

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

4pm, Monday, May 9, 2022
Hybrid Meeting Format:

Plaza Level Conference Room (In Person)
Melvin Municipal Office Building
West Washington Street

Using the Zoom videoconferencing tool (Virtual)

CSC Members Present:

Nicole Gaines, Chair	Jacques Pierre	Andrew Randall
Dr. Vicki Foust		

Staff and Others Present:

Will Yearns, CSC Advisor	Russ Behn, CoG Neighborhood Development
Marikay Abuzuaiter, City Council	Sergey Kobelev, CoG Engineering & Inspections
Jeff Sovich, CoG Planning	Hank Henning, Duke Energy
Dick Mearns, Sierra Club Piedmont Plateau Group	Laura Oxner, A Simple Gesture / RePurpose Food Recovery
Skip Yeakel GIA Link, Inc.	Kaylee Campbell, Resident
David Gilbert, Resident	Raleigh Stout, Resident

1. Chair Greeting / Welcome Visitors

Chair Gaines called the meeting to order at 4:04 pm and welcomed visitors and city staff in attendance.

2. Welcome New CSC Member Carol Carter

Chair Gaines announced that the City Council had recently appointed Carol Carter as a new CSC member, to represent City Council District 5. She welcomed Ms. Carter to the CSC. Ms. Carter was unable to attend due to a schedule conflict.

3. Approval of March 14, 2022 CSC Meeting Minutes

Chair Gaines invited the CSC to discuss the draft minutes of the March 14, 2022 CSC meeting. There being no comments on the minutes, Chair Gaines called for a motion to approve the minutes, as presented. Dr. Foust moved the item, which was seconded by Mr. Randall. The CSC approved the motion unanimously.

4. Announcement of New Chief Sustainability Officer

Chair Gaines announced that Dr. Shameka “Shree” Dorestant has been selected as Greensboro’s first Chief Sustainability Officer. Dr. Dorestant will begin work on June 1. She comes to Greensboro from the New York City Department of Environmental Protection, where she has worked since 2015, in developing and implementing the City’s Stormwater Management Program. From 2007 to 2015, she worked as a Regulatory

Compliance Specialist in the City of Greensboro's Water Resources Department, managing special projects such as community center runoff renovations and the Municipal Pollution Prevention/Good Housekeeping Program. Dr. Dorestant holds a Doctoral Degree in Management with an emphasis in Environmental and Social Sustainability from Colorado Technical University, a Master of Public Administration in Water Resources Management and Policy, and a Bachelor of Science in Biology, both from Albany State University. Chair Gaines invited Dr. Dorestant to attend any of the CSC meetings, and called for any comments from CSC members or attendees. She also stated that this announcement has been a long time coming, and will be an important step in helping Greensboro catch up to the progress of some other NC cities, that have well established sustainability programs and staff.

5. Strategic Energy Plan Discussion

Chair Gaines asked Dr. Foust to provide a brief update on the status of the Strategic Energy Plan. Dr. Foust stated that nothing has changed with the SEP since the March CSC meeting, other than some proofreading and refinements that have been made to the final draft document, in preparation for presentation to the City Council. The refinements, which were requested during the March meeting, included further elaboration on environmental justice issues. Currently, the process is awaiting notification from the City Manager's Office, that a date has been selected for an informational presentation during a City Council work session. Chair Gaines thanked Dr. Foust for the update and all her valuable work in preparing the detailed and highly technical document. Dr. Foust noted that she has made great effort in writing the SEP to ensure that ordinary residents would be able to read and understand the document, and she encouraged everyone to take the time to read it, or at least the executive summary. She called for any questions or comments.

Dick Mearns of the Sierra Club Piedmont Plateau Group asked if the SEP contains specific short-term targets for renewable energy quantities the city is aiming to use, by 2025 or 2030. Dr. Foust noted that toward the back of the document, in the section labeled "Annual Progress Report" intermediate goals, strategies, and actions are specified for each of the highest energy using departments, by energy source. All of the actions are then listed in the implementation schedule, by timeframe (Years 1-5, Years 6-10, Years 11-15, or Years 16-20). For instance during the various Community Partnership meetings, there was significant interest in increasing the use of solar energy for city operations. There was a lot of enthusiasm related to two specific solar projects: a proposed 1-megawatt ground solar array at the T. Z. Osborne Wastewater Reclamation facility, and a feasibility study for rooftop solar array at the Central Library. So these have been tagged for implementation during Years 1-5. Mr. Mearns asked what percent of the City's total energy use is 1 megawatt. Dr. Foust responded that the City's total electricity use is approximately 32 megawatts per year, of which roughly the Water Resources Department uses half. Therefore, 1 megawatt equals approximately 3.1% of total electricity use. Mr. Mearns remarked that this did not seem like a very significant amount. Dr. Foust stated that solar is only one of the sources of renewable energy that the City will be pursuing, and that the focus during Years 1-5 is on concurrently reducing demand and increasing efficiency, so that gains in renewable energy go further toward reducing our carbon footprint.

Mr. Mearns noted that Table 6 "Comparison of Emissions Factors 2007 & 2019" in the SEP showed a massive reduction in carbon dioxide emissions from electricity, but it showed virtually no methane. Now when we consider that the electricity we get from Duke Energy, are methane leaks calculated into these emissions figures? Dr. Foust explained that the 2007 and 2019 emissions factors are based on Duke Energy's actual generation

mix (from all sources) for the electricity supplied to the City of Greensboro during those two base years, in the form of pounds of Carbon Dioxide (CO₂), Methane (CH₄), and Nitrous Oxide (N₂O) emitted per megawatt hour generated. Duke Energy's generation mix changed significantly from 2007 to 2019, which resulted in a 48.6% reduction in pounds of CO₂, a 272.2% increase in pounds of CH₄, and a 59.1% reduction in pounds of N₂O emissions per megawatt hour. Although total CH₄ emissions increased by 272.2%, CH₄ still accounts for only 0.0091% of the total greenhouse gas emissions, with CO₂ making up 99.9897% and N₂O the remaining 0.0012%. The emissions factors for Duke Energy Carolinas are calculated according to standards specified by the US EPA, which do not include the impacts of transmission and distribution losses, emissions from fuel extraction, or emissions from other activities upstream of generation facilities. So, while the City's electricity usage declined by only 1.4% (from 141,392 MWh to 139,414 MWh) the resulting emissions due to electricity usage declined by 49.3% (from 93,232 metric tons to 47,254 metric tons).

Skip Yeakel of GIA Link, Inc. asked whether Duke Energy would consider retrofitting its coal-fired Belews Creek generation facility with a small modular nuclear reactor, instead of the planned conversion to natural gas in 2039. Hank Henning of Duke Energy stated that the utility is developing its state mandated Carbon Plan that will outline its steps to achieving net zero carbon by 2050. He stated that Duke Energy is always considering new technologies and evaluating the feasibility of adding these to its generation portfolio. He could not comment on whether any particular generation alternative was viable for conversion of the Belews Creek facility. Chair Gaines stated that the timeline for implementing new nuclear facilities is very long, but even if Duke's power plants could be converted to small modular nuclear reactors in a short timeframe, the environmental impacts of mining and refining nuclear fuel and disposing of spent fuel are large and long lasting. In addition, the City of Greensboro is not an electric utility and has no authority to install such a reactor. Dr. Foust noted that in Duke Energy's Integrated Resource Plan, small modular nuclear reactors are listed as strategy that will be pursued as its feasibility advances, but the technology is just not currently viable for immediate deployment. She added that the electricity provided to the City of Greensboro comes from the Duke Energy Carolinas grid, not exclusively from the Belews Creek Power Plant, so converting that one plant to nuclear or some other carbon free source will form only a small portion of the overall generation mix.

6. Break (10 Minutes)

The CSC adjourned for a brief break at 5:13 pm and reconvened at 5:24 pm.

5. Strategic Energy Plan Discussion (continued)

Chair Gaines resumed the discussion by reading a comment submitted through the Zoom chat by resident Raleigh Stout, who is "interested in what the final SEP says about managing e-waste from energy initiatives, because if unmanaged, it could drag our energy-efficiency back down and increase cost in a tangible way." Dr. Foust stated that e-waste is not specifically addressed in the SEP. The goal of the SEP is focused on reducing energy use and greenhouse gas emissions, so dealing with waste from discarded electronic equipment such as solar panels, LED lighting, or building automation systems, is not really contemplated within that focus. Chair Gaines noted that although the SEP was the result of a relatively narrow focus, as the City moves forward with implementation and moving on to broader sustainability efforts, it will be important to act with the end in mind and how all our present actions will come together in the long term. Jeff Sovich remarked that in order to recertify in the LEED for Cities program, Greensboro will need to develop a comprehensive waste management plan, including processes for handling special waste streams such as e-waste. Chair Gaines acknowledged that the adoption of the SEP would

signal the opportunity for the City to begin working on a comprehensive waste management plan and other initiatives.

7. Items of New Business

Chair Gaines opened the floor for CSC members to propose items of new business. Dr. Foust noted that during the December 13, 2021 work session, the CSC discussed establishing an agenda for 2022, which would serve as their priorities for the year. She stated that among the topics discussed, there was significant interest in the city's tree canopy, and in addressing food waste. Several CSC members, City staff, and residents have expressed interest in discussing and researching these issues in more detail and helping to develop ideas for new City policies, projects, or initiatives related to these two topics. Chair Gaines noted that the Strategic Energy Plan includes a recommendation to establish a policy for no net loss of tree canopy throughout the City. She called for a motion to establish a Tree Canopy Task Force and a Food Waste Task Force. Dr. Foust moved the item, seconded by Mr. Pierre. The CSC voted unanimously to approve the motion.

Chair Gaines noted that Dr. Foust and several other CSC members, along with other acquaintances involved in environmental justice efforts have brought to her attention a recent announcement by Google that the company has established an Environmental Justice Data Fund (EJDF) <https://www.environmentaljusticedatafund.com/> that aims to support data efforts of frontline communities that have been historically underserved and disproportionately impacted by climate change and environmental injustice in the United States. The EJDF has issued a request for proposals, open through September 16, from groups seeking to use data to quantify the degree of environmental degradation in their communities. A total of \$8 million will be awarded as one-time, flexible grants for 60 to 100 organizations, which can then use the grants to leverage additional funding from the White House's Justice40 initiative and federal infrastructure programs, paving the way to a more climate-resilient future. She noted that this grant seems like a phenomenal opportunity for the City and/or the Metropolitan Planning Organization to collaborate with one or more community stakeholder organizations to achieve a collective impact. Dr. Foust added that since the SEP mentions promoting environmental justice for vulnerable neighborhoods, this grant would be an opportunity to work directly with those neighborhoods, to develop baseline data that could be used to track improvements over time in metrics such as air quality, urban heat island effect, health outcomes, etc., resulting from implementation of the SEP.

Chair Gaines called for any further proposed items of new business. Dr. Foust also recommended that the CSC should revisit the Responsible Business Awards program, which was put on hold when the COVID-19 pandemic arose, and determine how best to re-launch that effort. She offered to share all the materials related to the awards program with Chair Gaines and the rest of the CSC to re-familiarize them with the details. She suggested that this item and the two new task forces could be discussed and given more structure during the CSC's June work session, and that individuals who have expressed interest could be invited to attend to be a part of the discussion.

8. Acknowledgement of Absences

Chair Gaines acknowledged the Authorized Absences of Ms. Carter, Dr. Hale, and Ms. Howell. Chair Gaines acknowledged the Unauthorized Absence of Ms. Jones-Curtis, her fourth such absence in succession. Chair Gaines stated that the CSC needs members who are committed to attending and participating on a regular basis, and maintaining robust communication with other members and staff support. CSC members are required to sign a Boards and Commissions Code of Conduct form, which among other things affirms this

commitment. Chair Gaines called for motion to request the City Council to remove Ms. Jones-Curtis from the CSC and to appoint a replacement from among the eligible individuals currently listed in the Boards and Commissions databank, who have expressed interest in serving on the CSC. Dr. Foust moved the item, seconded by Mr. Pierre. The CSC voted unanimously to approve the motion.

9. Incidentals and Announcements

- **Items from Chair** – None.
- **Items from Vice-Chair** – None.
- **Items from CSC Members** – Dr. Foust announced that a colleague of hers, Ann Tazewell has written a book entitled '*A Good Spy Leaves No Trace: Big Oil, CIA Secrets, and a Spy Daughter's Reckoning.*' Ms. Tazewell will be presenting and reading from the book at Scuppernong Books, beginning at 7pm, this Thursday, May 12. A second author, Sami Grover, will be reading from her book, '*We're All Climate Hypocrites Now*' during the same event.
- **Items from Public** –None.
- **Items from Staff** – Mr. Sovich noted that with the advent of Dr. Dorestant's tenure as Greensboro's Chief Sustainability Officer, the status of his role as staff support to the CSC was unclear. He wished the CSC the very best in their ongoing efforts to transform Greensboro into the greenest city in the Southeast by 2040.

10. Adjournment - Chair Gaines adjourned the meeting at 6:14 pm.