

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

4pm, Monday, April 10, 2023
Hybrid Meeting Format:

“Be INFORmed” Conference Room, Plaza Level (In Person)
Melvin Municipal Office Building
West Washington Street

Using the Microsoft Teams videoconferencing tool (Virtual)

CSC Members Present:

Nicole Gaines, Chair	Eric Ireland	Andrew Randall
Jailah White	Dr. Vicki Foust	Jerald Leimenstoll
Conor Baker		

Staff and Others Present:

Marikay Abuzuaiter, City Council	Burton Kennedy, Beyond Plastics
Dr. Shree Dorestant, Chief Sustainability Officer	Dr. Etsuko Kinefuchi, Beyond Plastics
Jeff Sovich, CoG Planning	Mina Kinefuchi-Elbert, Beyond Plastics
Rich Lovett, CoG Field Operations	Nancy Abrams, Beyond Plastics
Jackie Wilson, Beyond Plastics	Margaret Ritsch, Beyond Plastics
Steve Randall, Resident	

1. Chair Greeting / Welcome Visitors

Chair Gaines called the meeting to order at 4:19 pm and welcomed City Council Member Marikay Abuzuaiter, visitors, and city staff in attendance.

2. Approval of February 13, 2023 Meeting Minutes

Chair Gaines invited the CSC to discuss the draft minutes of the February 13, 2023 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. Randall. The CSC voted to approve the motion unanimously.

3. Final Preparations for Earth Day Activities

Dr. Dorestant described the various activities and promotions organized by OSR, including:

- The Earth Month Bingo activity, which offers prizes for participants who complete any 4 activities in a row (horizontal, vertical, or diagonal) on the bingo card calendar.
- Food Awareness Week, April 15 – 21, which coincides with the launch of the [Food Waste Collection Pilot Program](#) in partnership with Gallins Family Farm.
- A Sustainable Kitchen Practices Demonstration on April 17 at the McGirt-Horton Library, in partnership with the Second Harvest Food Bank.
- The collegiate Food Waste Solutions Poster contest, for which the submission deadline has been extended to April 15, in order to account for Spring Break.

She stated that the City has partnered with the Greensboro Farmers Curb Market to host the Greensboro Earth Day Celebration on Saturday, April 22, from 7:30am to noon. Visitors at the event will be able to: try out Greensboro's Food Waste Collection Pilot Program, courtesy of Gallins Family Farm; tour one of the Greensboro Transit Agency's all-electric buses; explore the Parks and Recreation EcoBus; try out BlueDuck eBikes and eScooters; enjoy food from a pair of on-site food trucks; hear live music; pick up educational resources; participate in fun sustainability activities; and purchase products from several earth-friendly vendors.

Beginning at 11am, the #LiveGreen Awards ceremony will honor people and organizations who've made a difference in local sustainability efforts. The ceremony will begin with an Earth Day proclamation read by Mayor Nancy Vaughan and a Keynote Address by State Senator for District 27, Michael K. Garrett. The nominees include 18 separate organizations or individuals in 6 categories. Four of the nominees were carried over from the original launch of the #LiveGreen Awards in 2020, which was suspended due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Finally, winners of the "Love the Food, Hate the Waste" Student Poster Competition will also be announced.

4. Discussion of the City's Efforts to Reduce Plastic Waste

Dr. Dorestant noted that the City is just beginning to examine ways to reduce the use of single use plastics and the volume of plastic waste produced, both within City government and community-wide. She stated that she was open to hearing comments from the members of Beyond Plastics attending this meeting, and that the Office of Sustainability and Resilience (OS&R) will be open to suggestions as City efforts move forward. She added that for several years, the City has promoted the "No-Straw November" program to encourage residents to skip single-use plastic straws during that month, but that the online pledge is available year-round. OS&R is considering circulating a survey and targeted district outreach, to understand resident preferences, priorities, and ideas about plastic waste. There's also a broader discussion around how to reduce litter generally, and developing some themed outreach to promote sustainability throughout the year, so that the energy and focus in April regarding Earth Day, can be expanded.

Margaret Ritsch of Beyond Plastics stated that some states, such as Washington, require retailers to charge a fee for disposable plastic shopping bags. And there's a clear difference in the overall level of litter in the environment in those states. Burton Kennedy of Beyond Plastics stated that the first step should be for the City to recognize that plastic waste is a real problem that is becoming worse all the time. The ultimate goal is to do away with plastics altogether, but that's a big goal. So, in order to take concrete steps, our group has been going to restaurants to encourage them to stop providing plastic utensils, styrofoam containers, and condiment packets by default. By asking customers whether they want or need these items with their order, the restaurant can significantly reduce its costs, but also reduce the amount of plastic waste generated. In addition, because plastics are petroleum products, reducing the use of those items helps lower the demand for fossil fuels.

Dr. Etsuko Kinefuchi of Beyond Plastics stated that public awareness campaigns are important and helpful, but in order to see systemic changes, it will be essential for the City to engage in outreach to, and partnership with, businesses. The City needs to lead the effort. From the interviews we've conducted, businesses are aware of the need for reducing plastic waste and they want to do good, but decisions often come down to avoiding perceived risks of doing things that might give their competitors an advantage. So incentives can help make the difference for encouraging businesses to take actions

that might produce a benefit for the community or the planet. If there are ways the City could provide such incentives, it might be a small step with a big impact.

Chair Gaines thanked the Beyond Plastics members for their comments and noted that it will be important that messaging in the City's awareness and encouragement campaigns is appropriately customized to speak to residents of all council districts, income levels, race and ethnic backgrounds, educational attainment, religions, etc., so that everyone knows it's important to do their part. For instance, among lower income households, there is often a perception that recycling or other green practices are something only rich people can afford to do.

Ms Ritsch stated that she was encouraged by the positive steps that the Food Lion grocery store chain has taken, especially since they often locate in zip codes that other chains avoid. Dr. Dorestant noted that conversations and collaborations with businesses are happening, including with Food Lion, which provided some refreshments for the Love the Food, Hate the Waste symposium. The manager of the Food Lion store was interested in further conversations and was eager to point out the chain's efforts toward sustainability. So the key will be pulling together the many individual efforts and partnerships in order to demonstrate the value and results they bring to the community. Mr. Ireland asked if there is a list of businesses in the community that operate on principles of sustainability, which could be made available on the City's website. Dr. Dorestant responded that this was a great idea, and that the #LiveGreen Awards were, in part, meant to help identify these businesses.

Steve Randall, resident, suggested that when the Field Operations Department eventually provides yard waste bins to its residential customers, stickers could be added to the bins each month, for users who pledge to follow all solid waste requirements. This would be a way to recognize residents who are doing their part to handle these resources properly.

City Council Member Abuzuaiter noted that Field Operations periodically conducts audits of the waste and recycling streams. The most recent audit showed that the recycling stream has contamination rate of around 28%. Whenever a load of recyclables has a contamination above a threshold percentage, the load is rejected and sent straight to the landfill. When the contamination rate is too high, the recycling contractor, Republic Services, which operates the Material Recovery Facility on Patton Avenue, can't make a reasonable return on expenses. Some routes have consistently higher contamination rates, and so Field Operations is targeting those for outreach, education, and compliance efforts.

Dr. Kinefuchi, who is a professor at UNCG, noted that one of her students recently completed a qualitative pilot study on communicating single-use plastic bans, involving interviews three individuals regarding their understanding of single-use plastics, and how single-use plastic bans might impact their workplace. She offered to share a copy of the study, which the student will be expanding on in her capstone project, with the CSC.

5. Break

The CSC opted to forego the break and proceed with the remainder of the agenda.

6. Update on #LiveGreen Awards (aka Responsible Business Awards)

This item was discussed during item #3) Final Preparations for Earth Day Activities.

7. Food Waste Task Force Update

Dr. Dorestant stated that the Love the Food, Hate the Waste symposium was such a success that OS&R is now in discussion with NCA&T, UNCG, and Guilford College to

arrange a part two follow-up symposium. The initial idea is to hold the event in the Fall, possibly in conjunction with World Hunger Day on October 22. The partners are preparing an application for a grant from the USDA, which would provide funding for the event, as well as for some food waste reduction projects.

8. Tree Canopy Task Force Update

Chair Gaines introduced this item by sharing two videos from the US Forest Service: "[Trees and Green Spaces in Urban Communities Make a Difference](#)" and "[Introduction to Urban Tree Canopy Assessments](#)". The City has an active Urban Forestry program, led by City Arborist Judson Clinton. As development activity and new construction happens throughout the City it's important that protecting our trees is taken seriously, and wherever possible, developers work around trees, instead of cutting them down. The CSC is fortunate to have Will Yearn as our advisor from the real estate and development sector, to help us navigate some of the issues and concerns related to trees.

Anyone interested in helping with the work of the Tree Canopy Task Force can join our next meeting on Wednesday, May 12, from 4 to 5:15pm, on Zoom. We're hoping to transition to in-person meetings sometime soon. One objective we hope to accomplish is a comprehensive update to the City's tree canopy inventory. Mr. Kennedy asked if the City is doing anything to take down Bradford pear trees. Chair Gaines noted that the NC Forest Service, the NC Urban Forest Council, and the NC Wildlife Federation have teamed up to offer a "bounty" for NC residents to remove invasive Bradford pear trees from their yards. This [Tree Bounty initiative](#) offers native tree saplings as replacements when residents cut down up to 5 Bradford pear trees. Interested individuals can sign up at the website, for specific replacement events by county.

9. Acknowledgement of Absences

Chair Gaines acknowledged the Authorized Absence of Dr. Marcia Hale.

10. Incidentals and Announcements

- **Items from Chair** – Chair Gaines noted that for the May 8 CSC work session, she has invited Benny Sloan, from the NC Department of Transportation's Civil Rights Division, to attend and speak about NCDOT's Disadvantaged Business Enterprise program. This will be a "knowledge networking" discussion.
- **Items from Vice-Chair** – Vice-Chair Ireland stated that he would like to request discussion at an upcoming CSC meeting (May 8, if possible), regarding the evaluation plan for the Strategic Energy Plan. He is seeking an explanation of its purpose, how it will be used, and how data and analysis of implementation progress will be shared, etc. He would like for Dr. Dorestant to lead that discussion. He also stated that the Arbor Day tree planting event at Dudley High School was very successful, and that he has some photos he will share with the CSC. Finally, he would like for the CSC and staff to have a debriefing session, to be led by Mr. Baker, regarding the process of reviewing and voting on the nominations for the #LiveGreen Awards, in order to improve the process for future years.
- **Items from CSC Members** – None.
- **Items from Public** – Dr. Kinefuchi stated that she has been volunteering with an organization called [7 Directions of Service](#), which is leading a movement to legally recognize the rights of the Haw River. Their aim is for the NC General Assembly to pass the Rights of the Haw River Ecosystem Act, H.B 795. Such a bill would be the first state-level Rights of Nature law in the US. Anyone who is interested is invited

to attend an information session about the effort on Sunday, May 21, from 3 to 5pm, in Barber Park Shelter #3 (next to the sprayground).

Council Member Abuzuaiter expressed her thanks and compliments to Dr. Dorestant for her excellent work in planning and organizing the Love the Food, Hate the Waste symposium. The event was very well done and well attended. She enjoyed the presentations and learned a great deal about food systems and food waste. She also complimented Dr. Dorestant and Mr. Lovett on their presentations during the symposium. The event was a great collaboration between the universities and the City, and she hopes it will be held again next year with even more attendees. She was very intrigued by information presented about food service company Sodexo's smart device app called "Leanpath," which is very effective at reducing food waste in institutional settings. She is looking forward to Dr. Dorestant's follow-up email to attendees, which will contain links to presentations from the symposium and additional information.

- **Items from Chief Sustainability Officer / City Staff** – Mr. Lovett from the Field Operations Department noted that the City's Spring Recycle Rodeo will be held on April 22 (Earth Day) from 9am to 2pm at Western Guilford Elementary School. This event is a great opportunity to dispose of household hazardous waste items, shred sensitive documents, and drop off difficult to recycle items such as electronics, foam, and glass. The event is free and open to the public. Although this event partially overlaps with the Earth Day Celebration, it runs until 2pm, so there's enough time for folks to travel to the Recycle Rodeo after the Earth Day Celebration ends.

11.Adjournment - Chair Gaines adjourned the meeting at 5:58 pm.