

NOVEMBER 2016 SUSTAINABILITY HERO



DR. THEODORE CHASE, JR. Franklin Township Deputy Mayor and Green Team Chair (Somerset County)

Often tagged as “the environmentalist,” Dr. Theodore (Ted) Chase, Jr. is a dedicated public servant and recognized champion of sustainability issues in Somerset County. His critical thinking abilities, honed from a lifetime in biochemistry, coupled with his listening skills, have allowed him to find the common middle ground needed to achieve consensus and move projects and people forward toward a shared goal.

Serving in local government for over twenty years, as a member of the Board of Zoning Adjustment, Planning Board and Council, Ted is currently the Franklin Township Deputy Mayor. He is the founder and chair of the Franklin Township Green Team and the council liaison to the Environmental Commission, the Historic Preservation Commission, the Kingston Village Advisory Committee, the Open Space Committee and the Agricultural Advisory Committee. Before public service, Ted spent 38 years as a biochemistry professor at Rutgers University where he received four awards for excellence in teaching. He is currently a Trustee for the [New Jersey Conservation Foundation](#) and on the board of the Delaware and Raritan Canal Watch. He received the Peter Homack Award from the New Jersey Section of the [American Water Resources Association](#) for his achievements in water quality.

Ted provided insight into his motivation, “For the first four hundred years since settling America began, growth and expansion were at the center of our values; we always had room to expand. It’s hard to break from this mindset, but we have reached a point where we need to change. The Earth cannot accommodate unending growth, ever-increasing population and the continuing use of fossil fuels. Earth is not getting bigger, so we must work towards becoming more sustainable in all that we do.”

Franklin Township achieves silver-level Sustainable Jersey certification: The Franklin Township Green Team was established in 2009 with Ted Chase as the chair. Under his direction, Franklin Township achieved Sustainable Jersey bronze-level certification in 2010 and recertification in 2013. Ted commented, “My advice to other green teams is to cultivate the township governing body and staff. Our success comes from great participation by municipal staff, which has led to emphasis on actions achieved by the municipality. From the township engineer to the director of planning, our staff has been in the forefront, getting the sustainability actions done.” Franklin Township has just been approved for silver-level certification with 400 points earned: read the [2016 Franklin Township Certification Report](#).



Franklin Township public information and engagement: Franklin Township is one of the first municipalities to complete the new Sustainable Jersey Public Information and Engagement actions. Ted explained, “A good communications strategy helps build a relationship between residents and their government. We were lucky to have Justin Heyman, the township director of information technology, join the green team. With a population of 62,300 in Franklin Township, it’s a challenge to get community movement, but these advances will help.”

Justin completed the municipal communications strategy as well as the other actions in this category. In 2015, the township launched a new website and social media channels. The site includes an updated directory, a dynamic news and events engine, a search function and a feedback method that delivers comments directly to the township manager. A new e-notification engine gives residents the ability to customize the email notifications they receive. You can see these features on the Franklin Township: [municipal website](#), [Facebook page](#), [Twitter](#) and [YouTube](#).



Franklin Township Clustering Ordinance: Residential cluster development is a form of land development in which principal buildings and structures are grouped together on a site, saving the remaining land area for common open space, conservation, agriculture, recreation or public and semi-public uses. Ted said, “Franklin Township has a number of clustering provisions that have helped the township be successful in preserving natural resources, agriculture, and open space while managing a significant amount of growth.” The techniques have worked because of the flexibility offered to developers, potential infrastructure cost savings and, in some cases, an incentive in the form of a density bonus. Read the [Franklin Township Clustering Ordinance](#).

Franklin Township Open Space Plan: Franklin Township prepared an Open Space and Recreation Plan that was adopted by the Planning Board as an element of the Township Master Plan. The development of this Plan was initiated by the Township Open Space Advisory Committee, which includes members of several township committees including the Recreation Advisory Council, the Trails Advisory Committee, the Agricultural Advisory Committee, the Environmental Commission and the Historic Preservation Advisory Committee. The plan built upon public input, analysis and recommendations received. Ted said, “Franklin Township has preserved 2,399 acres of land and 1,127 acres of farmland. When these are added to extensive lands purchased by the state of New Jersey and Somerset County, and prior acquisitions by the township, the township’s park and open space holdings total 9,995 acres which is 35 percent of the Township.” Read the [Franklin Township Open Space and Recreation Plan](#) and the [Comprehensive Farmland Preservation Plan](#), that were added to the Township Master Plan.

Preserved Land

- Township-owned, Preserved (2,399 acres)
- Township-owned Preserved, Pending (48 acres)
- County-owned, Preserved (1,229 acres)
- State-owned, Preserved (4,803 acres)
- Farm Preserved (1,127 acres)
- Farm Preserved, Pending (76 acres)
- Historic Preserved, Township-owned (3 acres)
- Historic Preserved, not Township-owned (2 acres)
- Private, Non-profit Preserved (88 acres)
- Conservation Easement (222 acres)

Franklin Township Municipal Building’s solar cells: Solar cells were put in service on the roof of the Franklin Township Municipal Building. In 2015, the cells provided 21.3 percent of the electricity used by the municipal building. The township did this project with Somerset County; the Somerset County Improvement Authority sells the bonds to construct solar cells on the roof, and a private company erected the system and sells the town the electricity. “As far as trends in solar,” Ted said, “I am now tracking the development of organic solar cells for use in place of the silicon panels. These innovative panels will use organic electronics for light absorption and charge transport to produce electricity. Another benefit is that solar cells plus bacterial cultures can present a way to remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.”

Township electricity from a renewable source: The Franklin Township Council purchases electricity with a 20 percent renewable content. The contract is handled by the Sustainable Energy Joint Meeting (NJ SEM) which has aggregated electricity and natural gas purchasing for over 185 of its member municipalities and authorities throughout

New Jersey. Ted explained, “By purchasing renewable electricity in this way, the township can reduce its energy costs while also reducing its greenhouse gas emissions, become less vulnerable to fossil fuel costs and help create demand for more sustainable sources of energy.”

Franklin Township Wind Ordinance: To encourage the generation of renewable, non-polluting electrical energy for township homes, the Franklin Township Council passed a Wind Ordinance, which authorizes small wind energy systems (windmills, vertical axis wind turbines) of up to 20 kW capacity in larger lot size zones. It is intended for on-site use of the electricity, but excess power can be transferred to a utility company power grid pursuant to utility company interconnection agreements. Ted said, “We hope to promote this ordinance so that residents use it.”

From Harvard, to Berkeley to Rutgers University and public office: Ted graduated cum laude from Harvard College in 1960 and received a Ph.D. in biochemistry from the University of California, Berkeley in 1966. He was a post-doctoral fellow at the Brookhaven National Laboratory before he joined Rutgers’ College of Agriculture in 1969 and rose from assistant to associate to full professor of biochemistry where he taught for 38 years. Ted is retired but still serves as a professor emeritus at the Environmental and Biological Sciences (SEBS) at Rutgers University. Ted was known for his ability to support and inspire his students at all levels. He said, “As professors, we have a natural proclivity to value the really bright students, but I always worked hard to develop and provide opportunities for the students at all levels.”



Ted got his first taste of politics when he was working on his Ph.D. in biochemistry at the University of California-Berkeley in the 1960s. He was active in voter registration and civil rights organizations. In 1972, Ted supported the George McGovern candidacy for president and was an alternate delegate at the Democratic National Convention. He has continued to serve as the County Committeeman for the Democratic Party in Franklin Township. Ted first entered local politics in New Jersey to help stop a local highway project that would have impacted his neighborhood.

Ted was elected to the Franklin Township Council in 2009 after serving for many years on the township’s Board of Zoning Adjustment, the Energy Commission, the Planning Board, Environmental Commission and Open Space Committee. While on the Environmental Commission, he led an effort to survey water quality in township streams. Ted is the Franklin Township representative to Middlesex County-Lower Raritan Water Resource Association and the Central Jersey Transportation Forum.

What you may not know about Ted: Ted was born in Boston and grew up in Dover, Massachusetts. His grandparents lived in Concord, Massachusetts near the river wetlands conservation area named the [Great Meadows National Wildlife Refuge](#). Ted’s lifelong love of birdwatching began in this park. His grandparents may have also inspired his love of science. Ted said he spent hours reading their 1926 edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica; his favorite sections were the chapters on chemistry and medieval history. Coming from two generations of lawyers, Ted made a conscious decision to take a different path by going into biochemistry. Ted reflected that while he has been in public office, he does use many of the negotiating skills he learned from his father and grandfather.

Ted has been married to Victory Van Dyck for over 50 years; they met in Berkeley, California and have lived in Franklin Township for the past 27 years. Ted and Victory have two children, Vanessa and Frederic, and two grandchildren, all of whom reside in New York City. In his free time, Ted can be found mowing his own lawn and counting downy woodpeckers, white-throated sparrows and other birds for [Project FeederWatch](#), which is a winter-long survey of birds that visit backyard feeders in North America.

