

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

4pm, Monday, November 14, 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:

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| Nicole Gaines, Chair | Carol Carter, Vice-Chair | Andrew Randall |
| Jailah White | Jacques Pierre | Dr. Marcia Hale |
| Veda Howell | Dr. Vicki Foust | Jerald Leimenstoll |

Staff and Others Present:

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| Will Yearns, CSC Advisor | Hugh Holston, City Council |
| Marikay Abuzuaiter, City Council | Richard Lovett, CoG Field Operations |
| Dr. Shree Dorestant, Chief Sustainability Officer | Danielle Harrison, CoG Workforce Development Office |
| Jeff Sovich, CoG Planning | Hank Henning, Duke Energy |
| Laura Oxner, A Simple Gesture / RePurpose Food Recovery | Scott Jones, Tiny House Community Development, Inc. |
| Claire Hansen Samet, Samet Corporation | Conor Baker, Guilford College |
| Edmir Silva, Unifi | Shaleen Miller, UNCG Sustainability |
| Skip Yeakel GIA Link, Inc. | Robin Davis, Maxie B's |
| Emma Holland, Resident | Karen Lennon, Resident |
| Dashawn Mclean, Resident | |

1. Chair Greeting / Welcome Visitors

Chair Gaines called the meeting to order at 4:01 pm and welcomed City Council Members Marikay Abuzuaiter and Hugh Holston, and visitors and city staff in attendance.

2. Approval of September 12, 2022 Meeting Minutes

Chair Gaines invited the CSC to discuss the draft minutes of the September 12, 2022 CSC meeting. There being no comments on the minutes, Chair Gaines called for a motion to approve the minutes, as presented. Carol Carter moved the item, which was seconded by Veda Howell. The CSC voted to approve the motion 7 to 0, with Dr. Foust abstaining, and Dr. Hale not yet present.

3. Update on Strategic Energy Plan

Dr. Foust stated that the 20-Year Strategic Energy Plan (SEP) is complete and is beautiful. Most of us have seen iterations of the plan along the way, but now Dr. Dorestant and the Communications Department are in the final stages of reviewing the plan for appearance and accessibility. Hundreds of people have played a role in development of the SEP. The last remaining step is for the City Council to adopt the plan. Council Member Abuzuaiter

stated that the SEP has been years in the making, with so many people involved, and it's so exciting that it will finally be on the calendar for the City Council. She thanked all involved for their hard work and determination. Dr. Dorestant stated that adoption of the SEP would be on the agenda for the December 20 City Council meeting. A formal invitation will be sent in the near future to all the CSC members and everyone involved in the diverse community partnership who came together to make the SEP possible. Once the SEP is adopted, annual progress reports will be issued, so everyone can see the implementation work that happens each year. Some parts of the plan may evolve over time, as recommendations are carried out, and goals are achieved.

4. Participatory Budgeting District-Level Results – Significance for the CSC

Chair Gaines stated that the winning projects in Cycle 4 of Greensboro's Participatory Budgeting program were recently announced. Some of these projects can align with goals of the SEP, or other CSC priorities. She noted that all five City Council Districts approved projects to install bus stop seating, and to identify historically significant neighborhoods eligible for "Heritage Community" designation. District 1 also selected a much-needed bus shelter with solar light, bench, and trash can at the Randleman Road / Creek Ridge Road intersection, a motion-sensing water bottle filling station and fountain at Heath Park. District 2 selected a motion-sensing water bottle filling station and fountain at the Woven Works cornerstone along the Downtown Greenway. District 3 selected a bus shelter with a bench and trash can, and two solar-powered electronic charging picnic tables with an overhead covering. District 4 selected a motion-sensing water bottle filling station and fountain at Ardmore Park. District 5 a bus shelter with seating and a trash can at the Groometown Road / West Gate City Boulevard intersection and solar charging benches or picnic tables at Griffin Recreation Center. [Summary of winning Round 4 projects.](#) [Detailed descriptions of all Round 4 candidate projects.](#)

Participation in this type of project selection process typically is very low, but it's a very exciting process from the standpoint of democracy in government, and the range of projects nominated and selected show strong support for sustainability. Council Member Abuzuaiter suggested that the CSC could help with publicizing the PB program during the next round, and encourage residents to vote for their preferred projects. Ms Carter asked whether the CSC could put together a list of proposed projects to submit to the City Council during the next budget development process. Mrs. Abuzuaiter responded that the CSC would be welcome to develop a list and submit it through the Office of Sustainability and Resilience, to the Budget and Evaluation Department, which is in charge of preparing the budget each year.

Dr. Foust stated that during development of *GSO2040*, initial meetings didn't focus on sustainability, but many participants continued to raise issues around sustainability, and staff adjusted the process to account for this. As a result, Prioritizing Sustainability is now one of the six Big Ideas that *GSO2040* is organized around. Richard Lovett of the Field Operations Department asked whether, in the next round of Participatory Budgeting, there could be a way for the CSC to review the proposed projects from a sustainability perspective, so that residents would have some "benchmark" information to base their voting on? Dr. Hale noted that information each project could include its estimated reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, water use, and energy use, or anticipated improvements to environmental justice.

5. Update on Responsible Business Awards (RBAs)

Dr. Dorestant stated that she has been discussing awards programs with other municipalities, to understand their structure, process, criteria, etc. For instance, the City

of Raleigh's sustainability awards program covers a broader range of recognitions, including a children's poster competition. She has suggested expanding the scope of Greensboro's award program in a similar way, and is seeking feedback on that idea. Dr. Foust stated that she is not opposed to the concept of a broader awards program, but the original charge to the CSC by the City Council was to develop an awards program focused on the business community. She recommended getting the business-focused program launched now so it can build momentum and excitement, then evolving it over time, to include more categories.

Dr. Dorestant noted that one of the businesses that had previously offered to sponsor the program has indicated that they can no longer offer financial support. She has drafted a letter to solicit sponsorships, which she hopes to begin circulating soon. She will be working with the Communications Department to develop and issue a press release calling for nominations. Mr. Yearns asked whether anyone had discussed the RBA program with the Greensboro Chamber of Commerce, as a source of contacts for sponsorships, nominations, etc.

6. Break (10 minutes)

The CSC adjourned for a 10 minute break from 5:07 to 5:17pm.

7. Proposed New CSC Meeting Feature: "Knowledge Networking"

Chair Gaines stated that as a way of enhancing the CSC's capacity and effectiveness, she proposes to add a new recurring feature to the CSC's meeting agendas, which she has termed "Knowledge Networking." The intent would be to allow a brief time during meetings when the CSC could exchange ideas and information, hear presentations from city staff and other practitioners, and promote collaboration on projects both within the municipal government and in the broader community. The expanded knowledge could become a cumulative resource for the CSC. She shared a graphic that depicted several blocks of text, with a series of lines linking each to the others. "Capacities necessary for sustainable development" was situated at the center, with the following phrases surrounding it, clockwise from top right:

- Capacity to promote Equity
- Capacity to Adapt to shocks
- Capacity to Link Knowledge with Action
- Capacity to Govern cooperatively

Chair Gaines reiterated that this is offered as a proposal for the CSC to consider. Will Yearns suggested that when the City Council receives an informational presentation from a department head or other City staff, the CSC could either watch the recorded video of the presentation. This could be effective at keeping the CSC informed of what the City Council is working on and enable the CSC to make timely contributions to the Council's decision-making process.

City Council Member Holston encouraged the CSC to continue its efforts to enhance its effectiveness and connection with the community, and to continue recommending ideas for advancing sustainability to be considered by the City Council. Next year's budget will look very different from the current year's budget as a result of the input provided by the CSC and Dr. Dorestant. Jerry Leimenstoll stated that the CSC has an advantage over the City Council in that it doesn't face the continual pressure to make quick decisions and respond to citizen requests and criticisms. This position gives the CSC the opportunity to work in pursuit of a vision, which is not a data-driven concept. The knowledge networking

proposal is valuable because it allows the CSC to ask good questions. Mr. Holston added that there is no group better situated than the CSC to take up the task of filling in the details of Greensboro's vision for the future, as expressed in *GSO2040*.

8. *GSO2040* – Prioritizing Sustainability & the CSC's Leadership Role

Chair Gaines noted that this item was largely addressed during Item 7 above.

9. Tree Canopy Task Force Update

Chair Gaines shared a brief video summarizing the work of the Tree Canopy Task Force to date. The overview noted that the task force is a collaborative group of stakeholders in the care of our green spaces and tree canopy development. The group's diverse members are critical to the success of Goal 6 in the Strategic Energy Plan. So far the group has focused on collecting, updating, revamping, and implementing a citywide tree canopy strategy. Steps in the process have included:

- August - Brainstorming session
- September - Naming the tasks
- October - Curation and research
- October - Focus group discussions
- November - Task force meetings
- January '23 - Complete content and design

Going forward, the group's strategies will be:

- Policy – define current tree canopy policy and who is responsible for its implementation and evaluation.
- Education – Use popular education, environmental summits, and community workshops.
- Research – Seek K-12 students to conduct research projects.
- Funding – Identify resources available to the City and non-profit partners. Connect with non-profits that have relevant missions.

The task force will be reviewing the City's tree ordinances and developing policy recommendations such as:

- Design overlays to encourage tree planting
- Incentives for developers to preserve more trees
- Prioritizing tree canopy areas that are needed for social equity and heat island reduction

The task force will engage with stakeholders through workshops, planting events, signage, and other means to highlight the importance of maintaining Greensboro's tree canopy. Among other initiatives, the group will also assess the effects of planned infrastructure projects on existing trees; evaluate other cities' tree preservation strategies; and seek to expand availability of low-cost trees to homeowners. Chair Gaines expressed special thanks to Dr. Shaleen Miller for her efforts in connecting the Tree Canopy Task Force to so many other stakeholders and resources. The task force will meet next in January.

10. Food Waste Task Force Update

This item was postponed to a future meeting.

11. Acknowledgement of Absences

None.

12. Incidentals and Announcements

- **Items from Chair** – Chair Gaines noted that the draft 2023 meeting schedule was displayed on the meeting room monitor. Informal Work Sessions would be held on the second Monday of alternating months, starting in January, while Formal Meetings would be held on the second Monday of alternating months starting in February.
- **Items from Vice-Chair** – None.
- **Items from CSC Members** – Mr. Pierre noted that this week is Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week. He asked other CSC members to consider how the board could help support those organizations working to improve access to food and housing for the less fortunate.
- **Items from Public** – Skip Yeakel stated that the biggest global sustainability issue is human population. He asked if there would be an opportunity for a future Knowledge Networking presentation about this issue from a local perspective?

Scott Jones of Tiny Houses Community Development stated that his organization is focused on creating supportive housing for individuals experiencing homelessness and living in poverty. There are many Greensboro residents unable to afford the currently very high rental rates. When they created their first tiny house community in Greensboro, four years ago, they were very deliberate in protecting as many of the trees on the site as possible, creating edible landscaping instead of purely ornamental plantings, and establishing a community garden. These are practices they have incorporated into all of their developments. Unfortunately the City subsidizes large affordable housing builders that practice clearcut development. Acres and acres of trees are removed to build huge apartment complexes that have very low construction quality, and in some cases prohibit tenants from growing produce on site. They would like to see the City provide greater emphasis on developing affordable housing that is more environmentally sensitive, that is built to last, and that empowers residents to be self-sustaining.

- **Items from Chief Sustainability Officer / City Staff** – None.

13. Adjournment - Chair Gaines adjourned the meeting at 6:25 pm.