

**GREENSBORO COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY COUNCIL**  
[greensboro-nc.gov/sustainability](http://greensboro-nc.gov/sustainability)  
**Minutes, Regular Meeting**

4pm, Monday, August 10, 2020  
 Virtual Meeting, using the Zoom videoconferencing tool

**CSC Members Present:**

Vicki Foust, Chair	Veda Howell	Nicole Gaines
Raleigh Stout	Jonathan King	Susan Phillips
Sophia Dubrovsky		

**Staff and Others Present:**

Marikay Abuzuaiter, Greensboro City Council	Kimberly Conley, NC CleanTech Center
Kimberly Sowell, Assistant City Manager	Lindsey Beane, Fordhams Cleaners
Rodney Roberts, CoG Information Technology	Carmen Honeycomb, Volvo Trucks
Zach Petersen, CoG Water Resources	Hazel Landers, Sierra Club, Piedmont Plateau
Sergey Kobelev, CoG Engineering & Inspections	Bill Bucklen, Triad Electric Vehicle Association
Elizabeth Link, CoG Planning	Happy Rieth, resident
Tori Carle, CoG Field Operations	Jordan Birkner, resident
Lorien Deaton, CoG Field Operations	Sean MacInnes, UNCG Sustainability
Jeff Sovich, CoG Planning	Dr. Etsuko Kinefuchi, UNCG
Christine Swanson, CoG Planning	Dr. Shaleen Miller, UNCG
Ellen Van Velsor, Citizens Climate Lobby	Charles Birkner, UNCG Library Sustainability Group
Shad Smith, ARDA Trade and Export	

**1. Chair Greeting / Welcome Visitors**

Chair Foust called the meeting to order at 4:01 pm and welcomed visitors in attendance, and recognized Ms Rieth and Ms Landers, listed speakers on Item 11 in the Agenda.

**2. Approval of May 11, 2020 Meeting Minutes**

Chair Foust advised of grammatical and other needed corrections in the minutes. The CSC discussed the need for a more thorough reading of the minutes by everyone. Ms Gaines made a motion to withhold approval of the May 11, 2020 meeting minutes to allow them to be reviewed by everyone; seconded by Mr. Stout. The CSC unanimously approved the motion (8-0). The minutes were tabled until the October meeting.

**3. EPA Grant Proposal for Anaerobic Digestion Feasibility Study**

Chair Foust advised that this EPA grant opportunity was discussed at a June or July meeting, in which it was determined that in order to submit a proposal that included a match amount from the City, the City Council would need to give its approval of applying for the grant. Chair Foust noted that if this proposal is funded, it would help Greensboro meet a prerequisite of the LEED for Cities program related to food waste. Chair Foust

recognized all of the members of the Anaerobic Digestion Proposal team for their work with the proposal. Ms Gaines asked how many people were on the committee. Mr. Sovich advised it was probably 7 or 8 total. Ms Dubrovsky stated it was a job well done and thanked everyone for their efforts in making sure it was in on time. Mr. Sovich thanked Chair Foust for bringing this grant opportunity to the attention of the Council pushing everyone forward to completing the proposal. Chair Foust thanked Councilmember Abuzuaiter for her assistance in working with Council, being supportive, and pushing it forward.

#### **4. District 3 CSC Opening Update**

Chair Foust has been working diligently with the City Clerk's office to fill this opening. Chair Foust advised there were some issues which have since been resolved. Dr. Marcia Hale from UNCG has applied to be added to the Boards and Commissions databank, specifically regarding the CSC. The open seat is designated to represent City Council District 3. Councilmember Abuzuaiter stated that the Council is working on filling this seat, noting that Dr. Hale is very qualified. Chair Foust was hopeful that by the next meeting the vacant seat would be filled.

#### **5. LEED for Cities Silver Certification**

Chair Foust advised that the US Green Building Council had finalized Greensboro's certification in the LEED for Cities program. Greensboro achieved LEED Silver Certification. Chair Foust thanked the City of Greensboro staff for their efforts in pursuing the certification over the course of a year, and recognized Mr. Sovich's role in coordinating the dozens of staff members working on the project. Preliminary documentation was submitted to USGBC in October 2019, and the final clarified documentation was submitted in June.

Over the next five years, the City will need to take deliberate steps and decisive action to improve this score and advance sustainability in order to reach the Gold level when it recertifies. Chair Foust stated that the CSC will need to receive and review the submitted documentation in order to understand what can and should be done to improve. Mr. Sovich stated that there would not be a problem providing the documentation and data for the CSC to review.

Mr. Sovich advised he was working on a landing page the City website related to the LEED for Cities certification and will follow up with more information regarding the certification.

#### **6. Discussion on LEED for Cities – Outcomes Communication Tool**

Chair Foust asked exactly what would the landing page be. Mr. Sovich responded it will consist of basic information about the LEED for Cities program, and a general explanation of how the City scored in various categories. There would be a description of the difference between prerequisites and credits. There would be a list of the specific points the City received, and those that the City fell short, which could present opportunities for improvement over the next 5 years in preparation for recertification. The landing page will provide general explanations on why this is important and what it means to the average person.

Chair Foust stated CSC has been seeking a chart or graphic that would present a concise, user-friendly summary of all the prerequisites, credits, and where Greensboro scored points. She asked whether something of this sort would be included. Mr. Sovich presented several slides showing various draft charts and tables intended to convey this information. Mr. Sovich noted that Transportation and Land Use, Water Efficiency, Energy and

Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Materials and Resources, and Quality of Life, are the five categories in which all LEED cities must achieve a minimum score in order to become certified. Mr. Sovich described the performance measure for Transportation and Land Use, which is dependent on the number of vehicle miles traveled per year, per capita in a community. The ARC Dashboard turns the raw performance measures into scaled scores so that all participating cities can be evaluated and compared on a consistent basis. For some of the credits, not every city would be submitting data on every credit, not all would be able to earn points for every credit.

Mr. Sovich noted that Greensboro's ARC Dashboard score was 67 out of a possible 90 points. A link to the animated ARC Dashboard will be included on the City's LEED webpage. This number is not the same as Greensboro's certification score of 55, which is what determined that the City received Silver certification. A question was asked if the participating cities were all similar in size. Mr. Sovich responded that cities of all sizes participate in and have been certified in the LEED for Cities program. Chair Foust inquired if the actual credits would be listed for people to understand the credits available under each of the categories and how Greensboro scored on each credit. Mr. Sovich responded the main LEED webpage would be limited in the amount of technical information, since most people would not be interested in reading more than a few paragraphs. But the full detailed information would be made available for anyone interested in a deeper dive into the data and documentation. Ms Foust emphasized that there is a large contingency of people in Greensboro who are very interested in sustainability. It is paramount that a high level of transparency be shown with anything regarding sustainability. Continued work will be done with the landing page to include links with more detailed information and to determine the best way for the information to be presented.

**7. Break** – At 4:47 pm, Chair Foust adjourned the meeting for a brief break. Chair Foust reconvened at 4:52 pm

## **8. CSC History Slideshow Update**

Chair Foust stated that over the last couple of months, the CSC discussed concerns about the loss of historical information, because the residents appointed to the CSC when it was established in 2008, are all no longer members. As a way of preserving the CSC's history and highlighting its accomplishments, a slide presentation is in development. Chair Foust stated two things discussed were interviewing the prior Chairs of CSC, and a review of the compiled annual CSC minutes, which are available on the CSC webpage. Mr. Sovich noted that when the CSC was formed, it was called the Advisory Group on Sustainability and a vote was made to change the name. It was acknowledged that contacting past CSC members from that long ago may be difficult. Questions were raised on why this was being done. Chair Foust stated it was something brought to the table and was talked about back on Earth Day. Ms Gaines suggested having students do the work. Mr. King felt sending an email to previous Chair members was a good idea to obtain highlights to make a short slideshow. Ms Gaines felt making a video with live reactions and experiences would be a good idea. Ms Phillips suggested that both of these ideas would have merit. A motion was made by Mr. King to table this issue and discuss it further at a work session; seconded by Ms Dubrovsky. The CSC unanimously approved the motion (6-0).

## **9. Update on Greensboro Strategic Energy Plan**

Chair Foust provided an update on the Strategic Energy Plan due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the City's focus being pulled in other directions, the Strategic Energy Plan (SEP) has not moved forward at all. A decision was made to request an extension of the

deadline for completing the SEP (the resolution originally adopted by the City Council requires a presenting a draft for their review by December 8, 2020). The City Council will be asked to extend this deadline to August 31, 2021. Ms Sowell stated it has not officially gone on a Council agenda. Ms Sowell had a conversation with Councilwoman Abuzuaiter who stated she was in support of it and the recommendation will be moved forward and added to a City Council agenda in September.

## **10. New Business (Raleigh Stout)**

Chair Foust stated Mr. Stout would like to present potential new business for the CSC related to equity and inclusion. Chair Foust read into the record "The CSC can specifically discuss equity and inclusion in the following areas: 1. Sustainable food policy regarding food desert zones; farmers market access, food banks, and food distribution to those most in need; 2. LEED for Cities and opportunities for food waste management; 3. Internet access, remote learning, and bandwidth improvements in preparation for supporting city staff and public users to include K-12 students working on academic projects within city facilities."

Mr. Stout added a fourth item, the City's energy policy and vision, which the CSC is working on. They are common topics shared with city departments and the Human Relations Department in the Human Relations Commission. Everyone should be able to access and equally benefit from all these services. Mr. Stout discussed food policy issues with staff of the Farmers Curb Market, at 501 Yanceyville Street, who advised they are considering opening up several new "satellite sites" for farm to consumer sales. Greensboro has a high number of Census Tracts designated as food deserts, so these additional locations would help address food access and security. The Farmers Curb Market does not have specific details that can be shared at this time. Mr. Stout stated that the LEED for Cities program includes requirements that the City develop procedures for handling and processing food waste, with either composting or anaerobic digestion as the end result. There may be an opportunity to partner with Guilford County Schools and the Board of Education and other large institutions with food service operations, in establishing a pilot program.

Mr. Stout stated that there are still areas of Greensboro where high-speed broadband internet service is not available. The COVID-19 pandemic has required many adults to perform their work duties remotely and nearly all K-12 students are likewise required to continue their academic coursework remotely. This new need to conduct work and school using virtual online platforms has highlighted the incomplete coverage of internet access in Greensboro and are intensifying disparities in employment and education outcomes. Addressing this issue will be vital to the City's economic recovery and to equitable prosperity for Greensboro's future. Mr. Stout is particularly sensitive to this issue, as he does not have home internet access, and relies on free wi-fi available at various City facilities. Mr. Stout advised he is working on a proposal for an IT survey that would look at these issues and offer recommendations for ways to extend wi-fi access to areas of Greensboro with greatest need.

Chair Foust stated that education and employment issues are relevant to the Quality of Life category of LEED for Cities, while the topic of food waste management is covered in the Materials and Resources category. Those are two areas CSC can explore in the future. Chair Foust asked Mr. Sovich if it would be possible to bring someone from the Guilford Food Task Force to assist CSC in developing recommendations that could be presented to the City Council. Ms Gaines stated that City representatives participate in meetings with Guilford County Schools to discuss unmet needs in the community and how to meet those needs. Chair Foust stated that once the CSC delves into the LEED for Cities data and documentation, we can discuss whether it may be possible for the City to partner with GCS

on food waste. Mr. Stout advised that the Human Relations Commission has an education committee, which may be beneficial to include in these types of discussions. Mr. Stout will provide names of people that should perhaps be a part of these type of discussions.

### **11. Requested Discussions: Hazel Landers and Happy Rieth**

Chair Foust stated that two Greensboro residents, Ms Hazel Landers and Ms Happy Rieth, had requested to speak on conservation issues.

Ms Hazel Landers presented a slide presentation developed by the Piedmont Plateau Group of the NC Sierra Club. The presentation highlighted the rapid acceleration of human-induced climate change and ecological destruction, the benefits of forests, and the harmful effects of clear-cutting. Clear cutting can cause changes in CO2 levels, create habitat losses, and increase the risk of natural disasters. Surface mining is a big problem as millions of acres of trees have been destroyed. Pipe line construction destroys a large portion of trees. Commercial and highway development in almost every city and town around the world have contributed to the global crisis. In Greensboro, thousands of acres of trees were destroyed during the construction of I-840. Most recently four acres of trees were destroyed at the intersection of Lawndale Drive and Lake Jeanette Road and will be the first commercial structure that will be on Lake Jeanette Road. Many trees are designated to be destroyed during the renovation and expansion of the Greensboro Science Center. Atmospheric CO2 levels reached an all-time high of 415 parts per million as of May 2019.

Ms Landers stated the human activities that increase CO2 in the atmosphere and advised everyone needs to be thinking of what needs to be done to save this planet. Ms Landers spoke to what causes high levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. What high carbon emissions across the nation have caused such as mudslides, droughts, wildfires, melting icebergs, rising sea levels, and earthquakes.

Ms Landers advised heart disease, upper respiratory illnesses, and viruses are more prevalent in industrial zones and urban areas where there are high levels of CO2 and a low density of trees and other oxygen-releasing vegetation. Trees act as our planet's lungs by absorbing carbon and purifying the air. Many illnesses and epidemics could be avoided if a sufficient number of trees were preserved in urban areas. Residents have planted trees in their neighborhoods and communities. Many cities and communities across the nation have called for a moratorium on clear-cutting of mature trees and forests. Ms Landers stated the Piedmont Plateau Group are asking Mayor Vaughan and the City Council to enact a moratorium on clear-cutting to save the trees. Ms Landers asked the CSC as a group to endorse the Save Our Trees campaign.

Chair Foust thanked Ms Landers for the presentation on behalf of CSC. Chair Foust requested Ms Rieth to speak.

Ms Rieth stated that her presentation would only pertain to the Guilford College area and the Friends' Home West expansion. Ms Rieth stated there were 3 phases of the expansion project. Friends Home West (FHW) has purchased most of the houses and demolished some houses and clear-cut 8 acres. Ms Rieth stated that her neighborhood attended the City Council meeting to speak in opposition to rezoning for this project. Based on the rezoning that was granted, FHW's site plan required so much grading that much of the site had to be clear-cut. The homes in Ms Rieth's neighborhood were built in the mid-1950s through mid-1980s. The destruction of such a large stand of mature trees has created a significant negative impact on the residential character of the neighborhood. Photographs were shown depicting a field with a riparian buffer along the stream. The battle has been lost on Ridgecrest Drive, but Ms Rieth expressed deep concern about removing so much of the stream buffer, and what effects this will have on the stream. A rendering of a two lane

bridge to be built over the stream was shown. Ms Rieth stated she was very alarmed when she saw the picture and decided to reach out the CSC, in order to understand where the City stands on protecting wildlife and trees with projects like this. Ms Rieth asked if Ms Abuzuaiter could address that question.

Ms Abuzuaiter stated that this rezoning was heard by the City Council and several conditions were placed on the development and the two lane road. From her recollection, the two lane road would not be open to through traffic and will only be for internal FHW traffic. In getting the site plan approved, the developers must go through the Technical Review Committee (TRC) process and comply with all the applicable requirements and standards related to landscaping and tree conservation. That stage is beyond what the City Council's role in the process. City Council approves the conditions and rezoning, and then it goes on to the next level. Ms Rieth stated that she was informed that the clear-cutting was approved because the developer will be required to plant new trees to replace those destroyed. There have been huge trees taken down, which will be replaced by saplings. Ms Rieth feels there should be a way to offer more protection than that. The neighborhood is concerned not only about the eyesore of the clear-cutting, but more importantly the environment destruction as Ms Landers discussed.

Chair Foust thanked Ms Rieth for her presentation, but was not sure if the CSC could do anything to help with this particular situation. It could be a lesson learned and used as a spring board to make different decisions in the future around planning and conservation. Mr. Stout stated he would support future use of remedies like wildlife refuges and conservation easements more often to help address the types of concerns presented by Ms Landers and Ms Rieth. Chair Foust noted that the CSC may be able to develop recommendations to the City Council regarding these conservation techniques.

Ms Link of the Planning Department stated she was aware the criteria the City uses when looking at a plan like this and the state requirements for watersheds. There are requirements for an undisturbed stream buffer of 50 to 100 feet from the top of the bank. Ms Rieth asked if the developers went high enough, would they be able to comply with that. The bridge would need to be high to avoid the flood waters when it floods. Ms Link stated developers are required to leave 50 feet from the top of the streambank undisturbed, on both sides, and another 50 feet beyond that can have very limited uses and tree removal. Additionally, if the site is located in a floodplain, there would be limits on what can be built.

Ms Gaines asked whether there is anything Ms Rieth and Ms Landers could do to encourage FHW to replant with the same types of hardwood trees, instead of ornamentals or Bradford Pears. Ms Link stated that when a site plan is submitted FHW would be required to include landscape buffers and some tree conservation, although stream buffers can be counted for their tree conservation which is 10% of the lot size. Planning has requirements for landscaping but not much. That is the only way Planning could enforce any kind of tree planting. Ms Link suggested to speak directly to the developers and see what can be found out. Ms Link stated she is not in Water Resources and could not speak to how the stream buffer would be enforced but assumed there would be inspectors to review the grading on the property. Ms Link was unsure if inspectors were in the fields at this point and suggested contacting Water Resources. Ms Gaines asked if the stream had an origin or was it storm water runoff from the area. Ms Landers stated she only knew it was called the King George Branch [ of Horse Pen Creek] and believed it to be an established stream. Chair Foust thanked Ms Link for her input.

Mr. Petersen stated he is with the Water Resources Department in the Utilities Mapping Section. He noted that tree conservation and watershed protection are issues which the City has an opportunity to improve its approach. He sees on a daily basis, situations such as Ms Landers' presentation showed. There was a lot of red uncovered soil. This is seen in

every situation where a brand new development is in progress. From the time the site is cleared to the time the last Certificate of Occupancy (CO) is issued, there is a large amount of soil erosion. This soil flows into storm drain pipes. These pipes are City assets where public funds have been invested. This infrastructure becomes clogged with sediment and its ability to function properly is significantly impaired before the CO is issued because of the way development activity is regulated. This is not to say that developers aren't complying with requirements, but rather that the current rules do not take into how much soil intrusion is reaching the storm sewer system. When these storm sewers become full, there will be more drainage and flooding problems throughout the area served by that line. Due to the increased intensity, frequency, and duration of storm events, City crews are overloaded with work on storm water control devices that are not functioning. Streams overflow their banks because of the same issues of excess sedimentation.

Mr. King noted the City's ability to promote tree conservation is laid out in the Land Development Ordinance (LDO). There are a lot of places where the tree conservation requirements in the LDO could be tweaked slightly to make a huge impact. The most direct and meaningful place for the CSC to start would be developing some recommended amendments to the LDO. Chair Foust thanked Mr. Petersen and Ms Link for being present and contributing to the discussion. Chair Foust will work on forming a sub-committee for additional discussions in the background.

## **12. Acknowledgement of Absences**

Chair Foust moved to acknowledge the excused absence of CSC Vice-Chair Jacques Pierre.

## **13. Incidental and Announcements**

- **Items from Chair** – Chair Foust stated Ms Gaines, Etsuko Kinefuchi, and Shad Smith all attended the Climate Reality Project Leadership training and are officially Climate Reality Leaders. Chair Foust will provide a presentation on this initiative in the future. Chair Foust would like to create a local chapter for Greensboro.
- **Items from Vice-Chair** – None.
- **Items from CSC Members** – Ms Sowell congratulated Chair Foust and Ms Gaines. Ms Gaines stated Ms Landers has been diligently working on the Sierra Club's AddUp campaign and will be structure behind the Save Our Trees and will present it to the Board at the next meeting. Mr. Petersen suggested the City web site there is a link for the Land Development Ordinance, Article 12, Natural Resources and can go through to see what the tree conservation policies the City of Greensboro currently has. It is a good thing to see what is actively being done.
- **Items from Public** – Bill Bucklen, Director of the Triad Electric Vehicle Association, advised that after many years of work, an electric vehicle charging station has been installed at Deep Roots Market. When Deep Roots built their new building in 2013, it was suggested that a charging station be installed there, so the necessary utilities were placed in the ground at that time. Installation of the charging station began in 2019, and was completed and turned on in the past week. There are two spaces or ports in this charging station which are free for public use. Chair Foust responded it was awesome. Ms Gaines stated it was great. Chair Foust thanked Mr. Bucklen for sitting through the meeting to before being able to speak.
- **Items from Staff** – None.

## **14. Adjournment**

Chair Foust adjourned the meeting at 6:09 pm.