



In August, the Town Council unanimously agreed on my appointment as the new Chair of the Environment Committee. Filling Robin Barr's shoes will certainly be a tall task, but I am excited to continue my focus on the environment in this leadership role. I thought I would start by sharing with you some personal notes of my journey as an environmentalist.

## What is an Environmentalist:

You are an environmentalist and so is almost everyone! Environmentalists all love the natural world. We admire the mountains and its streams, the vast oceans in which we surf, and the pristine lakes in which we swim. At home, we spend time in our gardens, weeding, planting, pruning, listening to the birds chirping and looking for butterflies. We also care for the environment. Some of our aspirations are: we don't litter, we recycle, we compost, we drive electric cars, we are vegans, we use renewable energy and LED lights, we minimize our use of airplanes for travel, we have significantly reduced our use of plastic, we rarely use Amazon but rather support local merchants, and we don't use pesticides on our lawns. We also write to our politicians to demand a Green New Deal and we protest for BLM and the Climate Emergency. Environmental racism is now an issue we are heavily focused on. And we always vote for the environment. As a result of all of our efforts, our carbon footprint - the term used to describe how much pollution and disruption to nature that we have caused - is becoming smaller every day.

But hold on a second, is our carbon footprint actually getting smaller? Is it even small at all? Is our footprint the same as somebody living in the rural areas of Zimbabwe? As it turns out, our family's **Mother Earth Project** is connected with many dozens of communities in Africa

## Environment Committee's Leaf Blower Discussion Zoom Event Wednesday, Oct. 14, 8 to 9 p.m.

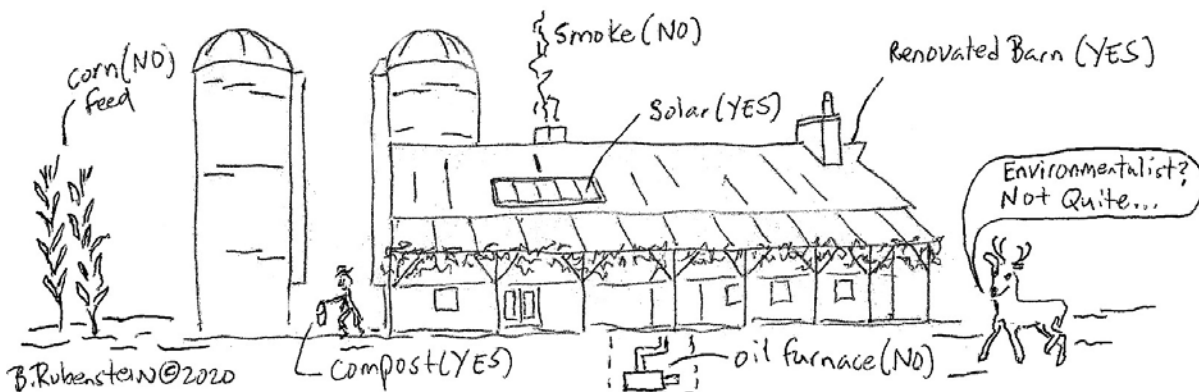
Featured Speaker is Chuck Elkins, Washington, D.C. Advisory Neighborhood Commission Commissioner, who spearheaded the gas-powered leaf blower ban, which begins Jan 1, 2022. He will speak about the background and origin of the law and why he believes that municipalities, particularly the Town of Somerset and Montgomery County, should piggyback on this legislation. Please register here: <https://bit.ly/2FVq3aE>

and around the world, and having heard their stories and concerns for the environment, it is clear that the answer is a resounding "no."

## It's a Journey:

But as we now know it isn't about absolutes. We all must try our best to be better stewards of the planet, and try not to judge others for not doing enough. It's all about education, putting knowledge to action, and sharing your journey with others. Sharing takes the sting out of guilt, and it provides a reasonable and achievable path towards reducing one's carbon footprint. To bring you closer into the environmentalist den, I thought I would share some of my personal bumps along the sustainable journey. I'll add a "YES" for things that reduced my carbon footprint and "NO" for those that increased it.

Growing up in D.C. in the 1960s and 70s, our family used to gather the large pile of newspapers each week (NO) and tie them into bundles to be recycled (YES). My father and



mother renovated an old barn (YES) to create a second home (NO) on the Eastern Shore, where we built one of the first solar panel systems (YES) in the United States. We threw all of our compost into the field (YES) and incinerated most of our trash (NO). To date, we rent our land to a farmer who plants corn and soy, 75% of which I now realize are used for cow, pig and chicken feed (NO). The farmer also uses a plethora of pesticides (NO) and poor plowing practices, which has caused a lot of top soil runoff (NO).

More recently, I have converted our electricity to **Clearview** renewable energy (YES), but we still have a backup oil furnace (NO) for when the solar energy system cannot provide enough energy. We also have a ski boat (NO) and as a teenager, I loved going to the gas station (NO) to fill the five-gallon tanks. It was the ultimate act of freedom and the American Dream! Nonetheless, I grew up proud of all of our family's sustainable achievements, mostly ignorant of all of the NO's.

Back at home, my wife, Shereen, and I have tried to continue these traditions of sustainability. We are grateful to afford a large house (NO) in the wonderful Town of Somerset and for decades I would jokingly boast, "You can judge the character of a man by his lawn." I used to water our lawn regularly (NO) and used pesticides to make it look super green (NO). Shereen helped to start **composting** in the neighborhood (YES), and we started to focus on reducing our trash (YES), thus increasing our recyclables (YES). Five years ago, we changed all of our light bulbs to LED (YES).

As a lover of nature, our family has traveled extensively (NO) to National Parks (YES), most recently to Kenai, Katmai and Denali in Alaska, getting to see firsthand some of the most remote and wild regions of our beautiful country. At home most recently, we tend to do curbside

ordering quite a lot (YES and NO), which is convenient except for all of the plastic containers (NO). I use Amazon quite extensively (NO) because it offers a one-stop opportunity to find unique things that we need as well as protects me from venturing out and getting the COVID. I definitely have a reputation in the house for wearing clothes until they are in tatters (YES), but I also wear polyester shirts (NO) on the tennis court. As a sculptor and **public artist**, Strosniders is still my favorite local store (YES) to visit.

Finally, I have followed my daughter to become vegetarian and almost vegan (YES). I placed an info sheet on our fridge to show the protein values of all of the vegetarian options. Pumpkin seeds, farro, peanuts, and chick peas are my favorite high protein choices. Going vegan was my most difficult life-changing task; it took almost three years. As an avid tennis player, Novak Djokovic was my inspiration. If he could do it as number one in the world, then I could. (TOTAL TALLY: 14-YES, 17-NO – What's your tally?)

### If He Can Do It, Then I Can!

So, you can see my road is as bumpy as anyone's. I am proud of what I have learned and accomplished, and equally humbled and distressed by all that I need to do. But by sharing with your neighbors and friends and taking collective actions, we WILL make our planet healthier and more sustainable for us and future generations. So, let's keep up our efforts!

If you have any questions about being more sustainable, the UN Sustainable Development Goals, or the Carbon Footprint, please feel free to contact me at: **bartsher@gmail.com**. You are also welcome to join our bi-monthly Environment Committee Zoom meetings, where the public comment portion is a great opportunity for "sharing your story or tally."

## GENERAL PERMITS

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### TREE REMOVAL

- 5610 Warwick Pl.
  - 4727 Essex Ave.
  - 5502 Greystone St.
  - 4805 Dorset Ave.
  - 4518 Cumberland Ave.
- 4917 Essex Ave. – Fence Permit Revision
  - 5813 Surrey St. – Fence Permit Exemption