEC: Open Space Grants for Environmental Commissions
Centennial Park Rehabilitation and Invasive Species Project
Borough of Metuchen

Organization Information:

Municipality: Borough of Metuchen

County: Middlesex County

Phone: 732-632-8540

Mailing address of municipality: 500 Main Street Borough of Metuchen, NJ 08840

Environmental Commission Contact Person (person responsible for application):

Name: Mark Herzberg

Email: sherberg3@verizon.net

Home address: 24 Clinton Place Metuchen NJ 08840

Day and cell phones: 732-372-8119

Environmental Commission Chairman:

Name: Mark Herzberg

Day or cell phone: 732-372-8119

Email: sherberg3@verizon.net

Municipal Manager/Administrator:

Name: Melissa Perilstein

Email: mperilstein@metuchen.com

Phone: 732-632-8509

Year Environmental Commission was established by ordinance:1973

Is your Commission a member of ANJEC? **Yes** / N

Project Information:

Title: Centennial Park Entranceway and Trail Rehabilitation Improvements

Amount being requested from ANJEC: \$1,500.00

Project Description (Limit 900 words):

What will you do? Who? When? How? Objectives? – Address and number items #1 – 6 on “How applications will be evaluated.”

- 1. Completeness – Does the application include a full description of deliverables, schedule and budget, including who will supervise and/or carry out each major task, when and how?**

The Borough of Metuchen’s Environmental Commission, in collaboration with the Borough’s Department of Recreation and Department of Public Works, requests \$1,500.00 for the rehabilitation of the entranceway and walking trail at Centennial Park. Centennial Park is a 13-acre public park extending from Grove Avenue to Wakefield Avenue and is the largest natural open space in the Borough. The land was originally purchased with a matching grant from a New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Green Acres bond issued to preserve the natural environment for passive recreation. Access along the walking path is provided by a hand-made wooden bridge over an area of uneven terrain. Centennial Park is home to many large trees, wildlife, birds, and areas of dense undergrowth where a natural ecosystem can thrive. Since its acquisition, Centennial Park has seen a drop-off in resident engagement to the area largely due to the lack of accessibility to the park due to the dilapidated state of the Park entranceway and lack of maintenance to the walking trail.

Centennial Park is a heavily wooded area. Due to some extreme weather events and unabated overgrowth of invasive vegetation, the park has lost much utility to facilitate recreational opportunities as the walking path and entranceway have both become inundated with fallen trees, poison ivy, invasive plant species, overgrowth of vegetation, and garbage. The Borough’s main priorities with this project are to improve the entranceway and the walking path, restore the trail surface at the Park entranceway, and combat the explosive spread of invasive species. Clearing the walking path will be a joint effort between the Department of Public Works and Commission members, as well as local volunteers. The Borough will utilize the assistance of local residents and organizations like the Scouts to help clear the park of trash, invasive species, and fallen trees. Invasive species are capable of damaging and killing native plants, reducing biodiversity, competing with native organisms for limited resources, and altering habitats, so it is important that these plants are removed. In Centennial Park, invasive species largely are present in the form of trees like the Norway Maple and Tree-of Heaven; shrubs such as Japanese barberry and Multiflora rose; vines like Japanese honeysuckle and Oriental bittersweet; and other plants like the Japanese knotweed and garlic mustard. We propose to remove invasive plants from targeted areas and replacing them with appropriate native species. Involving local volunteers like residents and the Scouts in the removal effort will offer the opportunity for the Environmental Commission to teach proper landscaping techniques and the importance of environmental protection to youth and other residents in the community.

Additionally, the Borough would like to purchase and spread woodchips and gravel along the paths at the entranceway of the Park. The Department of Public Works often has a surplus of wood chips from their landscaping maintenance work, so this is a cost-effective way for the Borough to improve the integrity of the soil on the trails at Centennial Park. Gravel is similarly inexpensive to purchase and will operate as a stabilizing material and reduce erosion on the unpaved driveway at the entrance of the Park. Wood chips will improve the integrity of the soil

in this area by cooling and slowing the evaporation of water out of the soil, improving the appearance of the landscape, helping to regulate soil temperatures, and serving as a path material to prevent dusty conditions. To offer further educational opportunities to Borough residents, the Metuchen Environmental Commission will create and distribute educational materials, on social media and at outreach events, which will detail the importance of environmental preservation activities, including identification of invasive species, and highlight the work being done at Centennial Park.

2 Budget - Did the commission research and itemize major costs in preparing the budget and determining the amount requested? An application without an itemized budget will not qualify for a grant. Include all major costs, whether covered by grant funds or other funding sources.

The total budget for this project is \$1,500.00. The Borough is confident in the ability of the volunteers and the Department of Public Works to accomplish this project at this cost. Further budget details can be seen in the charts at the end of this grant proposal.

3 Additional Resources – Does the application list any community partners committed to and/or contributing to the project? Obtain commitment from the partner organizations before listing them.

The Borough of Metuchen Environmental Commission will work with the following partners who will be involved in the rehabilitation and promotion of Centennial Park:

- Borough of Metuchen Recreation Department
- Borough of Metuchen Department of Public Works
- Borough of Metuchen Green Team
- Local Volunteers

The Metuchen Environmental Commission is confident that these partnerships will help ensure that this project is successful. The Borough will engage the community through the creation of an educational brochure, use of Borough and Environmental Commission social media and enlisting volunteers for regular park maintenance. DPW staff will be responsible for the labor of this project, with the active participation of Environmental Commission members and local resident volunteers. The collaboration with local organizations like the Scouts will not only provide additional assistance in park restoration, clean-up and maintenance activities, but also will allow for increased community engagement and education in the work being done by the Environmental Commission. Volunteers will gain practical and educational experience on how to remove invasive plant species, select and plant native species, and perform related landscaping techniques during this effort. This project will help promote Centennial Park's utility to Borough residents and highlight the work of the Environmental Commission among residents.

4 Environmental Commission benefit - How will the Environmental Commission use this project to raise its long-term visibility among residents and the governing body? Describe specific outreach tasks

Rehabilitation of this important public park aligns with the Borough of Metuchen's vision for a sustainable community that thrives through commitment to environmental protection. This project entails active outreach to residents and has a number of important objectives. First, this project will restore and enhance the walking trails, entranceway and ecosystem of Centennial Park. This will positively benefit the wildlife and native species of plants that call this area home including:

- Mammals:
 - Eastern Gray Squirrel
 - Red Fox
 - Eastern Cottontail Rabbit
 - Eastern Chipmunk
- Birds:
 - Great Horned Owl
 - Downy Woodpecker
 - Black-capped Chickadee
 - Gray Catbird
 - Red-tailed Hawk
- Plants:
 - Sweetgum
 - Pin Oak
 - Red Oak
 - Tulip Poplar
 - Sycamore
 - White Pine
 - Red Maple
 - Beech
 - Hickory
 - American Holly

The second objective of this project is to increase the presence of the Environmental Commission and to expand their engagement with Borough residents. This will be accomplished through the creation and distribution of the educational brochure, posting of education information on Borough and Environmental Commission social media, the promotion of improvements to the park, and through partnerships with local organizations in the effort to rehabilitate and clean up Centennial Park. The Environmental Commission will use this project to engage and educate volunteers on invasive species removal, native species selection and planting, appropriate landscaping methods, and the need for environmental conservation in Metuchen.

In its current state, Centennial Park can be considered unkempt, overgrown, and untraversable, with a deteriorating vegetative ecosystem. Through this rehabilitation project, the Borough will demonstrate the tangible, visible impact that the Metuchen Environmental Commission can facilitate within the community. Continued outreach and education surrounding the Borough's public parks will provide for greater collaboration with community partners, residents, and Borough leadership to protect and enhance the natural environments within Metuchen.

5. Impact on the community - Does the application explain how residents or others will be informed and/or included in the project, and how this will have a positive impact on local open space?

This project will be advertised on the Borough website, through the Borough's and the Environmental Commission's various social media accounts, and by way of the educational brochure distributed at local businesses in the surrounding area. In addition, it will be promoted by local organizations (e.g. schools, library, Scouts, senior center, local environmental groups, etc.) that will have the opportunity to be involved in this rehabilitation effort. The project will have a positive impact on local open space by promoting the work of the Borough's Environmental Commission to preserve and enhance protected park lands. Borough residents will gain knowledge about invasive and native species and landscaping that they can apply to their own properties, further expanding the positive effects on the community. This project's impact on the community will be measured through monitoring levels of participation and attendance at activities and events including volunteer activities to improve Centennial Park.

6 Replicability or follow-up – Does the application explain the project's ongoing use, and/or how it will be an annual or other regular event? If the proposed activity is a plan, does the application address "next steps" and who will pursue them?

Through this collaborative park ecosystem restoration, improvements to the park trails and entranceway, creation of the educational brochure and posting relevant and useful information on Borough and Environmental Commission social media, the Environmental Commission envisions renewed community engagement with Centennial Park. This park is the largest natural open space area in Metuchen. For this reason, this site has the potential to host numerous community gathering events, workshops, school events, and volunteer opportunities, such as further public education on invasive and native species. Through this project, the Borough's Environmental Commission hopes to improve this park so that it can begin to fulfill these potential educational and recreational opportunities. These rehabilitation activities promote good stewardship practices and raise awareness about the crucial role public park maintenance plays in contributing to a vibrant and sustainable community.

Project Budget (Limit one page):

See item #2 of "How applications will be evaluated."

- o Budget - Did the commission research and itemize major costs in preparing the budget and determining the amount requested? An application without an itemized budget will not qualify for a grant. Include all major costs, whether covered by grant funds or other funding sources. Include an estimated breakout of the in-kind (volunteer and town staff) labor. If additional labor, cash or other contributions are being used, itemize them in the budget.**

The Borough of Metuchen Environmental Commission respectfully requests support from the Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions Grant Program in the amount of \$1,500.00 for the completion of the Centennial Park Rehabilitation and Invasive Species Project. This total project budget accounts for those costs directly related to the site work, including planting and landscaping materials, and educational materials for the program. Funding will support the natural environment of Centennial Park, as well as promote the goals of resident engagement and education. Together, this initiative will emphasize important methods of preserving both public and private properties Borough-wide. The Borough agrees to cover any additional unforeseen costs that may be required to complete this project. Such expenses may be covered with support from the Borough of Metuchen Department of Public Works, Shade Tree Division and the Borough Recreation Department with volunteer assistance from the Borough of Metuchen Green Team and other local organizations.

Item Category	Description	Amount
Native bushes (3) and trees (3)	6 in total	\$50 each for one-gallon native holly bush from Nature Hills Nursery; \$42 for a 2.25-gallon pin oak from Home Depot; 3 of each Total approx. \$300.
Steel posts and fencing	18 posts (3 per tree or bush) and 150 feet of wire (24 feet per tree or bush)	Everbilt painted steel 8 feet long fence posts, 18 posts @ \$7 each; Everbilt 5 feet tall X 50 feet long roll, 14 gauge galvanized steel welded wire garden fence, 3 rolls @ \$66 each: \$126 + \$132 + sales tax, approx. total \$200.
Woodchips and Gravel	4-6" of coverage	\$250.00
Printing (Educational Brochures)	250 Informational Brochures	\$250.00
Posters	6 Total	\$96.00
Goggles (Community Cleanup)	4 Total	\$52.00
Gloves (Community Cleanup)	24 pairs	\$63.00
2-pronged weeder hoe (Community Cleanup)	4 Total	\$64.00
Loppers (Community Cleanup)	4 Total	\$88.00
Spades (Community Cleanup)	4 Total	\$108.00
ANJEC Request Total: \$1,500.00		

Item Category	Description	Cost	Amount
Borough Contributions	DPW Contributions	2 DPW employees being paid for 1 full day (OT rate)	\$720.00
Volunteer Contributions	Volunteer assistance from the Environmental Commission, Green Team and other local organizations	10 volunteers, (4 hours @ \$25.43/hour x 10 volunteers)	\$1017.20
In-Kind Total: \$1,737.20			\$1,737.20

TOTAL PROJECT COST: \$3,237.20

Submit: info@anjec.org

EMAIL SUBMISSIONS MUST CONTAIN THE NAME OF THE MUNICIPALITY IN THE SUBJECT LINE

Section II

Letters of Support



BOROUGH OF METUCHEN

MIDDLESEX COUNTY

Tel. (732) 632-8540 • Fax (732) 632-8100 • 500 Main Street • Metuchen, N.J. 08840

March 17, 2020

Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions
P.O. Box 157
Mendham, NJ 07945

RE: The Borough of Metuchen Environmental Commission 2020 ANJEC Grant Application

To Whom It May Concern:

The Borough of Metuchen is applying for a 2020 ANJEC Open Space Stewardship Grant for the Borough's Environmental Commission to secure funding for rehabilitation to Centennial Park. These improvements would focus on improving Centennial Park's entrance and the walking trail that runs through it. The Borough would look to engage community volunteers to assist in the clean-up, refinement, and maintenance of these existing park features. Funding will also be used to help better advertise the park, leisure and recreational capabilities it provides. This advertising will not only bring additional community awareness to Centennial Park, but it will also help demonstrate the growing capacity of the Borough's Environmental Commission. We hope to establish the Commission as a community leader for environmental preservation and protection activities within the Borough and among our neighboring communities.

As Borough Administrator of the Borough of Metuchen, I assume the role and responsibilities of Municipal manager of the project. While working closely with the Environmental Commission Chairman, Environmental Commission Contact Person, and Borough Council, we are ready and prepared to execute this grant funding to build the profile of the environmental commission among residents and continue to work to improve the open space park areas within the community. While a \$1,500 ANJEC grant should cover costs associated with this project, the Borough is prepared to provide payment for any additional costs that may arise.

Environmental preservation and the upkeep of open space parks and natural areas within the Borough are of utmost importance to Borough Administration. For this reason, opportunities such as these that allow us to contribute to improvements to the parks and open space areas enjoyed by our residents as well as raise the profile of the work of the environmental commission are considered extremely valuable to our Administration.

Sincerely,


Melissa Perilstein
Borough Administrator

Paula H. G. Best

March 11, 2020

ANJEC
PO Box 157
Mendham, NJ 07945
Phone: (973) 539-7547
Fax: (973) 539-7713

RE: 2020 ANJEC - Open Space Grants
Environmental Commissions Grant

Dear Sir or Madam,

As residents of Metuchen, my family relies on municipal public parks for a variety of recreational opportunities. Especially during times when there are concerns of pandemics, outdoor space grants us freedom and comfort. Our residence is located across from Centennial Park. This is the largest natural open space area in the Borough. Despite the Park's size its usability is limited because of the state of the natural environment. Access along the "walking path" is provided by a handmade wooded bridge over an area of uneven terrain. This (barely walkable) "walking path" is inhibited by an increasing number of fallen trees scattered throughout the park. The natural environment is in need of great attention so it can be a safe retreat. Poison Ivy is prevalent in the park, and the entranceway to the park is difficult to access due to the lack of soil integrity. It is so close to be easily enjoyed, but its current state prevents us from enjoying all it could offer.

The improvements and maintenance that will be brought to Centennial Park through this grant opportunity will help the Borough and all of our neighbors and residents across the town to make better use of this public park. The proximity of public park land to our home should be a desirable asset, but in its current state, Centennial Park really lacks the utility and attention needed to maximize its potential. And, in this time when outdoor space will especially be our freedom, we hope you will help us bring this special space back to us.

We applaud the Borough Environmental Commission's efforts to bring attention to this important public park and we are hopeful that the Borough will be given the opportunity to demonstrate its stewardship in the successful completion of this project.

With warm regard,
Paula Best
207 Dellwood Road
Metuchen, NJ 08840

Section 13

Photographs

Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions (ANJEC)
Open Space Stewardship Grants for Environmental Commissions
Borough of Metuchen – Centennial Park Photos



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Below are Japanese Hops - a common, invasive the Borough seeks to remove

