

GREENSBORO COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY COUNCIL
Minutes, Special Retreat Meeting
November 16, 2015

The Special Retreat Meeting of the Community Sustainability Council (CSC) was held on Monday, November 16, 2015 in the Plaza Level Conference Room of the Melvin Municipal Office Building, commencing at 2:00 p.m.

CSC Members Present:

Joel Landau, Chair	Tom Duckwall	Stephen McCollum
Chad Carwein, Vice-Chair	John Kavanagh	Bob Powell
Art Davis	Howard Taylor	

Staff and Others Present:

Greg Johns, Advisor	Jeff Sovich, Planning
Hanna Cockburn, Planning	Sigrid Marks, Triad Reporting

1) APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 14, 2015 MEETING

Mr. Davis moved approval of the September 14, 2015 meeting minutes as amended, seconded by Mr. Duckwall. The Council voted 8-0 in favor of the motion. (Ayes: Landau, Carwein, Davis, Duckwall, Kavanagh, McCollum, Taylor, Powell. Nays: None.)

2) DISCUSSION OF CSC FUTURE PRIORITIES AND STRATEGIC DIRECTION

Chair Landau announced that Mr. McCollum will facilitate the discussion of future priorities and strategic direction. Mr. McCollum reviewed the format and ground rules for the discussion.

Chair Landau commented on accomplishments and disappointments of the CSC so far, to his perspective. He cited the following accomplishments: (1) establishing the CSC; (2) creation and adoption of the Sustainability Action Plan (SAP); (3) the CSC's essential role in the development of the City's \$2.2 million Energy Efficiency Conservation Block Grant application during the Federal Stimulus period; (4) and the continuing existence of the CSC. His main disappointments include (1) how long it took to get the SAP adopted; (2) the non-adoption of the Sustainability Cash Flow Account that would set aside funds generated by revenue-positive sustainability projects, in order to fund future sustainability efforts that might involve larger up-front investments and/or longer cost-recovery periods; (3) the lack of implementation of the Green Team proposal; (4) the lack of ongoing monitoring of compliance with the SAP proposals; and (5) despite conversations with City Council members, no one on City Council has stepped forward to champion sustainability issues.

Chair Landau felt that the CSC has not accomplished very much in the last three or four years and the present is a great time for new energy to refocus on how to go forward. He suggested pushing forward the electric car hub and plastic water bottle initiatives.

Moving forward, Chair Landau said that the CSC should continue to adhere to their mission statement and be proactive in working with City Council and the City Manager's office to promote important issues of sustainability.

Mr. McCollum stated his opinion that the CSC appears to be in a state of drift with respect to its mission statement. He based his observation on the following: (1) the SAP seems to have fallen off the radar with respect to CSC discourse; (2) the Growing Solar initiative appears to have been stymied and it is unclear as to why and whether it is still a priority agenda item for City Council; (3) there was no follow-up report from NCSEA on the Green Jobs Seminar, nor did it keep this item on its agenda for further exploration; (4) the Equity Subcommittee 2015 Work Plan Report, while attempting to be comprehensive, failed to focus attention on the vacant City property information and to recommend that it be proactively pursued to determine if City Council has any interest in promoting community garden or urban farming initiatives; and (5) the Environment Subcommittee 2015 Work Plan proposed implementation of water bottle filling stations but did not include input from the City's Water Resources Department. In addition, Mr. McCollum commented on frustration trying to gain access to Council members to discuss the CSC, its mission, and their vision for its future. There has been no effective communication in 2015 between the CSC and City Council beyond the Greenhouse Gas Inventory Report. He summarized that it is unclear how the CSC fits into City Council's long term agenda and vision for sustainability in Greensboro. In order to move forward, it is critical that the CSC follow through on ideas and communicate effectively with City Council.

Mr. Johns commented that to achieve results, the CSC should focus on the two best opportunities to advance and accomplish its sustainability mission. In addition, there should be press releases to the public following presentations to City Council. The CSC should be more proactive with their follow through and promote better public awareness.

Mr. Davis stated that City Council has not dedicated money or resources to target the CSC as a priority. Unlike other cities, Greensboro has no directive for sustainability and the CSC's role is strictly advisory in nature. In order to implement the Sustainability Action Plan, there must be dedicated staff, to work toward that end. In addition, the CSC must become a community presence for sustainability.

Mr. Kavanagh commented that although the Greenhouse Gas Report was very good, there are still some questions that need to be explored further such as the relationship of the reductions to the recession. He felt the Board should focus on sustainable green job creation and noted that there was no follow-up to the well-attended Green Job Seminar held earlier in the year. He observed that there were

no medium to large-sized businesses at the seminar. Mr. Kavanagh suggested that the Board should continue to explore serving the electric vehicle industry and support more business participation. He was supportive of having a paid staff person and felt it would be worthwhile for the CSC to meet on a monthly basis, as opposed to the current bi-monthly schedule.

Mr. Taylor distributed a copy of his statement to members. He stated his opinion that the mission of the CSC is still viable although it would be better refocused. He suggested that the CSC should focus on building resilience to the coming effects of climate change. Mr. Taylor stated that integrating the organizational structure and process accountability were very important.

Mr. Duckwall was in agreement that it would be beneficial to hold monthly CSC meetings and felt there should be a list of City staff contacts and their responsibilities in an assortment of functional areas to facilitate ideas. He felt that the CSC should build on energy efficiency as part of the big picture.

Mr. Carwein first relayed comments from Mr. McNeil who could not attend the meeting. Mr. McNeil suggested the following: (1) that youth should be involved through the creation of environmental groups in public schools, (2) create several metrics for the City and the CSC to track such as household recycling and electricity usage to change current trends, and (3) take a look at alternatives to plastics and continue to emphasize plastic bottle and plastic bag bans.

Mr. Carwein then stated his opinion that the CSC is still a viable entity and although positive things have been done, there is plenty of room for improvement moving forward. He stated his primary goal of creating connectivity with the higher education industry in Greensboro. In addition, the creation of a City Green Team should be revisited. He felt the SAP should be updated and regular contact should be established with City Council.

Mr. Sovich commented that the solidification of the CSC's organization has gone well. All nine seats of the Council have been filled and appointments are made fairly quickly when vacancies come up. He felt that there has been a lag not in the frequency of meetings, but with what happens in between the meetings. More subcommittee activity should be taking place in between formal meetings. There should be a greater effort to bring other interested individuals into the activities of the CSC to promote awareness.

Ms. Cockburn thanked members for their dedication to sustainability. She stated that there have been many administrative accomplishments such as securing a set of approved bylaws and she noted that participation in the CSC has improved. The bylaws were set up to structure the CSC to be successful and to encourage reaching out to partner with other interested parties. She pointed out that the CSC has narrowed down activities to improve focus and clear guidelines were put into place to structure subcommittees. She indicated that the Planning Department will continue to provide whatever support they can; however, they are not an implementation group. She urged members to think about ways to reach into other

parts of the City and build a case for what members think is important as priorities are set for the coming year.

A brief recess was taken at 3:26 p.m. The meeting resumed at 3:35 p.m.

Chair Landau provided historical context and background of the CSC in an effort to aid members moving forward.

There was a lengthy discussion among members regarding identification, prioritization, and facilitation of topics before the CSC. In order of prioritization, the following topics were identified to establish a working agenda:

1) Establish Communication with City Council

- Get on January City Council agenda
- Meet individually with City Council members
- Determine best way to utilize the new City Council committee system

2) Refocus CSC Mission

- Reassess SAP by City staff person (self-funded)
- Build resilience to climate change

3) Develop Operational Capacity

- Establish paid City staff position (supported by grants)
- Hold monthly CSC meetings
- Refocus and restructure subcommittee meetings
- More volunteers

A brief recess was taken from 4:45 p.m. until 4:50 p.m.

Members agreed that priority topic (2), Refocus CSC Mission, and topic (3), Operational Capacity, should serve as the basis of dialogue with City Council at the January City Council meeting. It was determined that the CSC should decide on the two best opportunities available to move forward on a project that would yield measurable results. Council members were supportive of fostering interest about sustainability projects through a participatory budget initiative.

3) 2016 MEETING SCHEDULE

Meetings in 2016 will continue to be held on the second Monday of the month at 3:00 p.m. Mr. Sovich plans to check to make sure the Plaza Level Conference Room will still be available for the meetings. Members plan to meet on January 11, 2016; February 8, 2016; and March 14, 2016. It will be determined at a later date if meetings will be held monthly or bi-monthly.

4) INCIDENTAL ITEMS

- A) ITEMS FROM CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR** – Chair Landau announced that today’s meeting is his and Mr. Powell’s last official meeting. Chair Landau and Mr. Powell thanked CSC members and staff for their work. Chair Landau explained that according to the bylaws, a new Chair and Vice-Chair will be

elected at the January, 2016 meetings. The City Clerk has been notified and the process to fill the two vacancies is underway. The official City policy is that when a term has expired, the outgoing person is requested to continue until a replacement is found. Chair Landau said that if he was not present at the January, 2016 meeting, Vice-Chair Carwein will conduct the election of officers. Members thanked Chair Landau and Mr. Powell for their work with the Community Sustainability Council.

B) ITEMS FROM COUNCIL MEMBERS – Mr. McCollum stated that Wake Forest University has a new graduate program in sustainability and has scholarship funds available, for which local government employees could be eligible.

C) ITEMS FROM PUBLIC – None.

D) ITEMS FROM STAFF – None.

5) ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF ABSENCES

Chair Landau acknowledged the excused absence of Bill McNeil.

6) ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the Group, the meeting adjourned at 5:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joel Landau
Chairman
JL:sm/jd