

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

4pm, Monday, September 12, 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
Jailah White	Jacques Pierre	Marcia Hale
Veda Howell		

Staff and Others Present:

Will Yearns, CSC Advisor	Chris Marriott, CoG Field Operations
Marikay Abuzuaiteer, City Council	Zach Petersen, CoG Water Resources
Dr. Shree Dorestant	Jeff Sovich, CoG Planning
Crystal Mercer, Community Food Task Force	Hank Henning, Duke Energy
Laura Oxner, A Simple Gesture / RePurpose Food Recovery	Rita Brothers-Dingle, Greensboro Neighborhood Congress
Leslie Lloyd, A Simple Gesture	Sean MacInnes, UNCG Sustainability
Skip Yeakel GIA Link, Inc.	Robin Davis, Maxie B's
Marion Gamble, Resident	Conor Baker, Resident

1. Chair Greeting / Welcome Visitors

Chair Gaines called the meeting to order at 4:05 pm and welcomed City Council Member Marikay Abuzuaiteer, and visitors and city staff in attendance.

2. Approval of July 18, 2022 Meeting Minutes

Chair Gaines invited the CSC to discuss the draft minutes of the July 18, 2022 CSC meeting. There being no comments on the minutes, Chair Gaines called for a motion to approve the minutes, as presented. Veda Howell moved the item, which was seconded by Dr. Hale. The CSC approved the motion unanimously.

3. Responsible Business Awards

Chair Gaines noted that this item is a continuation of an effort that has been in progress for several years. The CSC had just announced to the public that it was seeking nominations for Greensboro's first "Responsible Business Awards" when the Covid-19 pandemic arose. As a result, the call for nominations was halted and the RBA program was put on hold. Dr. Foust, who was CSC Chair at the time, did a great deal of work with the sub-committee to develop the awards program, including a Google Form for submitting nominations. Now, Dr. Dorestant is reviewing the work that was done, in an attempt to re-start the RBA program.

Dr. Dorestant stated that the details of the previous work is well documented and organized. In reviewing this information, she has some questions she would like to discuss with the CSC at more length, in order to gain a better understanding of the history of the program and the rationale behind various aspects. This will enable us to develop a strategy and plan for re-launching the program, including such key information as revising the nomination form, setting a target launch date and nomination deadline, confirming sponsorships, and any other needed updates. Once we get those details ironed out, we can work with the Communications Department and move forward with announcements to let people know about the program.

Chair Gaines thanked Dr. Dorestant for this update and for taking the lead on preparing for a re-launch of the RBA program. She noted that this is just one of several exciting developments on the horizon in Greensboro's sustainability efforts, and that it takes a broad coalition of support to make these projects happen.

4. Community Sustainability Council – Evolution of Advisory Role

Chair Gaines began by welcoming and introducing the newest at-large member of the CSC, Jailah White, and asked her to tell a little bit about herself. Ms White stated that she is a Junior at NC A&T State University, pursuing a dual major in bioengineering and orthopedic surgery. She is very interested in sustainable living and that is what led her to seek appointment to the CSC. Chair Gaines thanked her for stepping up to serve on the CSC.

Chair Gaines noted that she added this item to the agenda in order to provide an opportunity for the CSC to discuss how this board's role may change, now that the City has established its Office of Sustainability. The CSC is an appointed board serving the City Council in an advisory capacity. The goals of the CSC, as stated in our bylaws, include to inform, consult, involve, collaborate, and empower. The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) offers a series of definitions for the many terms used in public participation activities, which align well with the CSC's goals. *Inform* can be applied in the CSC's context as "to provide the public with balanced, objective information that helps them understand" any implications of not only our clean energy work, but the alternatives we're trying to establish as we move away from a reliance on any kind of energy sources that are extractive, and solutions, and to keep those conversations going. The IAP2 describes *consult* as "to obtain public feedback" which we already do, in relation to any type of analysis or work that we're doing. According to IAP2, *involve* means "to work directly with the public through processes to ensure that public aspirations and concerns are consistently understood" so that everyone's voice is heard and acknowledged. *Collaborate* is the part where we have people from businesses, universities, faith groups, non-profits, neighborhoods, all coming together to identify preferred solutions and guide decision-making. Finally, *empower* means "to place decision-making directly into the hands of the public".

Chair Gaines then invited the CSC to discuss. Vice Chair Carter stated that as implementation of the Strategic Energy Plan and other City sustainability initiatives moves forward, and as more federal, state, and local requirements and funding opportunities arise related to sustainability issues are established, there will come a point where the City needs to expand the Office of Sustainability, with a current staff of one, to a full department with several staff members, in order to manage all of the projects. Chair Gaines observed that the CSC is hoping to see such an expansion in the very near future.

Conor Baker stated that the City is doing great things with the Community Sustainability Council, and suggested that these efforts could be extended by developing collaborative relationships with Guilford County and other surrounding local governments, especially if the City moves forward with establishing a Sustainability Department. Ms Carter asked

whether there is a sustainability committee at the Piedmont Triad Regional Council (PTRC), or whether they are looking into creating one. Council Member Abuzuaiter noted that she serves on the Board of PTRC and that the agency has been doing more sustainability-related projects recently. She said she would inquire whether there are specific sustainability initiatives they could take on that would be aligned with the City's goals, and share her findings with the CSC. She agreed that this type of synergy would serve to expand Greensboro's sphere of influence and make the region stronger. Chair Gaines stated that since Greensboro now has a Sustainability Office, the adopted GSO2040 plan, and the soon to be adopted Strategic Energy Plan, the City is clearly moving in that direction. Dr. Dorestant noted that she has been reaching out to businesses, non-profits, and other entities in the community in order to start building such partnerships. Ms Carter added that the CSC should also look towards our universities and students for help with sustainability initiatives.

5. Food Waste Task Force Update

Ms Carter noted that Dr. Foust gave a recap of the most recent Task Force meeting during the last CSC meeting. In the absence of a new update, she shared information about the upcoming Harvest Jubilee at VanHoy Farm in Harmony, NC, which is an excellent example of a farm and agro-tourism site operating with almost zero food waste.

Dr. Dorestant noted that the City recently submitted an application for a grant from the US Department of Agriculture for a food recovery and food waste reduction pilot program. Leslie Lloyd added that there is a parallel grant opportunity available to non-profits, which A Simple Gesture / RePurpose Food Recovery will be applying for, in tandem with the City.

6. Break (10 minutes)

The CSC agreed to proceed without a break.

7. Tree Canopy Task Force Update

Chair Gaines stated that the Tree Canopy Task Force met on September 7, from 4 to 5:15pm. She has created a publicly accessible Google Drive folder for the task force to at: <https://drive.google.com/drive/u/1/folders/13wyG02LA6KlsvbjYFs1Dp0BGlwFvO2i7>. The current focus of the task force is following through on Recommendation 6 of the Strategic Energy Plan: "Establish a policy to achieve no net loss of tree canopy throughout the City, for improved air quality, reduced urban heat island effect, and carbon sequestration." To this end, the task force has been doing background research to understand: what has already been done, what has been successful, and what has been unsuccessful. Then we can begin to identify new things the task force can try that will demonstrate some momentum. There are two solid project directions we're looking at right now in order to have the greatest impact: activities that lessen the destruction of tree canopy, and activities that help to reduce the urban heat island effect. As we move forward it will be important that we collaborate with local developers in looking at alternatives. One of the best ways to preserve tree canopy is to purchase the land where it's located, such as the Piedmont Land Conservancy often does.

Chair Gaines invited discussion and questions from the CSC and others present. Crystal Mercer asked if the task force is working with Duke Energy to address issues related to Duke's tree trimming and topping methods (and those of its third party contractors), which often leave trees in a disfigured condition. The end result is that it looks as if no care is taken for the long-term health or appearance of these trees. Chair Gaines noted that although this topic has not been discussed by the task force, climate change is causing more severe and widespread storm damage to trees, which often affect power lines and

other utilities. Duke Energy will definitely need to be involved in efforts to protect and enhance Greensboro's tree canopy. Hank Henning, with Duke Energy is attending via Zoom, and may be able to respond. Mr. Henning stated that there's no truth to the claim that Duke's contractors operate without proper supervision. Duke actually has a team of expert foresters and vegetation management professionals who take care for the trees. Power lines do need to be protected and unobstructed, so trimming is necessary, but we aim to do so in a way that will not kill the tree. The only alternative is to cut the whole tree down, which we obviously don't want to do. We have written agreements with the City of Greensboro and the Utilities Commission about how the trees are supposed to be cared for and trimmed. And many times, trees are planted directly under powerlines, after the lines are installed. These kinds of situations are unfortunate, but we do exercise a great deal of care for the trees, and our proactive trimming efforts are needed in order to minimize power outages resulting from downed trees. Ms Mercer said she would like to ride around Greensboro with Mr. Henning to observe the results of tree trimming by Duke and its contractors. Mr. Henning stated that he would be happy to meet with Ms Mercer and some of Duke's forestry personnel to discuss the protocols they follow and their general approach to trimming.

The next meeting will be held on September 21, at the same time. Meetings will continue every two weeks, through November 2. Meetings are held virtually via Zoom, always using the same link (<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88321251297?pwd=OWNwQ0FFajUyUm4wOHO2c1pLRW8zUT09>), meeting ID (883 2125 1287), and password "tree".

8. Greensboro Transit Agency – Federal Transit Administration Grant for New EV Buses

Chair Gaines stated that an article in the Greensboro Transportation Department's recently published 2021 – 2022 Annual Report, mentions that in March, the Greensboro Transit Agency received a \$3 million grant from the Federal Transit Administration. The grant allowed GTA to purchase three more EV buses, bringing GTA's fleet to over 35 percent EVs. Council Member Abuzuaiter noted that in August, GTA received an additional \$1.1 million from the Volkswagen Settlement Fund and the federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality program, which will be used to purchase 1 more EV bus and charging equipment. With 21 EV buses, along with over a dozen diesel-electric hybrid buses, nearly 60% of GTA's fleet will be running on alternative fuels.

Chair Gaines remarked that If these buses are safe for the City transit system, then Guilford County Schools needs to rise to the challenge and start phasing in EV school buses. When the Covid-19 pandemic began to wane, and GCS was returning students to in-person classes, there was a shortage of school bus drivers. To overcome the shortage, GCS partnered with the City to allow students from several high schools to ride GTA buses to school. This arrangement worked well enough that it's being continued for the new school year.

9. New and Returning City Council Members

Chair Gaines noted that Zack Metheny was recently elected to the Greensboro City Council, representing District 3. Council Member Abuzuaiter stated that Mayor Vaughan and all the other City Council Members were re-elected. She was honored to appoint Ms Jailah White to serve on the CSC, and she is present this evening.

10. Solar Panels on City Buildings

Chair Gaines noted that there was no information to present on this item.

11. Update on Methane Capture at Landfill

Chair Gaines noted that there was no information to present on this item.

12. Acknowledgement of Absences

Chair Gaines acknowledged the Authorized Absence of Dr. Foust.

13. Incidentals and Announcements

- **Items from Chair** – Chair Gaines announced that volunteers are needed for the Haw River Assembly’s annual environmental learning celebration at Camp GuilRock. Over 1,000 fourth graders from all different schools. Adult volunteers are needed to help guide and supervise these students as they engage in various learning activities on October 4 through 7.
- **Items from Vice-Chair** – Ms Carter repeated her announcement about VanHoy Farms’ upcoming Harvest Jubilee. She also inquired whether there was a need for the CSC to have an annual coordination session with the City Council. Council Member Abuzuaiteer stated that this would be advisable to arrange sometime after the Strategic Energy Plan is adopted.
- **Items from CSC Members** – None.
- **Items from Public** – Skip Yeakel noted that, regarding food waste, Guilford County Schools likely has a very large amount of food waste from its cafeteria operations, so adding a GCS contact to the Food Waste Task Force would be beneficial. Dr. Dorestant added that the Field Operations Department offers composting workshops that are a great resource for residents to learn how to divert food waste from the landfill. Laura Oxner noted that RePurpose Food Recover is the community liaison to GCS regarding its recoverable uneaten food. RePurpose works with Travis Fisher, the GCS Director of Nutrition. He has been in that position only since June, so he’s still getting up to speed. Interested schools can participate in RePurpose’s “Share” program, which allows uneaten food to be first shared among students, and then later among the broader community. Ms Oxner stated that anyone seeking additional information is welcome to contact her via email at: tplsoxner@gmail.com. Robin Davis stated that she is eager to see food waste reduction and diversion strategies implemented, and that if there is interest, she is happy to host a Food Waste Task Force meeting or tour at Maxie B’s.
- **Items from Staff** – None.

14. Adjournment - Chair Gaines adjourned the meeting at 6:02 pm.