

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

4pm, Monday, February 13, 2023
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	Eric Ireland	Andrew Randall
Jailah White	Jacques Pierre	Jerald Leimenstoll
Conor Baker	Dr. Vicki Foust	

Staff and Others Present:

Will Yearns, CSC Advisor	Hugh Holston, City Council
Marikay Abuzuaiter, City Council	Chris Wilson, Deputy City Manager
Dr. Shree Dorestant, Chief Sustainability Officer	Marlene Druga, CoG Financial and Administrative Services
Jeff Sovich, CoG Planning	Chris Marriott, CoG Field Operations
Ellen Van Velsor, Citizens Climate Lobby	Masey DeMoss, CoG Field Operations
Happy Reith, Sierra Club, Piedmont Plateau Chapter	Linda Margo, Sierra Club, Piedmont Plateau Chapter
Etsuko Kinefuchi, UNCG	Hank Henning, Duke Energy
Skip Yeakel GIA Link, Inc.	Lee Mortenson, Greensboro Farmers' Curb Market
Mary Miller, Resident	Beverly Willingham, Resident
Steve Randall, Resident	Karen Lennon, Resident
Dashawn Mclean, Resident	Celeste Cornelius, Resident

1. Chair Greeting / Welcome Visitors

Chair Gaines called the meeting to order at 4:00 pm and welcomed City Council Members Marikay Abuzuaiter and Hugh Holston, and visitors and city staff in attendance.

2. Approval of November 14, 2022 Meeting Minutes

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

3. CSC Officer (Chair and Vice Chair) Candidate Statements and Elections

Candidate Statements, Chair

Nicole Gaines – Ms Gaines stated that she has been the Chair for the past two years(?). She is seeking reelection to that position. She mentioned that although she is busy with several other responsibilities and roles in her life, she feels that these will not

interfere with her ability to fulfill the duties of position of CSC Chair. She is a former Chair of the Piedmont Plateau Chapter of the Sierra Club and has been a member of the CSC since 2017. She is very familiar with the City Council Resolution that launched development of the Strategic Energy Plan (SEP). She has attended every CSC meeting since she was appointed to the board. She has initiated a series of “Knowledge Networking” presentations by City staff and others, aimed at informing CSC members, and she intends to lead the CSC in initiatives that will help implement the SEP and including annual progress reports.

Eric Ireland – Mr. Ireland withdrew his candidacy for the position of Chair.

Chair Gaines then called for any further nominations. There being none, she called for a vote on the candidates for the position of CSC Chair. The CSC voted unanimously to re-elect Nicole Gaines as Chair. She was congratulated with a round of applause.

Candidate Statements, Vice Chair

Eric Ireland – Mr. Ireland stated that his background is in public health, most recently as a Deputy Director of Public Health in Durham County. But he has always had an interest in the environment and in serving others. He is looking for opportunities to bring those interests together in his tenure on the CSC.

Conor Baker – Mr. Baker stated that he is new to the CSC and has been very interested in issues of sustainability and resilience for several years. He currently works for the Guilford County Emergency Management Service, and focuses on hazard mitigation and building resilience in the community. He looks forward to the opportunity to bridge the gap between efforts by the City and County. To that end, he is currently working within his department on developing climate resiliency objectives that can be woven into its hazard mitigation and emergency management processes.

Dr. Vicki Foust – Dr. Foust had not yet joined the meeting. During the January 9 CSC Work Session, Dr. Foust offered to serve in the role of Co-Chair/Mentor if the CSC had elected a new, inexperienced member as Chair. Since Chair-Elect Gaines has served on the CSC since 2017 and has previously served as Chair, the CSC members present concluded that a Co-Chair mentor was not necessary. Accordingly, Dr. Foust’s conditional self-nomination was considered withdrawn.

Chair Gaines stated that CSC’s decision was to vote for either Mr. Ireland or Mr. Baker. Mr. Leimenstoll observed that the name of the Community Sustainability Council indicates that its role is about community, which includes both urban and rural. Mr. Baker’s statement included building community resilience, and connecting efforts by the County and the City. These are things the CSC should strongly work toward. Chair Gaines noted that since their recent appointments to the CSC, both Mr. Baker and Mr. Ireland have stepped in and very quickly demonstrated strong leadership ability. Mr. Baker’s experience with emergency management and climate change mitigation, and Mr. Ireland’s long career in public health will both be essential as we move forward implementing the SEP. She called for any further nominations for the position of Vice Chair. There being no further nominations, she called for a vote. With 4 votes for Mr. Ireland, 3 votes for Mr. Baker, and 2 absences, the CSC voted to elect Mr. Ireland as Vice Chair. Mr. Ireland was congratulated with a round of applause.

4. Yard Waste Enhancement Presentation - Chris Marriott

Chris Marriott, Deputy Director of the Field Operations Department (FOD) presented regarding proposed steps for enhancing the City’s yard waste collection and handling

services. He stated that FOD seeks the CSC's feedback on the items proposed, from their perspectives as City residents and as sustainability advisors. These proposed enhancements will also be presented the Solid Waste Commission, and later to the City Council for their consideration.

Mr. Marriott noted that the City's yard waste program is not very green or sustainable. Some residents put yard waste in plastic bags which require significant time and cost to remove. Curbside loose leaf pick up in the Fall uses significant time, staff, and fuel, and results in additional GHG emissions. Depositing leaves in or near the street also results in clogged stormwater drains. In addition to the operational costs, there is also a significant cost per year in worker's compensation claims from injuries sustained by staff while performing this work. So the department is looking for ways to reduce these costs and minimize the associated safety issues.

Compared with peer cities in North Carolina, Greensboro is the only one that still allows yard waste in plastic bags. Other cities all require yard waste to be either a) unbagged in a separate can or bin, b) in a paper bag, or c) in a "leaf burrito" (a large reusable mesh bag with a zipper, that leaves can be raked into, and placed at curbside for collection). Greensboro is one of only two cities in this sample that does not provide a specific yard waste bin for customers.

During fiscal year 2020-2021, FOD collected 13,000 tons of yard waste at a cost \$300 per ton, whereas ordinary solid waste cost only \$75 per ton. Part of the cost difference is due to the fact that yard waste collection requires a two person crew per vehicle (one to drive and lift the waste into a rear-loading truck), while ordinary trash can be picked up by one person driving an automated "one-armed-bandit" side-loading truck that lifts the bin, dumps it, and returns it to its original position. After pick-up, yard waste is taken to the composting site at the White Street Landfill, where plastic bags are manually removed in order for the waste to be shredded and spread out for composting. The plastic bags are then gathered and transported to the solid waste transfer facility on Burnt Poplar Road, where it meets up with the trash collected by the automated trucks.

So a combination of cost, employee safety, and environmental impacts has lead us to propose a series of changes to our yard waste collection and management program.

- Provide residents with one 96 gallon yard waste bin, with the option to purchase a second bin.
- Option to purchase a leaf burrito for loose leaves and yard trimmings.
- Prohibiting the use of plastic bags for additional yard waste (compostable paper bags only).
- Limit of 10 compostable bags per week (in addition to 96 gallon bin).
- Eliminating curbside loose leaf vacuum pick-up (bag limit suspended during leaf season, November thru January).

The proposed changes involve purchase of around 83,000 new bins at a cost of approximately \$5.3M. This upfront equipment cost would be offset by annual savings of \$1M to \$1.2M, resulting from:

- More efficient collection operations (fewer employees, fewer trucks)
- Reduced worker's compensation claims (fewer injuries), ~\$420,000
- Reduced labor costs from debagging operations, ~\$217,000
- Reduced other labor and equipment costs, ~\$125,000

The upfront public investments required to make these proposed changes are anticipated to yield long term savings, beginning around year 4 of implementation.

Additional benefits of the proposed changes include:

- More timely collection of leaves due to automated pickup operation.
- Frees up City personnel for other FOD functions.
- The new bins purchased would be blue and designated for recyclables, helping to eliminate confusion and reducing contamination in the recycling stream.
- Existing brown bins would be re-designated from recyclables to yard waste.
- Sets up possibility of future residential food waste collection for composting.

The timeline for implementing these changes begins with the budgeting and planning work now in progress. Education and outreach efforts would occur from Fall 2023 through Spring 2024. The carts would be purchased Fall of 2023 and delivered to residents, beginning Winter 2023-24. The full array of changes would go into effect beginning Spring or Summer 2024.

Chair Gaines asked if the elimination of the loose leaf collection program would take place all at once, or if there would be a phase-out period, and how residents would be educated about that change. Mr. Marriott stated that elimination of the loose leaf collection program could only be implemented effectively with the cycle beginning after plastic bagging of yard waste has been prohibited, the leaf burrito has been made available as an option, and brown bins have been re-designated for yard waste. Information about these changes will be distributed multiple times to residents through all available communication methods. Chair Gaines asked how the proposal would address the issue of equity, if lower income residents are expected to purchase paper bags or leaf burritos at the same prices as those who are more well off. Mr. Marriott stated that the ordinance change prohibiting yard waste in plastic bags would also require use of the 96 gallon yard waste bins, allowing paper bags or leaf burritos only for overflow. But because the 96 gallon yard waste bins would be picked up every week, most residents would be able to routinely dispose of all of their yard waste, including leaves, in a much quicker timeframe than currently, and without using overflow containers. We anticipate that only the largest yards or those with the most tree cover will end up needing additional yard waste capacity on a frequent basis.

Etsuko Kinefuchi of UNCG asked if it would be possible to encourage residents to compost some or all of their yard waste, as a way to reduce the volume of yard waste the City handles. Mr. Marriott stated that although this idea could be viable, staffing constraints have not allowed FOD to investigate the feasibility, and analyze the associated benefits and costs. He stated a hope that the Office of Sustainability and Resilience would be able to help in promoting such an effort in the future. The Waste Reduction and Education team have taken some initial steps in partnership with Libraries and Parks & Recreation to teach folks about composting methods. For the past 2 years we've also offered low-cost composting bins and rain barrels for residents to purchase. And those are part of our overall efforts to reduce residential waste in general.

Council Member Abuzuaiter noted that she initially raised the issue of eliminating the loose leaf collection service in response to the safety hazard it creates. Even though the program rules state that leaves should not be put in the street, but rather piled behind the curb, non-compliance is widespread. As a result, large piles of leaves accumulate on residential streets, many of which are narrow. Drivers must then weave back and forth to avoid leaf piles oncoming vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists, creating significant safety concerns. In a few cases, first responders were delayed in reaching incidents due to leaf

pile obstructions. During rainfall, leaves are swept into and often clog storm drains leading to localized flooding. She and another City Council member raised this issue several years ago, but the suggestion was ultimately rejected. She believes that conditions in the community have changed and the time is right for the idea to be reconsidered, and it will hopefully receive a warmer welcome.

Mr. Yearns asked if the proposals involved any change to the City's solid waste collection fees. Mr. Marriott stated that the proposed changes do not reflect any change to the fee, which is currently set at \$3.50 per month, per household served. That rate does not cover the full cost of the service which is supplemented by annual allocations from General Fund tax dollars. Chair Gaines asked how much the widespread public education and awareness campaign would cost, in order to get the word out about these changes. Mr. Marriott said that the costs of promoting these specific changes hasn't been estimated yet, but FOD does have an annual budget for communications and marketing, which would be focused on that effort when the changes are implemented.

David Hampsten of the Transit Alliance of the Piedmont asked if the owners and/or managers of apartment complexes would be notified of the changes as well, since many of them appear to be benefiting from the loose leaf collection service. Mr. Marriott stated that the communication efforts would indeed extend to apartment complexes, home owner associations, townhome owners, and other entities, that could potentially be affected.

Chair Gaines thanked Council Member Abuzuaiter for her valuable additions to the discussion on this item and thanked Financial and Administrative Services Director Marlene Druga for attending, in order to respond to any questions regarding the costs associated with the proposed changes.

Mr. Marriott requested that the CSC consider the proposed changes he presented and provide a statement regarding which items, if any, the CSC endorses or supports, so that he can take that forward in present to the City Council. Chair Gaines thanked Mr. Marriott for the informative presentation and called for a motion. Mr. Leimenstoll moved to recommend in favor of the proposed changes, seconded by Dr. Foust. The motion was approved unanimously by the CSC.

5. Preparation for Possible Earth Day Activities

Dr. Dorestant discussed the various activities and other elements being planned for Greensboro's Earth Day Celebration, in partnership with and hosted at the Greensboro Farmers Curb Market, 501 Yanceyville Street. Among the many sustainability related exhibits and activities will be:

- One of the Greensboro Transit Agency's all-electric buses
- The Parks & Recreation Department's EcoBus
- Blue Duck e-scooters and e-bikes micro-mobility
- Artisans and crafters offering up-cycled creations
- The inaugural #LiveGreen Awards ceremony
- The Kathleen Clay Edwards Library
- Live Music by City Arborist Judson Clinton
- Piedmont Bird Club
- NC Food System Advocacy Coalition
- Greensboro Water Resources Department
- Sierra Club, Piedmont Plateau Chapter
- Greensboro Field Operations Department

- Citizens Climate Lobby
- North Carolina Conservation Network
- Sustainably Yours vintage boutique bus
- And more!

The event runs from 8am to noon on Saturday, April 22 (Earth Day!), culminating with the inaugural #LiveGreen Awards! Set-up for vendors and exhibitors starts at 7:30am. Admission is free, and anyone interested in attending is encouraged to register online for free at: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/earth-day-at-the-curb-tickets-529447861807>. More details will be available at www.GSOFarmersMarket.org

In addition to the one-day event, the Office of Sustainability and Resilience is organizing an Earth Day Bingo Challenge that will run throughout the month of April. A calendar page for the month will be transformed into a bingo card, with a different “green” activity or event on each of the 30 spaces. Participants will be challenged to complete at least one full line of 4 or more activities, either vertically, horizontally, or diagonally. Then they’ll email a photo of their completed card to be eligible for a prize drawing. April 15 through 22, we’ll be focusing on “Food Awareness Week”

6. City Council Adoption of Strategic Energy Plan

Chair Gaines noted that the CSC’s last formal meeting was in November, and at that time, the Strategic Energy Plan had not yet been adopted. During the December 20 City Council meeting, Dr. Dorestant presented the SEP to the Council. Seeing the SEP finally adopted unanimously by the City Council that evening was a great moment for Greensboro. So now the real work begins to guide the City towards meeting its clean energy goals by 2040. This work will include preparing annual Progress Reports to measure changes in key metrics from the 2019 baseline levels.

7. Review of 2023 Growth & Development Trends Infographic

Chair Gaines distributed copies of page 3 of the January 2023 annual Growth and Development Trends document produced by the Planning Department, while that page was also displayed on the meeting room’s viewscreen. The report provides a very informative snapshot of development activity that occurred in Greensboro over the preceding year. Page 3 consists of an infographic summarizing various key metrics about the City, including population, land area, annual total budget, miles of infrastructure, etc. Chair Gaines drew attention to the fact that as of 2022, Greensboro had 105.5 miles of trails and greenways, up from 102 miles in 2021. She asked whether we’re creating enough miles of trails, greenways, and green spaces each year to keep pace with the City’s population growth. The annual Growth and Development Trends reports, stretching back to 2012 are available on the City’s website at: <https://www.greensboro-nc.gov/statistics>

8. Update on #LiveGreen Awards (Responsible Business Awards)

Dr. Dorestant noted that the official City news release announcing the #LiveGreen Awards was issued earlier today. She is hoping that lots of interest will be generated by this announcement, and that lots of great nominations will be submitted. The #LiveGreen Awards ceremony, beginning around 11am, will be the “grand finale” of the Earth Day Celebration at the Farmers Curb Market, 501 Yanceyville Street.

Nominations will be accepted through March 22; self-nominations are welcome. Once all the nominations have been received, the CSC will be charged with reviewing and scoring them. Although this year's event is oriented primarily toward recognizing businesses in the community that are setting examples of sustainability, our aim in the future is to expand the nominations to include noteworthy organizations or individuals who are also doing important work to keep the green in Greensboro. Dr. Dorestant is also making arrangements to have a local business design and craft the recipients' award plaques from sustainably harvested, locally sourced wood.

9. Food Waste Task Force Update

Dr. Dorestant noted that she, Dr. Foust, and the Food Waste Task Force members have been developing a partnership with the NC A&T Agricultural and Environmental Sciences program to plan and host a food waste reduction symposium to be called "Love the Food, Hate the Waste". The symposium will be held on Wednesday, March 22, from noon to 5pm, at the NC A&T Farm Pavilion, 3020 McConnell Road. The order of speakers and topics during the symposium will be based on the EPA's Food Recovery Hierarchy. The event also includes a food waste reduction poster contest open to all college and university students, with winners to be announced during the symposium!

Linda Margo, a Food Waste Task Force member, noted that Laura Oxner of RePurpose Food Recovery will be speaking about food waste issues at the next Sierra Club meeting, 6:15pm, Wednesday, March 8, at Deep Roots Market, 600 North Eugene Street.

10. Tree Canopy Task Force Update

Chair Gaines referred attendees to the Tree Canopy Summary Report which was presented during the November 2022 CSC meeting, and which was included as an email attachment with the announcement for today's meeting. She stated that the Task Force has focused the majority of its efforts around Recommendation #6 from the Strategic Energy Plan, which aims to "Establish a policy to achieve no net loss of the tree canopy throughout the City, for improved air quality, reduced urban heat island effect, and ongoing carbon sequestration." As the Task Force identifies the various tree canopy issues and explores them in greater depth, we're learning that there are so many inter-connected aspects. Ellen Van Velsor, a Task Force member who's also involved with the Citizens Climate Lobby, noted that she has helped get 'Healthy Forests and Urban Tree Canopy' included on CCL's agenda at the national level. Chair Gaines noted that this is one of the numerous collaborations on education and outreach we've achieved in a fairly short time.

Overarching principles for the Task Force are:

- Planning
- Education and Awareness
- Diversity and Equity in Leadership
- Environmental & Human Health
- Funding

Going forward for 2023, the Task Force will be meeting from 4 to 5:15pm, on the fourth Wednesday of each month, on Zoom.

11. Acknowledgement of Absences

Chair Gaines acknowledged the Authorized Absence of Dr. Hale.

12. Incidentals and Announcements

- **Items from Chair** – None.
- **Items from Vice-Chair** – None.
- **Items from CSC Members** – None.
- **Items from Public** – Linda Margo noted that a fellow Sierra Club member is interested in creating a comprehensive Google calendar of sustainability related events in Guilford County, that would pool together information from the many people and organizations arranging these events throughout the year. Anyone interested in contributing to that effort can contact her at linda.mrg@gmail.com

Skip Yeakel offered to make contacts with Volvo Trucks to see if one of their EV trucks could be on display at the Earth Day Celebration. He also noted that NuScale Power has recently received approval from Nuclear Regulatory Commission for sales of its 50 megawatt small modular reactor. He suggested that it would be great advance for clean energy if one of these units could be deployed in Greensboro, for instance at NC A&T.

City Council Member Abuzuaiter expressed her pride and excitement regarding the adoption of the SEP, together with Greensboro now having a Chief Sustainability Officer, all the great events being planned around Earth Day and other work by Dr. Dorestant and the CSC. It's been a long road to reach this point, but the momentum now feels strong enough to keep going! Chair Gaines thanked Mrs. Abuzuaiter for her tireless efforts as liaison to the CSC.

- **Items from Chief Sustainability Officer / City Staff** – Mr. Sovich noted that due to a scheduling conflict in the Plaza Level Conference Room, the CSC's next 3 Formal Meetings (April 10, June 12, and August 14) instead will be held in the "Be INFORmed" conference room (also located on the Plaza Level of the Melvin Municipal Office Building). This information will be included in the normal meeting announcement distributed via email and on the City website at www.greensboro-nc.gov/csc. The meeting location for CSC Work Sessions is unaffected.

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