

SUSTAINABILITY HERO

October 2020



Kim Diamond

Founder and President, Sustainable Berkeley Heights
Co-Chair, Sustainable Jersey's Union County Hub

It was a drive by the iconic rows of wind turbines outside of Palm Springs that first inspired Kim Diamond more than 30 years ago. Since seeing the futuristic turbines generating clean energy in the California desert that day, Kim has helped shape the renewable energy future while making it her mission to advance sustainability in her community, county and world. As a sustainability leader, she motivates and educates those around her, recognizing that one of the best ways to address our environmental challenges is through local grassroots efforts.

Kim is founder and president of [Sustainable Berkeley Heights](#), co-chair of Sustainable Jersey's Union County Hub and a member of both the [Berkeley Heights Environmental Commission](#) (BHEC) and the Berkeley Heights [Mayor's Recycling Task Force](#). Professionally, Kim is a transactional lawyer who has worked in the finance and securitization groups at large international law firms and a global investment bank. She is a thought leader in renewable energy, smart cities and energy policy matters. In addition to her scholarship being cited by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit, Kim was recognized on *A Word About Wind's Legal Power List 2016* as one of the Top 100 lawyers working in the wind industry globally. She was also recognized as a 2014 finalist for a Clean Energy Education & Empowerment (C3E) Award for leadership and achievement from the U.S. Department of Energy and the MIT Energy Initiative.

Kim designed and teaches the Energy Law course at Fordham Law School in New York City. Through her enthusiasm, in addition to discussing traditional energy sources, she inspires lawyers of the future to become interested in green building in the built environment, sustainable urban design and the legal and business aspects of renewable energy projects in the wind, solar, geothermal, hydropower, wave, piezoelectric and other renewable energy sectors.

Within the American Bar Association's (ABA's) Section of Environment, Energy & Resources, Kim served as co-chair of the award-winning [Renewable, Alternative and Distributed Energy Resources \(RADER\) Committee](#) as well as co-chair of the Special Committee on Congressional Relations. She also was the chair of the Tri-State Area Chapter of [Women of Renewable Industries and Sustainable Energy](#) (WRISE) and as a Wind Energy Ambassador for the [Wind Energy Foundation](#). One of her law review articles, which she co-authored with WRISE colleague Ellen Crivella, was groundbreaking, as it analogized rights to sunlight to rights to wind access. It has been downloaded over 10,000 times: [Wind Turbine Wakes, Wake Effect Impacts and Wind Leases](#).

Confident, driven and an excellent communicator, Kim combines her knowledge of the law, finance and the art of closing a deal to propel her sustainability mission forward. When asked for the key to her success, Kim explained, "It takes more than an idea and vision to turn the tide. You need to create and implement an actionable plan." One of the professionals that Kim mentored describes her as "someone who can see the invisible, which helps her create the impossible."



“I want society to take a giant leap forward through sustainable measures and cutting-edge energy innovations,” Kim said. “Everyone needs to know that we cannot treat the environment as an afterthought. If we can get people to envision what is possible and take steps forward to get there, then we can achieve behavioral change.”

Sustainable Berkeley Heights: Berkeley Heights Township has been continuously certified with Sustainable Jersey since 2009. In 2018, together with Julie Lloyd and Councilwoman Jeanne Kingsley, Kim founded a non-profit, [Sustainable Berkeley Heights](#). This organization works with local government entities, local businesses and other volunteer organizations to foster community collaboration, implement sustainable measures and transform the Township into a smart city for future generations. In Sustainable Berkeley Heights’s first year, Kim was instrumental in obtaining the organization’s admission to the [New Jersey Sustainable Business Registry](#). She also has assisted other Berkeley Heights businesses to qualify for, and gain admission to, the Registry. This year, in celebration of Earth Day, Sustainable Berkeley Heights rolled out seven days of fun, nature-focused activities for the community. See the different creative graphics and daily topics [here](#). Over fifteen articles have been published in the local media that have helped promote and educate the community on local initiatives.



Trex Thin Film Plastics Recycling: As a member of the Berkeley Heights Environmental Commission (BHEC), Kim spearheaded a [Trex Thin Film Plastics recycling effort in Berkeley Heights](#) through the [Trex University & Community Recycling Program](#). Trex rewards participating groups with an outdoor composite Trex bench if they collect 500 pounds or more of thin film plastics within a six-month collection period. As of March 2020, prior to COVID-19, Berkeley Heights had earned 16 Trex benches from the more than 12,200 pounds of thin film plastics deposited in local Trex bins. Kim said, “That’s more than six tons of thin film plastics that would otherwise have wound up in landfills or that would have been discarded as litter. Of the seven Trex bins we placed around town, the library bin was the most popular one. Kids urged their parents to bring them to the library to drop off their plastics. While there, they also checked out books. The librarians said that it was the library’s most successful summer in over 15 years.” The township collected the equivalent of approximately 915,375 thin film plastic bags over a one-year-nine-month period. This tremendous participation resulted in the BHEC receiving a 2018 Environmental Achievement Award from the [Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions \(ANJEC\)](#).



Berkeley Heights Vegan Fest: Kim developed and chairs the [Berkeley Heights Vegan Fest](#), which also won an ANJEC Environmental Achievement Award. In 2018, she launched the three-day-long event to raise awareness of positive environmental impacts and health benefits associated with mindful exercise and a plant-based diet. The event, which was free to the public, featured outdoor yoga, health-focused and planet-focused educational panels and a Vegan Cook-Off. Kim chaired Vegan Fest again in 2019, adding a children’s energized dance session and providing free event t-shirts to all guests. Her dedication to marketing, public relations and corporate partnerships resulted in an even more successful event the second year; Vegan Fest doubled the number of attendees and raised seven times the funding from the prior year.



For the second Vegan Cook-off, contestants provided appetizer, main course and dessert entries for the judges and worked with several local restaurants to provide samples for attendees. One restaurant added its Vegan Cook-Off chickpea slider entrée to its permanent menu due to its popularity at the event.



To support the event, Kim developed a pledge that residents could take regarding incorporating vegan meals into their diets: [Vegan Fest Vegan Quest](#). “I want to share with others what I’ve learned about food. The documentary film *Forks Over Knives* inspired me to change my eating habits. It

demonstrates how adopting a plant-based diet can help people reduce their risk of contracting certain diseases,” Kim explained. “Vegan Fest encourages people to ask questions and try vegan cuisine. When they understand they will not suffer from a protein deficiency and taste how fresh and yummy plant-based food can be, it is my hope that they will incorporate more foods free of animals and animal products into their regular diets.”

Litter Cleanup and Recycling Events: Inspired by her daughter Valerie, who formed “Val’s Valiants,” a group of volunteers whose mission it is to find and pick up litter at different locations in the township, Kim focused her energy on cleanups. Over ten litter cleanup events were held in Berkeley Heights with the BHEC, Val’s Valiants, Sustainable Berkeley Heights, the Berkeley Heights Downtown Beautification Committee and several scout troops. Trash and recyclables were gathered at many venues including: three water basins, two local roads adjacent to a local stream, two local parks and two main roadways.

Collectively, the amount of litter collected totaled over 1,000 pounds. Three of these cleanups contained an educational component, enabling two local Girl Scouts to earn their Silver Award. In addition, when Sustainable Berkeley Heights partnered with Union County for a cleanup along the walking path in Passaic River Park, the group collected several thousand pounds of trash. Kim said, “We found everything from discarded Christmas trees and truck tires to building equipment and recyclables. It was truly an amazing, eye-opening experience for the approximately 40 people who participated. People enjoyed doing something hands-on and positive for the township. Plus, it opened our community’s eyes to the extent of our litter problem.” Check out this video with one of the cleanup teams: [Berkeley Heights Litter Cleanup](#).



Kim also organized several shoe collection drives that were held concurrently with the litter cleanups and the Berkeley Heights 5K. Kim explained, “We donated the over 200 pairs of shoes we collected to Soles4Souls for others in need globally. It was gratifying to know that these shoes were being upcycled and reused, rather than taking up space in a landfill.” Watch the video highlighting the shoes collected: [What Does 132 Pairs of Shoes Look Like?](#)



More About Kim: Kim earned her J.D. from Cornell Law School and a B.A. with Honors in English and Political Science from the University of Michigan. Kim lives in Berkeley Heights with her husband; they have two daughters and two Bichon Frise rescue dogs. In her free time, Kim enjoys yoga and science fiction movies. As for future plans, she hopes to run the Morristown Superhero Half Marathon for a second time but admits that dressing in a costume is the real draw. If you happen to see Electra Woman run by, know that the superhero in costume also doubles as a sustainability hero.

Kim has written over 30 published articles on offshore wind, onshore wind, solar power, smart cities, green building climate change, finance and other renewable energy topics. Here are a few of the articles:

- [Footfall and Social Media v. Concentrated Solar Power: When the Power of Choice in a Behavior-Based Economy Can be More Powerful than the Power of the Sun](#), Fordham Environmental Law Review, 136 (2017)
- [Wake Effects, Wind Rights, and Wind Turbines: Why Science, Constitutional Rights, and Public Policy Issues Play a Crucial Role](#), William & Mary Environmental Law and Policy Review, 813 (2016)
- [Water Infrastructure and Adaptive Building Design: An Emerging Opportunity](#), Development Magazine (Spring 2019)
- [Public-Private Partnerships for Water Infrastructure and Stormwater Management Projects](#), American Infrastructure, Vol. 10., No. 4, 66 (July/Aug. 2018)
- [Innovation Clusters: Drivers of Cutting-Edge Technologies for Our Energy Future](#), Renewable Energy World (July 29, 2016)