

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

4pm, Monday, July 18, 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	Carol Carter, Vice-Chair	Andrew Randall
Dr. Vicki Foust	Jacques Pierre	Marcia Hale
Veda Howell		

Staff and Others Present:

Will Yearns, CSC Advisor	Chris Marriott, CoG Field Operations
Marikay Abuzuaiteer, City Council	Jeff Sovich, CoG Planning
Dr. Shree Dorestant, CoG Office of Sustainability and Resilience	Ellen Van Velsor, Citizens Climate Lobby
Crystal Mercer, NC Cooperative Extension Office / Community Food Task Force	David Hampsten, Transit Alliance of the Piedmont
Omar Rasul, Urban Sustainable Communities	Robin Davis, Maxie B's
Skip Yeakel GIA Link, Inc.	Hallie Smith, Resident
Conor Baker, Resident	Lindsey Beane, Resident
Kaylee Campbell, Resident	Scholl Lezley, Resident
Lori Shaw, Resident	

1. Chair Greeting / Welcome Visitors

Chair Gaines called the meeting to order at 4:05 pm and welcomed visitors and city staff in attendance.

2. Approval of May 9, 2022 Meeting Minutes

Chair Gaines invited the CSC to discuss the draft minutes from the May 9, 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.

3. Discuss Timing for Election of CSC Vice-Chair

Chair Gaines stated that the Vice-Chair position within the CSC is currently vacant, and that there is a procedure for electing a CSC member to serve in that Officer position. Mr. Sovich noted that CSC members may nominate themselves or any other CSC member. Chair Gaines called for nominations. Dr. Foust nominated Carol Carter for the position of Vice-Chair. Ms Carter accepted the nomination, stating that it was an honor. Chair Gaines called for the CSC to vote on the nomination. The CSC then voted unanimously to elect Carol Carter as Vice-Chair.

4. Food Waste Subcommittee Update – Dr. Foust

Dr. Foust stated that the subcommittee has already assembled a robust and diverse group of volunteers and City staff. Interest and expertise among the subcommittee members includes food recovery, food waste composting, food access and security, and other aspects. Dr. Foust shared a “Food Recovery Hierarchy” graphic produced by the US EPA. The graphic arranges food waste management strategies from most preferred to least preferred as follows:

Most Preferred

- Source Reduction – Reduce the volume of surplus food generated
- Feed Hungry People – Donate extra food to food banks, soup kitchens, and shelters
- Feed Animals – Divert food scraps to animal food
- Industrial Uses – Provide waste oils for rendering and fuel conversion and food scraps for digestion to recover energy
- Composting – Create a nutrient-rich soil amendment
- Landfill/Incineration – Last resort to disposal

Least Preferred

Dr. Foust stated that one topic of discussion has revolved around how the City can step in and take a coordinating role in the process of re-allocating food according to the hierarchy, while avoiding gaps and overlaps in the efforts of various organizations to meet community needs. The subcommittee developed the idea of a mobile device app that could help connect food sources such as warehouses, grocers, and restaurants with the agencies that distribute recovered food to those in need. The end result would help feed more people and keep more food out of landfills. A similar network could help direct food scraps to feeding livestock.

In the realm of industrial uses, Dr. Foust noted that several years ago, she was involved with a team of City staff in writing an application for a grant from the US EPA to conduct an anaerobic digester feasibility study. The intent was to examine whether an anaerobic digester could be successful and scalable for converting food waste to methane for use as an energy source. On the level of composting, the City currently does not compost food waste. Greensboro’s lack of a procedure or plan for handling food waste was a key hurdle in attaining LEED for Cities certification. In the end, the CSC had to adopt an amendment to the Sustainability Action Plan, adding a new strategy to “Develop a Food Waste Processing and Handling Program” that includes several action steps.

Dr. Foust stated that food waste constitutes 38,000 tons, or around one third of the waste Greensboro sends to the landfill each year. The transportation and disposal of this amount of waste costs taxpayers nearly \$3 million annually, so finding a way to reduce this waste could produce significant savings and extend the useful life of the landfill. In addition, the City’s solid waste transfer station is nearing its daily capacity, so diverting food waste can also help delay the need to add a second transfer station.

Carol Carter asked whether there are any local governments that have a system like this in operation, and whether there is a profitable model that could be used by a private business, rather than the City. Dr. Foust stated that Gallins Family Farm offers a residential food waste pick-up and composting operation, available for a monthly fee. Dr.

Dorestant noted that she has had positive initial discussions with Crystal Mercer, who is the primary contact for the Community Food Task Force (<https://www.greensboro-nc.gov/government/community-food-task-force>). This task force is a group of partner organizations and government agencies working toward a healthier community through advocacy and increased access to nutrition and local foods. Chris Marriott stated that he is not aware of any North Carolina municipalities that operate a large scale food waste collection and composting service. Lindsey Beane noted that the US Composting Council is a wealth of information and will be holding a Compost Operations Training Course in Raleigh on September 12 to 16.

Omar Rasul of Urban Sustainable Communities stated that he feels the subcommittee is thinking too big. He suggested that it would be more cost-effective to work directly with homeowners. Chris Marriott stated that a joint effort between the Field Operations Department and the Water Resources Department offer rain barrels and home composting bins for sale to the public, at cost. Council Member Abuzuaiter added that the Field Operations Department offers home composting classes, interested individuals can contact Masey DeMoss or Ashley Robinson. Dr. Foust added that the subcommittee would continue to collaborate with City staff, non-profits, and other stakeholders, discuss ideas for small-scale composting and food waste solutions in the short-run that can be built upon over time toward community-wide systems.

Will Yearns asked what requirements related to food waste are included in the LEED for Cities program. Mr. Sovich stated that in order to recertify in LEED for Cities, at a minimum Greensboro must “Implement a pilot program for composting food waste from residential and business sources; set an annual target for tons of food waste processed; and develop a pathway for scaling up the pilot program to operate as an integral component of the City's solid waste program” by 2024.

5. Tree Canopy Subcommittee Update

Chair Gaines stated that the Tree Canopy Subcommittee met on June 29, and was well-attended. The goals of the meeting were for members to get to know each other; to assess the available information about Greensboro’s existing tree canopy; and to discuss the Strategic Energy Plan’s recommended tree canopy strategies. She is excited about the possible ideas that this group of minds will generate for minimizing loss of existing trees, planting trees to offset losses that have already occurred, and efforts to reduce urban heat island effect and promote environmental justice in the most vulnerable parts of Greensboro by planting trees. She indicated that the subcommittee would need to take a “grassroots” approach in working with areas such as the Randleman Road corridor (related to the adopted Randleman Road Corridor Plan of 2016), and invited Omar Rasul to become involved with the subcommittee.

Dr. Hale suggested that the Strategic Energy Plan could provide an opportunity to propose and prioritize future “green corridors” throughout the city. Chair Gaines stated that the subcommittee would be exploring a wide variety of approaches for maintaining and expanding the City’s tree canopy, including partnerships and funding sources. Carol Carter recommended that the subcommittee and staff coordinate with the Transportation Department regarding federal and state funding sources that may be available to help pay for tree planting projects related to transportation facilities. Chair Gaines noted that the Tree Canopy Subcommittee would be meeting again soon and asked staff to re-circulate the call for volunteers for both subcommittees.

6. Landfill Gas Proposal, Field Operations Department

Julio Delgado of the Field Operations Department, who was scheduled to present this item, did not attend.

7. Acknowledgement of Absences

All CSC members were present. Chair Gaines noted that there are currently two vacancies on the CSC, a District 3 seat and an At-Large seat. She encouraged any interested Greensboro resident to complete the Boards and Commissions interest form on the City's website at <https://form.jotform.com/202604384295153>.

8. Incidentals and Announcements

- **Items from Chair** – Chair Gaines encouraged all present to vote in the upcoming July 26 election for City Council and bond referenda.
- **Items from Vice-Chair** – None.
- **Items from CSC Members** – Dr. Foust noted that the City Council had charged the CSC with developing a Responsible Business Awards Program. The CSC had developed and launched the program with a call for nominations in early 2020, but had to suspend the nomination process when the COVID-19 pandemic arose. She encouraged the CSC to resume the program and re-initiate the call for nominations, to fulfill the Council's directive and honor the substantial effort already invested in the program. Chair Gaines suggested that the awards program be included on the agenda for the CSC's next meeting.
- **Items from Public** – Skip Yeakel noted that on Wednesday, July 20, the NC Sustainable Energy Association will host a public forum on the Duke Energy Carbon Plan at Foothills Brewing, from 6 to 8pm.
- **Items from Staff** – None.

9. Adjournment - Chair Gaines adjourned the meeting at 5:51 pm.