

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

4pm, Monday, December 14, 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	Tiffany Oliva	

Staff and Others Present:

Marikay Abuzuaite, Greensboro City Council	Charla Gaskins, Neighborhood Development
Kimberly Sowell, Assistant City Manager	Rodney Roberts, Information Technology
Angie Lord, City Clerk	Shawna Tillery, Parks & Recreation
Chris Marriott, Field Operations	Richard Lovett, CoG Field Operations
Mike Borchers, CoG Water Resources	Zach Peterson CoG Water Resources
Sergey Kobelev, CoG Engineering & Inspections	Elizabeth Link, CoG Planning
Christine Swanson, CoG Planning	Jeff Sovich, CoG Planning
Will Yearns, CSC Advisor	Amber Weaver, City of Asheville
Margaret Rowlett, Solar Power Now Coalition	Sean MacInnes, UNCG Sustainability Office
Kathe Latham, Solar Power Now Coalition	Ridwaana Allen, UNCG
Shad Smith, Climate Reality Project	Plaxedes Chitiyo, UNCG
Carrie Stewart, Green State Power	Erin Marken, Raymond James Financial
Stephen McCollum, Resident	Happy Rieth, Resident
Carol Bloom, Resident	Jean Pudlo, Resident
Victoria O'Leary, Resident	Steve Drew, Resident

1. Chair Greeting / Welcome Visitors

Chair Foust called the meeting to order at 4:01 pm and welcomed visitors and city staff in attendance. Chair Foust advised that Amber Weaver will be a guest speaker during the second half of the meeting.

2. Approval of October 12, 2020 Meeting Minutes

The CSC discussed the draft minutes of the October 12 meeting and noted corrections to be made. Mr. Stout moved to accept the minutes as amended; second by Ms Gaines. The CSC unanimously approved the motion (8-0).

3. Proposed Amendment to CSC Bylaws – Diversity and Inclusion

Chair Foust stated that it is important for CSC, as an advisory board appointed by the Greensboro City Council, to make an affirmative statement regarding diversity and inclusion in the CSC's bylaws. The CSC has prepared an amendment to the bylaws to add such a statement. Ms Gaines noted that she was happy with the proposed amendment, as it follows the Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing and the Bali Principles of Climate Justice. The statement is general and leaves room for interpretation of what would be

considered as diversity and inclusion. Ms Gaines stated the Bali Principles address the fact that climate change is a scientific reality; that it adversely affects people of color; and the poor; and that the CSC and its actions need to be representative of all peoples. Mr. Sovich thanked Ms Gaines for adding that information, for the benefit of all in attendance.

Chair Foust stated the proposed amendments create new paragraphs 6 and 7, under Article II – Purpose. These proposed new paragraphs read:

6. To achieve a just transition to a cleaner, climate forward, and more equitable Greensboro. Address the intersectionality of climate, racial, gender, and economic equity, and the barriers of each. Recommend policies and practices to City Council that consider historically marginalized groups at the center.
7. To embrace diverse communities and the unique voices they support. With increasing challenges related to climate change, resource scarcity and population growth, it is important that we work together to create a more resilient world.

In addition, the proposed amendments add a new paragraph under Article III – Members, immediately following the paragraph regarding the “young adult” member. This proposed amendment reads:

CSC is committed to building an inclusive, varied council that is welcoming to people of all backgrounds.

Chair Foust stated that she felt the CSC currently includes people from diverse backgrounds, age, and gender. Ms Gaines stated that the CSC might also want this amendment to be inclusive specifically with regard to ability. Chair Foust stated rather than trying to list who would be included, CSC stated it would be inclusive to all. Ms Oliva responded she had researched how other organizations phrase their statements regarding member inclusivity, in order to develop the language in this proposed amendment. Ms Gaines thanked and complimented Ms Oliva for her input.

Chair Foust inquired if there was any further discussion of this proposed amendment before entertaining a motion. Chair Foust thanked both Ms Oliva and Ms Gaines for their work on this project. Chair Foust stated that everyone on the Council was committed to this amendment, and all provided good feedback in the process to prepare it. Mr. Stout made a motion to approve the amendment to the bylaws; seconded by Dr. Phillips. The CSC voted unanimously to approve the amendment (8-0).

4. Proposed Amendment to CSC Bylaws – Officers, Terms of Office

Chair Foust advised that during the last CSC work session there was discussion regarding the upcoming January 2021 election of CSC officer positions. Due to ongoing work on the Strategic Energy Plan, Chair Foust was asked by the CSC to serve an additional term as Chair, which she has agreed to do. However, in order to serve another term in that position, the bylaws need to be amended. The proposed amendment to Article IV – Officers would modify Section 3 – Terms of Office, by adding the underlined text in the following paragraph:

The Chair and Vice-Chair will be elected to a term of one (1) year. Officers may be elected to a maximum of two (2) consecutive terms of office. Officers' terms may be extended by first adopting a motion to suspend the term rule, with a two-thirds vote. Elections shall occur at the first meeting of each calendar year, or as required to fill a vacancy.

Chair Foust thanked Ms Howell for her work in drafting this well-written proposed amendment. Chair Foust if there was any further discussion or comments on the proposal before entertaining a motion. Ms Dubrovsky moved to approve the amendment of the CSC Bylaws; seconded by Ms Gaines. The CSC voted unanimously to approve (8-0).

Chair Foust requested Mr. Sovich to send the scheduled meetings of the CSC for 2021 to Council, or directly to her. The first formal meeting of the CSC will be in January, followed by a work session in February, and continuing the pattern of alternating months for the rest of the year.

5. Strategic Energy Plan Update

Chair Foust stated that she and Mr. Sovich have been meeting with the City Manager's Office regarding development of the Strategic Energy Plan and will have an initial meeting with the internal staff team on December 17. A public listening session will be held in January, 2021, to provide an opportunity for interested individuals and other stakeholders discuss their ideas, priorities, interests, concerns, and questions related to development of a 20-Year Strategic Energy Plan for the City of Greensboro. On behalf of the CSC, Chair Foust thanked everyone that assisted in helping to move this process forward. Chair Foust noted the City Council's directive for having a draft presented by August 31, 2021. The timeline is tight, but there are many talented and passionate individuals among City staff and throughout the community who are committed to completing this plan on schedule.

6. Findings of Statewide Sustainability Director Survey

Chair Foust stated that in order for Greensboro to reach the goal of becoming the greenest city in the southeast, as expressed in the GSO2040 Comprehensive Plan, it will be important that we have a Sustainability Office with full-time staff committed to sustainability efforts. Accordingly, this is an item that the CSC has been discussing during work sessions, and will continue to explore. The CSC prepared a survey that was sent out to about 40 sustainability directors or managers throughout North Carolina. We're trying to understand how long these other sustainability offices have existed, number of staff, where they are situated within the municipality's organizational structure, their annual budget, and what goals they've accomplished or are working on. This will be very important information for the City Manager's Office and City Council in making the case to fund establishment of a sustainability office and personnel going forward. We've received a number of responses and the CSC will be reviewing them in the near future in order to develop a comprehensive summary and recommendations.

7. Discussion on 2021 CSC Guest Speakers (City Staff related to LEED for Cities)

Chair Foust stated that the CSC has set a goal to have a guest presentation at each formal meeting in 2021, from a City staff member who was involved in preparing the data and documentation that went into Greensboro's LEED for Cities certification. The intent would be to hear about what their respective departments are currently working on to improve on the sustainability metrics tracked in LEED for Cities, and understand how the CSC's efforts can be coordinated with that work. Among the staff members discussed were:

- Sergey Kobelev, Engineering & Inspections Department
- Love Crossling or others, Human Rights Department
- Mike Borchers or others, Water Resources Department
- Chris Marriott or others, Field Operations Department

8. Break (5 minutes)

At 4:50 pm, Chair Foust adjourned the meeting for a brief break. Chair Foust reconvened the meeting at 4:56 pm. Chair Foust apologized to Richard Lovett and Chris Marriott of the Field Operations Department, who requested to speak during Item 7, but were not called upon, due to time constraints. This item will be revisited during the January CSC meeting.

9. Asheville Energy Plan: Amber Weaver – City of Asheville Sustainability Director

Chair Foust introduced Amber Weaver, Sustainability Director for the City of Asheville, and thanked her for agreeing to present during this meeting about all of the great sustainability work Asheville has been doing.

Ms Weaver thanked Chair Foust and the CSC for the invitation and stated that she would make her presentation slides available after the meeting.

Ms Weaver noted that the Asheville City Council has adopted over a dozen resolutions during the past decade, establishing various sustainability related goals. These goals are very aspirational and will require significant effort to achieve. She discussed five of these resolutions in more detail:

2016 – A joint resolution with Buncombe County, establishing an Energy Innovation Task Force (EITF) in cooperation with Duke Energy Progress. The EITF has a short term goal of avoiding or delaying the construction of a 190 megawatt natural gas peak-demand power plant planned for 2023, and a long term goal of transitioning Duke Energy Progress' West Region to a cleaner, affordable, and smarter energy future. With the help of the EITF and Duke Energy Progress, Asheville was able to successfully reduce peak energy demand and avoid the need for the new power plant, by developing 2 micro-grids, 19 megawatts of battery storage, a pilot program to provide energy efficiency upgrades for low-income families, and advanced metering infrastructure.

2019 – A joint city/county effort, called the “Blue Horizons Project,” (BHP) to create a clean energy future, and preserve the community’s skies and waters for future generations. This project grew directly out of the success of the EITF and was supported by numerous public and private partner organizations. Asheville contributed over \$200,000 to the project, including renewables generation and storage, energy efficiency audits at city facilities, weatherization matching grants for low-income families, energy efficiency upgrades for commercial buildings, and a sustainability staff position. Buncombe County made similar funding and program contributions. Duke Energy Progress committed to expanding its energy storage capacity, developing 15 megawatts of solar power, creating a new rebate for customers who install on-site solar systems, developing a community solar program, and deploying Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI), and other initiatives. Duke Energy Progress also helped draft NC House Bill 589, which established the Green Source Advantage program and other energy-related provisions. More information is available on the website: www.bluehorizonsproject.com. BHP began as a public-private partnership, but has since transformed into a non-profit called Blue Horizons Project Community Council, in order to be able to engage in fundraising and advocacy efforts.

2018 – BHP helped develop a joint resolution, establishing a goal of 100% renewable energy by 2030 for City of Asheville municipal operations, and a community-wide 100% renewable energy goal by 2042 for Buncombe County. The resolution includes multiple options and pathways for achieving these goals, including direct development of renewable energy, procurement of renewable energy from utilities, purchasing renewable energy certificates, and lobbying efforts at the state level to change the energy generation mix used by utilities. The city and county are committed to working toward these goals in

ways that promote equity and ensure that Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and Low and Moderate Income (LMI) members of our community are not left behind.

Ms Weaver then summarized Asheville's sustainability accomplishments over the past two years, including actions related to Governor Cooper's Executive Order 80, energy efficiency upgrades at city facilities, renewable energy investments, participation in the Environmental Defense Fund's (EDF) Cities Initiative, efforts to promote climate resilience and climate justice, and various other initiatives.

Chair Foust thanked Ms Weaver for the overview of everything being done in Asheville and Buncombe County.

10. Q & A with Amber Weaver

Margaret Rowlett asked whether Buncombe County established its 2042 community-wide goal independently, or did so in coordination with Duke Energy Progress? Ms Weaver stated that the goal and target date were the result of political pressure from the local "Sunrise Movement" group and other community members. The goal was based in part on recent data from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

Chair Foust asked whether Asheville's short term goal of reducing its carbon footprint by 20% was intended to be attained through conservation measures? Ms Weaver stated that Asheville's approach includes efforts in two main categories: mitigation of carbon; and expanding renewables or resiliency. The 20% comes from an assessment of what is attainable in a reasonable amount of time. Of course, we'll continue to work with our utility on that, but Duke's goal is to reach carbon neutrality, which is different from 100% renewables.

Chair Foust asked if Ms Weaver found working with Duke Energy Progress to be a good experience? Ms Weaver stated that working with Duke was like working with any other large bureaucratic organization. Despite their vast resources they are not a nimble, responsive organization. Also, the composition of the NC Utilities Commission has recently changed and now has a greater interest in holding utilities accountable for providing energy that is clean and renewable, in addition to the long-standing criteria of reliable and affordable. With new more diverse representation on the NCUC, they'll be able to speak out about how the utilities should make these changes. And yes, it's always hard to work with a utility as an organization, but within that organization there are people who are skilled professionals, and who are interested in doing cool stuff.

Ms Gaines noted the partnerships that Asheville has established with local stakeholder organizations and with Buncombe County. She asked how Asheville approached the county to engage in the partnership, align its efforts, and contribute financially, and how did you build on that to create a wider recognition of the need for action? Ms Weaver stated that there are 5 other municipalities in the county and when Asheville began this process, none of them had the resources or capacity to contribute. But when Asheville and the county issued an aggregated Request for Proposals (RFP) for solar projects, which also included Buncombe County Schools and Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College, the resulting multi-million dollar contract got their attention. So when we issued a second RFP, Buncombe County started looking for ways to help fund projects in those smaller communities. But it's going to take some time to get them up to speed. For more information see our website: www.ashevillenc.gov/department/sustainability/100-renewable-energy-initiative/

Ms Gaines noted that Greensboro's demographic composition is much different from Asheville's but wanted to hear how Asheville approached interactions with the BIPOC community. Ms Weaver stated that Asheville hired a BIPOC community member to assist with learning from our BIPOC community how they define climate justice and climate

resiliency. Resiliency hubs, story circles, and youth photo essays are being discussed as strategies for outreach and promoting climate justice and resiliency. It's important to have conversations and identify examples of the negative impacts on minority residents, in order for these issues to "click" with elected officials, city staff, and the broader community. The micro-economies operating within the BIPOC community, which are often invisible to white suburbanites, don't need the city to come in trying to create new businesses from the ground up, but instead need an infusion of resources to make them more stable and able to grow. She noted that the Urban Sustainability Directors Network (USDN) has provided funding to support many of Asheville's efforts.

On behalf of the CSC and all the visitors in attendance, Chair Foust thanked Ms Weaver for her presentation and for graciously agreeing to be a guest speaker. This has given the CSC so much to think about.

11. Acknowledgement of Absences

Chair Foust noted that she did not hear from Jonathan King prior to the meeting and his absence is unexcused.

12. Incidentals and Announcements

- **Items from Chair** – None.
- **Items from Vice-Chair** – None.
- **Items from CSC Members** – None.
- **Items from Public** – None.
- **Items from Staff** – Sergey Kobelev stated that the City of Asheville has one third the population of Greensboro, but has a budget about 75% of Greensboro's. Asheville has a Sustainability Office with three full-time staff, but Greensboro has none. Asheville has a very strong engineering team, including Bridgett Herring, who serves on the NC Building Code Council. Their achievement and initiatives are based on strong and well-designed policies. Mr. Kobelev hoped that the Strategic Energy Plan will be similarly strong and based on scientific data.

13. Adjournment

Chair Foust adjourned the meeting at 6:02 pm.