

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

4pm, Monday, June 12, 2023  
Hybrid Meeting Format:

Transportation Conference Room, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor (In Person)  
Melvin Municipal Office Building  
West Washington Street

Using the Microsoft Teams videoconferencing tool (Virtual)

**CSC Members Present:**

Nicole Gaines, Chair	Eric Ireland, Vice Chair	Andrew Randall
Jailah White	Dr. Vicki Foust	Jacques Pierre
Conor Baker		

**Staff and Others Present:**

Marikay Abuzuaiter, City Council	Will Yearns, CSC Advisor
Dr. Shree Dorestant, Chief Sustainability Officer	Sergey Kobelev, CoG Engineering & Inspections
Chris Marriott, CoG Field Operations	Jeff Sovich, CoG Planning
Samuel L. Hawkins, Minimum Housing Standards Commission	Mary Miller, CSC Tree Canopy Committee
Hank Henning, Duke Energy	Jim Josephson, Johnson Controls
Rachel Hutto, Resident	Kassandra Hart, Resident
Steve Randall, Resident	Joshua Todd, Resident

**1. Chair Greeting / Welcome Visitors**

Chair Gaines called the meeting to order at 4:09 pm and welcomed City Council Member Marikay Abuzuaiter, visitors, and city staff in attendance.

**2. Approval of April 10, 2023 Meeting Minutes**

Chair Gaines invited the CSC to discuss the draft minutes of the April 10, 2023 CSC meeting. There being no comments on the minutes, Chair Gaines called for a motion to approve the minutes, as presented. Vice Chair Ireland moved the item, which was seconded by Dr. Foust. The CSC voted to approve the motion unanimously.

Chair Gaines asked those in attendance to join her in acknowledging the loss on May 4, of Nelson Stover, a local champion for sustainability and the environment. He helped establish the organization Emerging Ecology, and pushed strongly for acquiring the styrofoam densifier currently hosted and operated by Tiny Houses Greensboro. He will be missed.

**3. CSC Vacancy, New Boards & Commissions Residency Requirement**

Chair Gaines noted that there is currently one vacancy on the CSC, an at-large seat formerly held by Dr. Marcia Hale. Anyone interested in serving on the CSC is encouraged to complete the [Boards and Commissions Interest Form](#) on the City website. The City

Clerk's office maintains a list of individuals who have expressed interest in each board or commission, and when a vacancy comes up, the City Council can select an appointee, either from among that list, or not, at their discretion. However, in April, the City Council adopted a change to Greensboro's Code of Ordinances requiring that all board and commission members have primary place of residence within City limits.

#### **4. CSC Letter of Support for Urban & Community Forestry Grant**

Dr. Dorestant advised that she has been coordinating with staff in several departments to identify and pursue various grant opportunities that may be able to advance City sustainability objectives. Among these is the Urban & Community Forestry Grant program from the US Forest Service, within the Department of Agriculture. The staff team developed a project proposal for this grant application, which was due June 1. The concept for the project includes conducting a tree canopy audit, working within and with disadvantaged communities of Greensboro to expand urban tree canopy (planting and maintaining new canopy trees!), and engaging residents in urban forestry planning and management, educational campaigns, and workforce development opportunities. Dr. Dorestant noted that the team secured letters of support from Mayor Vaughan, Piedmont Land Conservancy, CSC Tree Canopy Task Force, One Tree Planted, Duke Energy, Greensboro Beautiful, Guilford Works, and the Southeast Greensboro Coalition. Dr. Dorestant designed the project proposal to focus the benefits in disadvantaged communities within Greensboro, which enabled the application to be submitted without having to provide a local matching amount. The program had a per award minimum of \$100,000 and a cap of \$50 million – Greensboro applied for \$825,000 over 5 years. We should know the results of our application by early September.

#### **5. Review of *GSO2040* Implementation Update**

Mr. Sovich noted that the *GSO2040* Implementation Update, for 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2023 was published recently. These 4 page newsletters are intended to provide a brief overview of key projects, policies, or initiatives the City has carried out that implement one or more Goals and Strategies of the comprehensive plan. Publishing these updates helps raise awareness that Greensboro has an adopted comprehensive plan and that the plan has a significant role in guiding the work of all units of City administration. Each newsletter usually includes 5 articles of around 150 words (or 300 for the front page article), plus photos or graphics, and callouts for the Big Idea, Goal, and Strategy the item is most relevant to.

This quarter's issue includes articles about adoption of the Fleming Road Area Plan and upcoming adoption of the East Gate City Plan; a proposed National Register of Historic Places nomination for the Benbow Road, Clinton Hills, and Benbow Park neighborhoods; adoption of the Strategic Energy Plan; Greensboro's participation in the North Carolina Year of the Trail; and the recent election of new members of the International Advisory Committee. Chair Gaines noted that she really appreciated the feature on African-American mid-century architecture in east Greensboro. It is wonderful to see these important architects, builders, and structures recognized, as well as numerous residents of the area who played key roles in the Civil Rights movement. She encouraged everyone to read this issue and to watch for future issues as they come out. Implementation of the Strategic Energy Plan and other sustainability activities will likely be covered as the Office of Sustainability & Resilience gains staff and gears up.

## **6. CSC Progress on Implementing Strategic Energy Plan**

Chair Gaines stated that she has been contacted by numerous people in the community interested in hearing what progress the City has made in implementing the Strategic Energy Plan since it was adopted in December. Many of these inquiries are from people who were involved in urging the City to pass the resolution that initiated the SEP, or were involved in the various meetings along the way to develop the SEP, eager to see results. Obviously, a key implementation step was getting the Office of Sustainability & Resilience established, which was accomplished when Dr. Dorestant came on board. But as we move forward it will be important to show how improving energy efficiency and switching to clean energy in City operations will get taxpayers more for their dollar and make Greensboro a cleaner, healthier, greener, and more equitable place to live.

The SEP has very ambitious goals, and just getting to the point of having the SEP adopted was a 3 year effort. We just need to keep the momentum going and work through the prioritized actions for years 1 through 5 on page 55. Keeping a stable, committed, and actively engaged CSC will help to keep City staff accountable for making steady progress on implementation. The grant opportunity described earlier by Dr. Dorestant is an excellent example of City staff being agile to begin proactively addressing an item identified in the SEP.

Dr. Foust asked about the status of a potential solar PV installation on the roof of the Central Library. Dr. Dorestant noted that the feasibility of this project idea is still being assessed, and if it's determined that it can move forward for funding, that will certainly help implementing the SEP. The Office of Sustainability & Resilience expects that it will be responsible for producing the annual progress report on implementation of the SEP. As funding and staff are assigned to OSR, we'll be exploring what that report should look like, how it will be developed, and how it will be presented to the City Council and the public, to give a clear, concise snapshot of what's been accomplished over the preceding year. There will be many funding opportunities available through the Inflation Reduction Act and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, that will be very helpful in getting many important SEP priorities implemented. City Council adoption of the annual budget, set for June 20, will also be crucial in getting the OSR well-positioned to bring a significant amount of that federal funding to Greensboro.

Chair Gaines noted that she is involved with the Haw River Assembly, and was impressed with the work by several City employees who recently helped install a "Trash Trap" in a waterway in Barber Park. This positive collaborative effort is a great example, and will help set the stage for similar environmental protection and restoration projects with other non-profits going forward. Dr. Dorestant stated that the City staff members who are expected to be assigned to OSR are already doing significant work related to sustainability, not only within their current departments, but throughout the organization. So, hopefully by the next CSC meeting we'll be able to share a more detailed update on OSR's structure, roles, and more.

## **7. Call for CSC Letters to Editor Supporting Sustainable Living**

Chair Gaines stated that in a previous meeting, the CSC discussed a general lack of awareness in the community regarding the work of the CSC and the City in advancing sustainability and environmental goals. It's important that we understand why people are unaware and take steps to broaden the reach of our communication efforts. The City's website can be difficult to navigate—people get lost. She called on the CSC to take a more active role in this regard by, among other things, writing letters to the editor of the News & Record, describing how these issues affect them and their families and neighbors. Paint

a picture of what these environmental challenges look like, and explain how the CSC and OSR are taking steps to address those challenges and support sustainable living in our community.

Dr. Foust noted that the continuing success of the food waste composting collection pilot program at the Farmers Curb Market shows the support and enthusiasm in the community for City initiatives for sustainable living and environmental protection and restoration. This support will make it easier, going forward, for the City Council to see the need for trying these kinds of new and innovative ideas.

Commissioner Samuel Hawkins of the Minimum Housing Standards Commission introduced himself and stated that he has long had an interest in programs, initiatives, and facilities that affect the lives of Greensboro residents, whether positively or adversely. The food waste composting program is certainly one that could have far-reaching positive impacts for all residents. He noted that Starbucks has a program called “Grounds for the Garden” through which they will provide used coffee grounds to anyone for use as an extremely effective garden soil amendment. He also noted that the hospitals and other large institutions in Greensboro have massive amounts of food that are disposed of every day, that could be redirected to feed hungry people, and any remaining surplus could be composted, instead of sent to the landfill.

Dr. Dorestant noted that Guilford County Schools will be a host for the grant proposal OSR is currently working on, for a food waste composting pilot program in selected schools. But the intent is to build on and expand that initial test phase as we learn what works and how to improve on less successful aspects. Another grant proposal will expand the current partnership with Gallins Family Farms to deploy food waste composting collection bins in several locations throughout the City. Mr. Hawkins also offered a suggestion for improving the user experience on the portions of the City website related to the CSC and OSR. Specifically he proposed creating a series of short videos that explain key sustainability concepts or summarize important plans or policies. He noted that some people find that form of information easier or more convenient to absorb.

City Council Member Marikay Abuzuaiter noted that she has had a garden for more than 40 years and grew up with a garden. Those of us who have are aware of the need to compost and save coffee grounds and recycle. And she has been adamant about these practices because her children came home in kindergarten and said “Mommy you have to do this!” She realizes that schools are under a tremendous amount of pressure from many directions, but somehow we have to reach those 4 and 5 year-olds because the message needs to be internalized from a young age. She commended the CSC for making great progress in just the 7<sup>th</sup> month since the Strategic Energy Plan was adopted, but we’re just getting started! And this is where the CSC will shine because there will be benchmarks to gauge just how successful all of this is.

Mr. Sovich noted that anyone interested in staying informed about City events, news, or announcements related to sustainability can sign up to receive that information by visiting the CSC webpage (<https://www.greensboro-nc.gov/csc>). Along the right-hand column, is a box for eNotification signup. Fill in the form and check the Calendar and News boxes, and these announcements will be sent directly to your email address. Chair Gaines stated that OSR will be working to help spread a mindset of collaboration within the City organization, instead of silo-ing. And that’s where Greensboro will see much more success.

Ms Cassandra Hart introduced herself, stating that she holds a certificate in waste management from the Waste Management Institute at NCA&T. She is interested in the environment, sustainability, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and related issues.

## **8. CSC Member Retreat to Discuss SEP Evaluation Processes**

Chair Gaines noted that the SEP already incorporates a framework for annual evaluation and progress reporting in the Appendix. She recommended that the CSC dedicate some time to work on elaborating this framework in more detail during a retreat. Vice Chair Ireland stated that it is important that the CSC is aware of how the evaluation element interacts with goals of the overall plan and how important it is to developing the annual report. The CSC will have a role in supporting Dr. Dorestant and the Office of Sustainability & Resilience in implementing the plan.

Chair Gaines stated that she has not considered any proposed dates for the retreat, and would like the CSC to take time to discuss possible dates, times, and format. She expected the conversation would take at least 6 hours. Dr. Foust suggested that maybe a Saturday or Sunday in late July or early August would be a good concept. She added that sending out a Doodle Poll with several options would be an effective way to identify the times and dates that would work best for as many CSC members as possible. Chair Gaines agreed. Mr. Baker stated that the late July to early August timeframe would also allow Dr. Dorestant time to get her staffing arrangements settled and availability of the OSR team to participate and contribute.

## **9. Recap of Tree Canopy Committee Greenway Tour**

Chair Gaines noted that although there is not a recent tree canopy assessment to provide data, she knows that with all the development that has occurred in Greensboro since the 2009 assessment, there has certainly be a significant loss of canopy and old-growth trees. The Tree Canopy Committee has been working with City Arborist Judson Clinton and others to develop proposals to help advance Strategic Energy Plan Recommendation 6, to achieve no net loss of tree canopy. In February, the committee toured the Guilford College woods, which has been designated as a tribute to the history of the Underground Railroad. The tour included a tulip poplar tree that is over 300 years old, that was present during the time (1819-1852) when the Underground Railroad helped guide, shelter, and lead escaped slaves to free states in the north. It's important that people are aware of the lenses of equity and environmental justice through which we on the CSC view all the work we do.

In May, the committee toured the western leg of the Downtown Greenway, to draw attention to both the natural and manmade spaces that the greenway will pass through when complete. The point was made, that as infill development occurs, and overall residential density increases, the City's greenspaces will play an increasingly important role as an essential urban amenity, rather than an ornamental luxury we can get by without. Along the way, the committee saw rain garden installation on Smith Street, which was designed and landscaped by David Mudd and Justin Vettel, who were the winners of the "In Touch with Nature" category of the #LiveGreen Awards in April. She stated that she would like to see this type of beautiful, natural, sustainable streetscaping installed along Randleman Road and other thoroughfares that lack street trees or other streetside amenities. The subcommittee also saw the "Cairn's Course" public art installation that highlights some early Greensboro industrial history, and which is also the site of an urban wetland.

## **10. Acknowledgement of Absences**

Chair Gaines acknowledged the Authorized Absence of Mr. Leimenstoll.

## **11. Incidentals and Announcements**

- **Items from Chair** – None.
- **Items from Vice-Chair** – None.
- **Items from CSC Members** – Mr. Baker noted that the Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan update will be kicking off in the August timeframe, but there hasn't been much additional information on that item.

Mr. Yearns noted that Duke Energy Carolinas is rolling out some new energy-efficiency credits for homeowners, that Duke Energy Progress has made available for several years.

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

**12. Adjournment** - Chair Gaines adjourned the meeting at 5:20 pm.