

GREENSBORO COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY COUNCIL
Minutes, Regular Meeting
3:00 pm August 8, 2016
Transportation Conference Room, 3rd Floor
Melvin Municipal Office Building

CSC Members Present:

Stephen McCollum, Chair	Kista Mansell	Howard Taylor
Faun Finley, Vice-Chair	Bill McNeil	Will Yearns
Tom Duckwall	Kelli Swaim	

Staff and Others Present:

Nancy Hoffmann, City Council Member	Mike Kirkman, Planning
Dana Clukey, Planning	Jeff Sovich, Planning
Hart Crane, Planning	Shannon Teamer, Parks and Recreation
Omar Jones, Golden Renewable Energy	Rob Bencini, Author / Economic Developer
Elaine Stover, Greenschemes	Kathe Latham, Green Drinks Greensboro
Thais Weiss, Climate Stories NC	

Chair McCollum called the meeting to order at 3:02 p.m.

- 1) **A) APPROVE MINUTES OF MAY 9, 2016 MEETING**
B) APPROVE NOTES OF JUNE 13 & JULY 11, 2016 INFORMAL WORK SESSIONS

Chair McCollum requested several edits to the minutes of the May 9th meeting. Mr. Davis moved to approve the minutes as amended, Ms. Mansell seconded, and the Council unanimously approved the minutes.

Meeting notes were not available for the June 13th and July 11th work sessions.

- 2) **EQUITY SUB-COMMITTEE REPORT-** N/A

- 3) **COMMUNITY GARDENS INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATIONS AND DISCUSSION**

Shannon Teamer introduced herself and described the existing neighborhood garden spaces that are managed by Greensboro Parks and Recreation which include: Village at Northside, Maywood Park Garden, Steelman Park Garden, Caldcleugh Community Garden, and Keeley Park Community Garden. Ms. Teamer discussed the issue of food insecurity, where the food deserts are in Greensboro, and some of the barriers that limit Greensboro residents' access to fresh food. She also described several upcoming initiatives: a community garden at Brown Recreation Center, working with volunteers from local universities and high schools, and fostering partnerships with the cooperative extension, neighborhood associations, and Guilford County Schools. Upcoming projects include: outreach programming with afterschool programs, day cares, and church groups. She also spoke about extending programming at existing sites, and placing new community garden sites at City owned property. Ms. Teamer offered advice on how to start a community garden, beginning with contacting the Parks and Recreation Department.

Mr. McNeil asked if there was available land for more gardens. Ms. Teamer stated that there are sites available in neighborhoods throughout the City, but garden projects often become neglected when coordinated solely by community members; gardens coordinated by Parks and Recreation staff have better continuity of participation and maintenance. Mr. McNeil also asked about school participation. Ms. Teamer stated that schools can be involved, but programs often end when a

teacher leaves. Ensuring that the principal and other administrators (in addition to teachers and parents) are committed to the garden makes for a more sustainable program.

Mr. Davis asked Ms. Teamer to present to the Neighborhood Congress. Ms. Teamer said she could do that and also pointed out the Fresh Food Access Plan includes information about the entire food system in Greensboro.

Mr. Sovich asked if there was evidence that community gardens can alleviate some of the problems in food deserts. Ms. Teamer said that this question had not been explored yet, but that the Parks and Recreation Department would soon begin gathering the data needed to do so, including registering garden sites and conducting a survey of garden users.

Mr. Duckwall asked if there were any other creative fresh food initiatives, like hydroponics. Ms. Teamer said that they are working on ways to educate the public concerning new tools, specifically container gardens.

Vice-Chair Finley asked if there was a plan to conduct cooking classes, so that people living in food deserts would have the skills to prepare fresh food once they've gained access. Ms. Teamer said that the USDA Cooperative Extension and NCA&T State University are both looking into creating a test kitchen to teach classes. She is also looking into arranging cooking demonstration events and creating recipe cards to hand out at community gardens.

Mr. Davis stated that the City has led a partnership that has submitted an application to the US Department of Agriculture for a Local Food Promotion Program Implementation grant that would establish entrepreneur programs related to local, fresh food.

Mike Kirkman, Zoning Administrator, gave some details regarding the City's regulations for community gardens. The zoning ordinance was amended in April, 2014 to allow for community gardens and urban farms as principle uses in most residential, mixed use, commercial, and traditional neighborhood zoning districts. Many times, the subject lots are infill lots that are adjacent to existing development. Community gardens grow plants, food or ornamental, but do not include retail activity. There are thresholds for the size and setbacks for accessory use structures. Community gardens are allowed by right in most residential and multi-family zoned areas, although Special Use Permits are sometimes required. Urban farms allow for retail activity and more intense garden uses on larger lots. Some benefits that community gardens and urban farms provide include bringing activity to a vacant lot, decreasing enforcement issues and crime, and bringing communities together.

Vice-Chair Finley asked if community gardens were permanent. Mr. Kirkman stated that it is up to the property owner and the operator of the garden. Community gardens are often a great interim use for a site until a use is established that provides a higher return for the property owner. It may also be a broader discussion for the City to determine the permanence of a community garden. Ms. Teamer stated that for existing sites in City parks, she is charged with maintenance.

Mr. Yearns asked if gardens would be allowed in the common areas of apartments or multi-family sites. Mr. Kirkman stated that there is no prohibition on gardens as a secondary use in such locations. Mr. Yearns asked if any urban farms have been established since the ordinance was amended. Mr. Kirkman stated there were a couple of projects in the discussion phase, but none currently existing.

Chair McCollum stated that there were many organizations and much work going on regarding food sustainability and was not sure how the CSC could get involved. He asked for discussion regarding how the CSC moves forward.

Mr. Davis stated that the CSC needs to be an advocate for the gardens. Mr. Yearns suggested that the CSC could consolidate the information that Chair McCollum found from all the organizations that have food related missions. Ms. Mansell asked if there was a webpage where information could be posted. Ms. Teamer stated that there is a Parks and Recreation website and Facebook page, but

wasn't sure of how to get information posted. Ms. Teamer stated that her main goal for the meeting was networking and advocating for more work regarding community gardens. Vice Chair Finley stated that best way to advocate is to work on the CSC webpage. Mr. Duckwall asked what the market was for people looking for information. Ms. Teamer said one of the goals for this year was to market existing plots and the existence of the Parks and Recreation program. Meeting attendee Elaine Stover interjected that the problem with gardening for food is cultural. She stated that there is often a negative social perception related to growing one's own food that often deters people from gardening.

Chair McCollum asked if there was a community wide food forum. A guest to the meeting and Ms. Teamer discussed a few of the food forums: Share the Harvest food bank, Desert Food Storm, and a regional event held by Food Council.

Council Member Hoffman stated she will be attending the CSC's every other month meeting. Mr. McNeil asked how any information from the CSC would be presented to the City Council. Council Member Hoffman stated that she could take items back to Council. There was discussion on food items being in the upcoming bond package.

4) GREENSBORO SOLAR ROADMAP

Mr. Sovich described the Solar RoadMap program and the involved partners. Planning Department staff gathered data related to solar energy, which was then provided to the contractors managing the program. The contractors then created an online information hub, designed to help local government, businesses and interested individuals gather data related to solar energy market. Mr. Sovich detailed some of the website features. The dashboard rates Greensboro's progress in the solar market, particularly the permitting process, zoning regulations, financing options and solar market development. The ultimate goal is to facilitate installation of solar arrays and reducing carbon footprint in Greensboro by making solar installation more cost effective and competitive with conventional power sources. He shared the address of the new page on the City website that provides information on solar energy.

Ms. Swain asked if the Solar RoadMap makes the City of Greensboro more attractive to solar developers. Mr. Sovich said it may increase attention, by making key information readily available. At present, Greensboro and Asheville are the only participants in NC that have opted to make their Solar RoadMap web pages publicly available.

Mr. McNeil asked if there are any metrics related to existing solar use. Mr. Sovich stated he would check into whether such data is available. Mr. Duckwall asked if there were any restrictions of placement of solar panels. Mr. Kirkman stated that in residential areas with a homeowners association or a property owners association, there are often covenants and restrictions that restrict placement of solar panels, but there are no specific restrictions in the City's land development ordinance. Ms. Mansell stated that she was having solar panels installed currently on her home. Mr. Sovich stated that the roofs of approximately 10 to 15% of residential structures are not strong enough to support solar panel installation, but that this can only be determined through direct examination. He also pointed the CSC to a portion of the City's solar webpage that links directly to the Development Services office. Mr. Sovich then briefly demonstrated the function of the Solar RoadMap website.

Chair McCollum asked if the City has made any programmatic commitments to reach solar power goals through its participation in the Solar RoadMap program. Mr. Sovich stated that he is not aware of any commitments. Mr. Davis asked if there was a resolution related to the Solar RoadMap. Mr. Sovich stated that no resolution on solar installation was forthcoming. Council Member Hoffmann asked Ms. Mansell what the buyback was for her solar panels. Ms. Mansell stated that her household would most likely use all the energy generated.

Ms. Swain asked how Duke Energy was involved. Mr. Sovich stated that the State has a renewable energy standard requiring utilities to shift toward renewable power sources over the next 10 to 15 years. Ms. Swain asked how the CSC could promote solar energy use. Mr. McNeil stated that the

City is looking at adding solar panels to some of its facilities, according to a previous meeting with Energy Efficiency Manager, Steve Randall. Vice Chair Finley stated that the CSC could help homeowner associations develop codes, covenants and restrictions that allow solar panels. Mr. Sovich pointed out that the Solar RoadMap has information and suggested language for that purpose. Mr. Duckwall suggested that solar panels could be combined with community garden efforts.

Chair McCollum asked Council Member Hoffmann to keep the CSC informed related to meeting the Solar RoadMap goals.

5) INCIDENTAL ITEMS:

- A. **ITEMS FROM CHAIR & VICE-CHAIR** - Chair McCollum stated that the CSC's September 12th meeting would be an informal work session, and that he would be attending the 2016 Carolinas Climate Resilience Conference in Charlotte on that date. He asked the CSC if they wanted to cancel or reschedule meeting. Mr. Sovich stated that the next meeting would be a tour of the facility of the City's recycling contractor, ReCommunity. Mr. Duckwall suggested that the next meeting be September 19th, to which the CSC agreed.

Vice-Chair Finley stated that she had compiled a great set of outreach videos on topics of interest to the CSC. She also gave three words that the CSC should keep in mind in its outreach efforts: compile, simplify, and share.

- B. **ITEMS FROM COUNCIL MEMBERS** - Chair McCollum asked all CSC members to send their "biosketches" to Mr. Sovich.

Mr. McNeil stated that today's meeting was helpful in seeing what the CSC should and could do. The CSC should also add value to what the City is already working on. Mr. McNeil suggested that the CSC keep the movement going on the initiatives already being worked on. Mr. Taylor stated that there may be other avenues related to the food issue, like drought-resilience and prevention issues. Ms. Swain recalled that Water Resources Director, Steve Drew gave an example of energy production from water flow in pipelines. Perhaps conducting research is how the CSC could help. Chair McCollum encouraged the members to keep up the networking and advocating to making things happen. Ms. Mansell stated that she attended a sustainable transportation conference in Texas. There were many informative and interesting topics. She stated that providing people with options to getting out of their single-occupancy vehicles presents a major opportunity to reduce carbon emissions. Also, many cities have sustainability offices or officers and that may be a great way to get a program started, but sustainability must really be woven into all of a city's programs and activities. Resiliency officers are different from sustainability, but also helpful.

Vice-Chair Finley stated that August 8th, 2016 is Earth Overshoot Day, a day to recognize that humans have used all the natural resources that the Earth can provide for a given year.

- C. **ITEMS FROM PUBLIC** - N/A

- D. **ITEMS FROM STAFF** - Mr. Sovich directed the CSC to the August/September edition of *Planning* magazine, which is dedicated to coverage of issues related to sustainability.

6) ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF ABSENCES

Mr. Johns' absence was excused.

7) ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Mansell moved adjourn the meeting. Mr. Yearns seconded and the motion was unanimously approved. The meeting adjourned at 4:51 pm.