

# SUSTAINABILITY HERO

## May 2022



**Elizabeth Magill Peer**  
Chair, City of Lambertville Environmental Commission  
(Hunterdon County)

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Elizabeth Magill Peer is the chair of the [City of Lambertville Environmental Commission](#) and the creative force behind the comprehensive public education campaign [Ditching Disposables](#). This outreach initiative prepared the community for the [City of Lambertville](#)'s single-use plastics ban that took effect on January 1, 2020 and the New Jersey statewide ban on disposable bags that went into effect on May 4, 2022.

Liz explained, "We designed the Ditching Disposables initiative to foster a sense of community around improving the environmental health of our city. We hope to inspire residents to minimize the consumption of single-use plastics and empower businesses to embrace sustainability as a pillar of their business model." The campaign is one element of the City of Lambertville's impressive sustainability program. The City of Lambertville is one of only two towns in Hunterdon County that are Sustainable Jersey certified at the silver-level; read the [2021 Lambertville City Certification Report](#) for an overview of the City's sustainability actions.

In her role as the environmental commission chair, Liz has supported many municipalities in New Jersey and Pennsylvania with the implementation of similar single-use plastic reduction programs. She said, "Municipalities have reached out to seek our insight to develop plastic ordinances and replicate Ditching Disposables in their community." Liz was a speaker at a number of plastic reduction forums. She presented at the Bucks County Environmental Advisory Committee Forum, the [Delaware Riverkeeper Network](#) Congress, the [Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions](#) (ANJEC) Congress, the ANJEC Ditching Disposables Forum, the [Coalition for the Delaware Watershed Forum](#) and at countless town meetings. She added, "We never could have imagined that this initiative would have the reach and impact that it has beyond our small river town."

Eternally optimistic and upbeat, Liz has been an asset to the environmental commission and is a recognized sustainability leader in Lambertville and across New Jersey. "I love New Jersey and I am grateful to live in Lambertville; it's an honor to serve the planet and my community," Liz said. It is no wonder that Liz has strong ties to land as her father's family has a 17-generation history in the area and her parents, Cindy and Randy Magill, have owned and maintained a farm in West Amwell for 39 years. Liz said her parents are active members of the community and instilled in her the importance of helping others. Stewardship, gratitude and community service are her core values and it shows in everything that Liz does.



However, it was not until the PennEast Pipeline project was proposed that Liz became a formidable environmental activist. The project sought to create a pipeline to move natural gas from Pennsylvania to New Jersey. Representing her parents as landowners, she joined the opposition group that prevented the project from moving forward. Her talents and

commitment were quickly recognized, and she was invited to become an active member of the City of Lambertville Environmental Commission.

**Ditching Disposables Educational Campaign:** The City of Lambertville’s Ditching Disposables initiative was supported by a 2019 \$20,000 [Sustainable Jersey grant](#) funded by the [PSEG Foundation](#). Liz secured this grant and other funding that enabled the City of Lambertville Environmental Commission to implement a comprehensive public education campaign that included sustainable business forums, a community canvassing day, sustainability lectures, sustainable business awards and a green business certification program. The educational campaign targeted many audiences, including the schools. Liz partnered with the [Lambertville Public School](#), which achieved [Sustainable Jersey for Schools](#) certification in 2020. Due to COVID-19, all of the water fountains at the school were turned off for safety. The school has three filtered water refilling stations in the building. As part of the Ditching Disposables initiative, [Liz provided the students and staff with a reusable water bottle](#). This enabled the school community to access water during the school day without the use of single-use plastic bottles and learn about the goals of the Ditching Disposables program.



**Support from Leadership and Strong Partnerships:** “The greatest lesson I learned from working on the Ditching Disposables initiative is that it takes a village,” said Liz. “The support of Sustainable Jersey and the PSEG Foundation ensured that the program was comprehensive and allowed us to have an impact on the community, and beyond, that would not have been possible without the generous grant. However, it was the support of our City of Lambertville mayor, council, residents, businesses, community organizations, boards and commissions that have been integral in the implementation and success of this initiative.”

Liz praised the various City of Lambertville commissions for their support and help with coordination. She said, “The environmental commission jumps at the chance to partner with other boards and commissions because we have so many amazing volunteers doing great things in the city.”

Liz partnered with the previous City of Lambertville mayor, Julia Fahl (watch the [Facebook Live video with Mayor Fahl](#)), and is now coordinating with the current mayor, Andrew Nowick. Liz said, “The main piece of advice that we would give is to use your network. There is no need to reinvent the wheel. We created this program from the ground up and it is a privilege for us to share Ditching Disposables with other communities and hear their ideas for how they would adapt it in their own towns. I had to learn not to be shy; I reach out to other green teams doing things I admire and I learn from their experiences.” Liz noted that the environmental commission is successful because the members each bring something unique to the group. “We have an amazing, talented team; everyone empowers each other to take ownership and the spotlight for the projects they lead. When we recruit volunteers and new members, we do it organically, through being social and involved in community activities,” Liz added. The next focus for community outreach and planning will focus on resiliency. The environmental committee will support Mayor Nowick as the city works toward sustained, long-term natural disaster mitigation and resiliency planning.



**Community Canvassing Day:** The City of Lambertville’s Community Canvassing Day is another creative example demonstrating the extent to which the Lambertville volunteers went the extra mile to ensure that the transition to the

plastic ordinance was a success. In 2019, nearly 30 volunteers joined the environmental commission to knock on every door in the City of Lambertville to hand out reusable shopping bags made out of recycled cotton and to talk about the upcoming plastic ordinance. Liz said, “Anecdotal data showed that a vast majority of the residents we spoke to knew about the ordinance and were so excited about Community Canvassing Day that they stayed home so they could receive their shopping bags that day! Residents who were not home were left a door hanger that gave information about the ordinance and how to pick up their reusable bag.”



**Sustainable Business Forum:** The City of Lambertville Environmental Commission hosted a forum with local businesses to discuss successes, concerns, questions and ideas regarding sustainability and the plastics ordinance. You can watch it on the [NJTV News segment on July 31, 2019](#). The event was well attended and provided businesses the opportunity to learn more and meet distributors of eco-friendly plastic alternatives. Liz said, “We were mindful of the impact the plastic ordinance could have on businesses, our Sustainable Business Forum was ahead of the curve. I was thrilled with how businesses stepped up and helped with this event.”

**Sustainable Business Awards:** After the Sustainable Business Forum, the environmental commission wanted to find a way to encourage the ongoing efforts of the local businesses to improve their sustainability practices and provide public recognition. The environmental commission launched the City of Lambertville’s Sustainable Business Awards. Nominations and votes were solicited from the community for sustainable businesses through social media outreach. In September 2019, the awards were chosen by the City of Lambertville and presented at an [awards ceremony](#) in Mary Sheridan Park. The 2019 award recipients were [Homestead Market](#) (Green Innovator Award); Open Door Thrift Store (Green Style Award); Dig Yoga and Green Building Center (Green Trailblazer Award); and Lewis Fishery (Green Educator Award). Liz said, “We received wonderful feedback from businesses that they felt tremendously appreciated. We hope to continue to recognize the positive efforts of businesses in this way.” In 2021, the environmental commission launched the [Lambertville Green Business Certification](#). Local businesses now have the opportunity to show their community and their customers that they care about sustainability through this program.



**Education and Experience:** Liz received a BA in American Studies from Dickinson College. For four years, Liz worked at [Love 146](#), an international human rights organization that is working to end child trafficking and exploitation. Liz currently has her own business; she is a designer and owner of [Sacred Moon Jewelry](#).

**More About Liz:** Liz lives in the City of Lambertville with her husband Dave, their cat Yogi and rescue dog Clover. In her free time, she enjoys yoga, meditation and spending time in nature with her friends. Although time consuming, Liz and her husband are enjoying their time working together on restoring their historic home. She looks forward to enlisting her friends when it comes time to plant the pollinator gardens outside. During the height COVID-19 when everyone was practicing social distancing, Liz put together a creative challenge for herself. Liz hiked a marathon in 2021; she created her own route and in one day traveled 26.2 miles hiking from her home in Lambertville through the [D&R Greenway](#) trails and various parks; crossing into Stockton, Pennsylvania; and then finally traveling back home to Lambertville on the towpath. She said the challenge made her feel grateful to be alive and living within beautiful outdoor spaces.

