



Barton Has Stepped Down as Chair of the Environment Committee

Neighbors, I would like to share news that I have stepped down as Chair of the Environment Committee, effective in February, 2025.

We Have Lots to be Proud of as a Town

During my nearly five years as Chair, we have made many recommendations to the Town Council, and together, our Town has accomplished quite a lot. I would like to share some of these accomplishments. You can see the entire list on our Town's website, <https://bit.ly/4feCtWO>.

- **Composting** began in Somerset (2015). My wife, Shereen, along with a determined group of residents, began this wonderful program – and coincidentally, it inspired our family to establish the Mother Earth Project, which uses art to activate sustainable communities worldwide, now in over 80 countries. As you know, most Town residents now compost (2024).
- **LED Street Lights** (2024). This project took 20-30 years to come to fruition, spearheaded by many individuals, including the late Council Member **Alan Proctor**, who sadly never saw the fruits of his labor. These lights reduce energy use by approximately 80% when compared to the previous bulbs used.
- **Gas Powered Blowers** (2022). These machines have been a nuisance for years and with the effort of like-minded colleagues from other towns nearby, these machines will be banned in Montgomery County (MOCO) starting July 1, 2025. This is yet another example of how taking a small step in Somerset can ripple outwards and inspire larger municipalities to do the same.
- **Solar Panels** (2023 and 2025) have already been installed at our Town Hall and will be installed at our Swimming Pool this coming year. This renewable energy source will significantly reduce our Town's carbon footprint.

- An **Apiary** (2023) was created in our Town forest to bring pollinators to Somerset, which have unfortunately been decimated by our use of pesticides. Our Town (2020) has also opted-in to MOCO's ban on lawn pesticides which has been extremely helpful to maintaining biodiversity.
- New Construction in Somerset Requires **Native Plants** in Landscaping (2024). This is a first step towards removing invasive species from our Town.
- **Signed Declarations and Awards:** As recommended by the Environment Committee, our Mayor and Town Council have signed the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty and Sierra Club's Mayors for 100% Clean Energy Pledge. In addition, Somerset is now designated as a Sustainable City (Bronze Medallion); see <https://bit.ly/3WxHhix>.

It has been a great pleasure serving as Chair. I thank my fellow Environment Committee members for their dedication and focus on environmental issues, as well as a determined Town Council and the wonderful Town employees who have helped along the way. I do plan to continue as an Environment Committee member going forward and I am still very happy to continue answering environment-related questions. And I do plan to contribute occasionally to the Town Journal's Sustainability Corner column.

As for my future activities, I continue to enjoy my sculpture and public art career (see www.RubensteinStudios.com). Our Mother Earth Project website (motherearthproject.org) is presently being updated, to allow people worldwide to learn about being more sustainable and if inspired, Take Action.

If you have any questions about the above-mentioned environmental initiatives, please feel free to reach out to the Town Hall, or contact the Environment Committee at tos.environmentcommittee@gmail.com.