

**GREENSBORO COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY COUNCIL**  
**greensboro-nc.gov/sustainability**  
**Minutes, Regular Meeting**

4pm, Monday, October 12, 2020  
Virtual Meeting, using the Zoom videoconferencing tool

**CSC Members Present:**

Vicki Foust, Chair	Veda Howell	Nicole Gaines
Jacques Pierre, Vice-Chair	Raleigh Stout	Susan Phillips
Sophia Dubrovsky		

**Staff and Others Present:**

Marikay Abuzuaiter, Greensboro City Council	Nelson Stover, Emerging Ecology
Kimberly Sowell, Assistant City Manager	Marlene Sanford, TREBIC
Will Yearns, Advisor	Judy Stalder, TREBIC
Mike Borchers, CoG Water Resources	Laura Oxner, Repurposed
Sergey Kobelev, CoG Engineering & Inspections	Paula Sieber, Greensboro Urban Farming Initiative
Elizabeth Link, CoG Planning	Sean MacInnes, UNCG Sustainability
Tori Carle, CoG Field Operations	Dr. Etsuko Kinefuchi, UNCG
Richard Lovett, CoG Field Operations	Trista Munson, resident
Jeff Sovich, CoG Planning	Happy Rieth, resident
Christine Swanson, CoG Planning	Victoria O'Leary, resident
Shad Smith, Climate Reality Project	Jonathan Mitchell, resident
Will Pharr, Sustainability in Greensboro	

**1. Chair Greeting / Welcome Visitors**

Chair Foust called the meeting to order at 4:00 pm and welcomed visitors and city staff in attendance.

**2. Approval of May 11 and August 10, 2020 Meeting Minutes.**

Chair Foust advised of grammatical and other corrections to the minutes. She also requested that Item 3 in the May minutes be revised to include the full text of the adopted amendment that added Strategy 7E to the Sustainability Action Plan. Mr. Stout made a motion to approve the May minutes, as revised, seconded by Ms Gaines. The CSC unanimously approved the motion (7-0). Ms Gaines made a motion to approve the August minutes, as revised, seconded by Ms Dubrovsky. The CSC unanimously approved the motion (7-0).

**3. New District 3 Appointment Tiffany Turner**

Chair Foust advised that Ms Tiffany Turner will be the representing District 3. Having been married the preceding weekend, and currently enjoying her honeymoon, Ms Turner was not available to attend today's meeting. She plans to attend the next CSC informal work session. Ms Turner will receive a formal introduction during the December CSC meeting.

#### 4. LEED for Cities Initiatives Discussion

The CSC discussed various requirements of the LEED for Cities certification program and ways that the City could earn more points when it pursues re-certification in 5 years. Regarding the Green Spaces credit, Dr. Phillips noted that in order to receive points, green spaces would be needed that are located within a 1/2 mile walking distance of at least 70% of the dwelling units in the City. Reaching out to civic groups to inquire if they would be interested in helping establish new green spaces was discussed. Suggestions were made to reach out to Lowes, Home Depot, and New Garden Nursery for donations of plants or seeds and have college students plant them as part of their service requirements. Mr. Sovich noted that the staff team that worked on gathering the data and documentation for the LEED for Cities certification performed a GIS analysis of the green spaces that meet the criteria and found that the City fell short of the threshold to receive points for this credit. The analysis included all drainage maintenance and utility easements, public parks, watershed critical areas, and many places that most people would never realize were green spaces. Private lands and residential yards do not qualify, unless they are protected by a conservation easement. Green spaces can be made up of multiple contiguous properties, but each green space must have an area of at least 7,212 square feet. Chair Foust asked Mr. Sovich if it would be possible for the CSC to receive some type of map that would identify the areas or locations of the green spaces and dwelling units not meeting that requirement. Mr. Sovich responded that this could be done in some form.

Regarding the Light Pollution credit, it was noted that Greensboro's lighting ordinance does not conform to the Model Lighting Ordinance (MLO) published jointly by the International Dark Sky Association and the Illuminating Engineering Society. Dr. Phillips has done research which will be discussed at the next CSC work session, regarding possible recommended changes to the ordinance, particularly in the area of light trespass. Mr. Yearns stated that there is language in the City's ordinance that speaks to light pollution, but he did not know if the verbiage aligns with the MLO.

Chair Foust asked to add Arbor Day and Scouts BSA for Eagle Scout projects. Chair Foust advised she recently joined the Landscape Ordinance Committee on updating the landscaping requirements in the LDO. The CSC would like to work with as many groups as possible and continue having all the stakeholders together and looking at everyone's needs. Mr. Stover advised that Greensboro Beautiful's NeighborWoods Program, which provides a tree-planting grant to neighborhoods, has planted thousands of trees throughout the City.

Dr. Phillips stated that in the Land Use and Transportation category there is a credit related to Alternative Fuel Vehicles. To earn points in this credit, the City needs more electric vehicle charging stations or more alternative fuel stations. This could be a student project to survey existing charging stations. Chair Foust stated that this topic will be discussed at the next CSC work session.

Two credits in the Quality of Life category where the City missed points were the low graduation rates for Hispanic high school students, and environmental justice issues. Credits in the Materials and Resources category have changed since the CSC first reviewed them. The category now focuses more on materials recovery to manufacturers, and procurement from producers that use less non-recyclable materials.

Chair Foust advised that the City was not selected to receive a grant from the EPA for conducting a feasibility study on anaerobic digestion, but she believed there may be other opportunities available in the future. The City will continue working on the food waste issue through other means.

Mr. Sovich noted some of the LEED for Cities credits where Greensboro has the best opportunities to make advances and receive additional points for re-certification, such as

adding more electric vehicle charging stations, reducing average daily water use per capita, increasing the percentage of renewable energy used in city operations, reducing per capita waste generation, and increasing the number of residents living within walking distance of a green space. Councilmember Abuzuaiter stated the Community Foundation has a grant program called Building Stronger Neighborhoods that addresses quality of life, parks and recreation, and more. The contact person is Sadie Blue.

Chair Foust stated this was a very robust conversation and is a good sign that the CSC is making good progress in identifying sustainability projects that can be brought together by different stakeholders and get the community involved. Chair Foust thanked Dr. Phillips for a great job in gathering all of the information and taking leadership on reviewing the LEED for Cities documentation.

## **5. Strategic Energy Plan Update**

Chair Foust advised that she, Assistant City Manager Kim Sowell, and Jeff Sovich were working on a list of City staff members to form the internal team that will guide development of the Strategic Energy Plan. They are also compiling a list of key external stakeholders who will form the initial core of the “diverse community partnership” called for in the City Council Resolution to develop the SEP. Plotting out a specific timeline and process for developing the plan has been complicated and delayed due to Covid-related disruptions.

**6. Break** – At 5:02 pm, Chair Foust adjourned the meeting for a brief break. Chair Foust reconvened the meeting at 5:09 pm.

## **7. Climate Reality Project: Guilford County, NC Chapter Leadership Presentation (Dr. Etsuko Kinefuchi, Nicole Gaines, and Dr. Vicki Foust)**

Chair Foust advised Nicole Gaines, Dr. Etsuko Kinefuchi and herself all attended a Climate Reality Project leadership training, along with Shad Smith. Their goal in attending the training was to form a Guilford County Chapter that could collaborate with similar sustainability organizations to identify points of synergy and how to leverage them for climate action. The Climate Reality Project was founded by former Vice President Al Gore.

Chair Foust began the presentation with the first photograph of earth taken on the Apollo moon missions, which changed the thinking of humanity regarding the earth, reminding us that we are all connected and that our actions affect the entire planet. There are only three questions remaining in the climate crisis: Must we change?; Can we change?; and Will we change? The scientific community around the world has been saying for a long time we must change. Things happening in the world currently tell us Mother Nature is telling us that we must change. Currently, pollution by humans spews 152 million tons of greenhouse gases into the thin shell of Earth’s atmosphere every 24 hours. Chair Foust stated the basics of global warming. Energy from sun comes to the earth and is absorbed into the atmosphere. Some of the energy that reaches the surface is re-radiated into the atmosphere and trapped, which is what keeps the planet warm enough to sustain life. But the burning of fossil fuels and other human activities increases the heat trapping properties of the atmosphere, which is causing the planet to warm at an unprecedented rate. Globally, fossil fuel use increased dramatically since World War II. Nineteen of the hottest years ever measured have occurred since 2001, the hottest within the last 5 years.

Dr. Kinefuchi continued the presentation, advising of the consequences of climate change around the world. Heat exhaustion, which affects people, animals, crops, and weather, has become far more prevalent. More than 90% of the excess heat trapped by the atmosphere

ends up in the oceans. This heat drives ocean-based weather events, making hurricanes, typhoons, and cyclones, more frequent, more powerful, longer-lasting, and more destructive. Dr. Kinefuchi discussed the hydrological cycle and how heat affects the amount of water that evaporates from the warming oceans. But this same excess heat also evaporates moisture even more quickly from the land, causing longer and deeper droughts. Extreme precipitation events have led to record flooding all over the world. The past two years were among the top 10 most expensive at over billions of dollars. Flooding can occur even without rainfall, due to high tides at beaches everywhere. The U.S. Department of Defense has long warned about these crises, along with their potential to trigger disease pandemics. Climate change is the number one threat to the global economy.

Ms Gaines continued the presentation with an interactive poll asking participants to answer the 3 questions posed at the beginning. Ms Gaines referred to examples depicting the growth of renewable energy use, such as wind energy, solar energy, geothermal, and how all of these sources could be implemented toward solving the climate crisis and helping local economies at the same time. Battery storage will be an essential part of the green energy revolution and the electrical vehicle market. Highly efficient LED lights are predicted to completely replace incandescent lighting products. Energy efficient technologies save money and reduce emissions by cutting down the amount of electricity. All major motor vehicle manufacturers are now offering or preparing to offer electric vehicles. At the COP-21 negotiations in Paris in 2015, every nation agreed to phase down greenhouse gas emissions. Climate is not only what every country does, but everyone needs to take personal responsibility in addressing the climate crisis. Everyone's voice, vote, and choices in the market place, and in life, speak to the power of change. Ms Gaines concluded the presentation by providing information for anyone to become involved in the Climate Leadership Chapter.

## **8. Upcoming CSC Elections**

CSC elections will be held at the December official meeting.

## **9. Speakers from the Community**

Ms Laura Oxner stated her niche in Sustainability is through food recovery. Ms Oxner has used this Covid quarantine time to form her non-profit program, Repurpose, under A Simple Gesture. Food recovery is an important effort for two reasons: improving food security, and diverting good food from landfills to people who need it. Ms Oxner previously managed food waste for the Guilford County Schools snack program. She now works with colleges and universities, the hospitality industry, and special events organizers. Repurpose is working on a local adaptation of a mobile app called FoodConnect, which is based in Philadelphia. Ms Oxner detailed the current proposals being worked on with local county food councils and Governor Cooper's office. The focus is to ensure that all available food resources go to productive use. Ms Oxner advised she has a lot of mitigation numbers that can be shared.

Mr. Nelson Stover, Chairman of Emerging Ecology, described a new coalition of four local organizations: Emerging Ecology, Environmental Stewardship Greensboro, Greensboro Beautiful, and Tiny Houses Greensboro. Recently, these four groups signed a memorandum of understanding to bring a styrofoam densifier machine to Greensboro. The densifier is expected to arrive at the Tiny House facility 1310 West Gate City Boulevard on November 11, 2020. Approximately the size of 3 filing cabinets, this device turns styrofoam into ordinary polystyrene plastic. First the Styrofoam is pulverized and then heated at a low temperature and extruded. The Styrofoam goes in at the top and

molten plastic comes out the bottom, which can be molded into and other products, instead of ending up in a landfill.

Styrofoam takes up a lot of space in landfills. The City pays by the ton to haul solid waste and dump at the landfill. Recycling Styrofoam just for the resale value is not economically viable on its own but cost savings from the space it saves at the landfill is tremendous. The licensed landfills left in the state of North Carolina have a remaining capacity to accept waste for only the next 40 years, so it behooves the state to divert as much material from landfills as possible.

Currently \$44,000 has been raised. The project will start on November 11 or 12, of 2020. The City of Greensboro has agreed to help publicize the launch event. The goal is that after Thanksgiving the level of awareness about this service will be city-wide. Mr. Stover stated to those present at the meeting, they could go to the Tiny House facility on November 12, 2020 for a demonstration. Mr. Stover stated that details about the business, pictures of the polystyrene densifier machine, and all the details of what is being done are available on Emerging Ecology's website (<https://emergingecology.org/>). Both financial and time contributions to this effort would be appreciated.

Ms Paula Sieber, of the Guilford Urban Farming Initiative (GUFU) thanked the City of Greensboro for all of their help. There is property within the Willow Oaks community common area that will be used as a farmers market to provide food directly from the farm to the table. This program will have a two-prong effect: helping to save family farms and to providing good healthy, fresh food directly to those who do not otherwise have access. The effort has been very successful, with 38 vendors now signed on. The area has been opened up to local craftsman, artists, etc. to help relieve Covid-related economic hardships. There are also informational exhibitors who teach nutrition essentials and food preparation skills. Guilford County provided a substantial grant from the CARES Small Business Assistance fund. About 2,200 pounds of food are delivered each week to local food banks, churches, etc. for distribution. Ms Sieber expressed her interest in green spaces as they are working with the City in identifying property to build an urban farm. GUFU has received several grants in support of the urban farm. One GUFU member is a local business owner who has offered their roof for a green-roof demonstration project. Ms Sieber inquired if there were any grants available for green roof projects to let her know. Ms Sieber thanked everyone for their help and support. Chair Foust thanked everyone on behalf of the Council for coming and talking to CSC about their projects.

## 10. Acknowledgement of Absences

Chair Foust moved to acknowledge the excused absence of Jonathan King.

## 11. Incidental and Announcements

- **Items from Chair** – None.
- **Items from Vice-Chair** – None.
- **Items from CSC Members** – Ms Gaines encouraged everyone to vote early for the upcoming election. Ms Gaines thanked both Ms Sieber and Mr. Stover for their connections to the community. Ms Gaines advised that she had some questions for Ms Oxner but needed more time. Ms Gaines thanked Chair Foust and Dr. Kinefuchi for their help with the presentation and thanked Mr. Stover for his mentorship. Mr. Yearns advised Mr. Stover to reach out to the City regarding the "At Your Service" newsletter insert to include information regarding the styrofoam densifier. The lead-time on that publication is around 3 months. Chair Foust suggested perhaps a sign company could donate some advertisement for them.

- **Items from Public** – Ms Sieber thanked Ms Gaines for her kind words. It is their honor to work with the communities they are working with and have made great new friends. Most importantly, this could not be done without all the volunteers and all the different groups helping them. It has been a really great collaboration. Mr. Yearns stated that Living Roofs, NC.com and located in Ashville have done a lot of commercial projects and may be a good resource. Chair Foust advised that she has a contact name for that company.
- **Items from Staff** – Mr. Sovich advised there has been a large amount of information about the LEED for Cities program in general, and Greensboro’s LEED Silver Certification in particular, is now available on the City website at <http://www.greensboro-nc.gov/LEED>

**12. Adjournment** - Chair Foust adjourned the meeting at 6:00 pm.