

**Orange County
Commission for the Environment**

DRAFT Meeting Summary

August 12, 2013

Environment and Agricultural Center, Hillsborough

MEMBERS PRESENT: David Neal (Chair), May Becker, Terri Buckner, Peter Cada, Susie Enoch, Loren Hintz, Jeanette O'Connor, Steve Niezgoda, Gary Saunders, David Welch

ABSENT: Lucy Adams, Tom O'Dwyer, Jan Sassaman

STAFF: Rich Shaw, Tom Davis, Malcolm Munkittrick (DEAPR Research Associate)

GUESTS: Donna Lee Jones (CFE prospect)

- I. **Call to Order** – Neal called the meeting to order at 7:34 pm.
- II. **Additions or Changes to Agenda** – None. O'Connor and Niezgoda provided an account of a recent tour of Duke Forest that they both attended since the last meeting.
- III. **Introduction of New CFE Member** – Neal welcomed Susie Enoch who was appointed by the BOCC on May 21 along with Jones, Niezgoda, and O'Connor. Enoch described her background and interest in serving on the CFE. CFE members introduced themselves. Neal asked the new members on which of the two committees they would like to serve. Enoch, O'Connor, Niezgoda and Jones offered to serve on the Water and Biological Resources Committee. Jones noted she has not yet to receive authorization from her employer so she remains a "guest" and will not participate as a voting member.

Neal referred to a draft resolution of appreciation for Bill Kaiser. Saunders motioned to approve the resolution as written; seconded by Niezgoda. Motion approved unanimously.
- IV. **Approval of Minutes** – Neal asked for comments on draft June 10 meeting summary. Saunders motioned to approve as written; Niezgoda seconded. Approved unanimously.
- V. **State of the Environment 2014** – Shaw provided an overview of the status of developing the 2014 State of the Environment report. He reviewed the discussion from the CFE's June meeting and what had been done since then to address the comments received thus far. Shaw explained how Munkittrick had completed an initial draft of the report for CFE review and comments. He thanked those members who had already provided comments via email and asked others to provide feedback.

Neal asked CFE members for further comments. The following suggestions were provided:

- Change the Air Resources section to Air and Energy Resources [Buckner]
- Identify any relationship to the 2030 Comprehensive Plan and progress made to implement County goals and objectives [Buckner] Munkittrick said he included several references to the comprehensive plan, but that more could be added.

- The introductory letter from CFE Chair could also reference Comp. Plan [Hintz]
- The icons used to convey current trends blend into the photo background; would help to include a border or “halo” effect; make arrow light color. [O’Connor, Cada]
- Add text above and below the trends icon (e.g. Good; Getting Better) [Hintz]
- Include summary table (or “scorecard”) of trends/icons for all of the environmental indicators; include with executive summary [Buckner]
- Improve the format of headings and links for “What You Can Do” [O’Connor] Shaw asked CFE members to provide ideas for new/better links to information.
- Who determines how to characterize/summarize the status and trends for a particular environmental indicator? [Buckner] Shaw asked CFE members to evaluate the data and provide their assessments and any recommendations.
- Why was specific conductance chosen as an indicator of water quality? It may oversimplify overall water quality [Becker] Davis said it was recommended by DWQ staff. Neal asked Water & Biological Committee to make recommendation.
- Air and Energy Resources section should include metrics from the greenhouse gas inventory if feasible. Should also highlight County’s innovative energy conservation projects, such as green building initiatives, landfill gas pipeline to UNC, solar arrays, and geothermal well projects. [Buckner and Neal]
- Include graphic showing where county residents get their energy; also info. about WISE program, LED streetlights, public green buildings [Buckner]
- Search for data on how many residents produce green energy or participate in green energy programs like NC Greenpower; number of households that have applied for tax credit for green building facility; provide links [Neal]
- Ask energy utilities how many households are above or below average for energy consumption [Hintz]
- Include references to climate change in narrative or Chair’s message [O’Connor]
- New public school science curriculum has climate change requirement [Hintz]
- Clarify rankings for the status of rare plants and animals [Hintz] Neal asked the Water and Biological Resources Committee to consider, make recommendation.
- Include information about food disposal/composting in Land section [Becker]
- Include information about local food and farms, such as the number of farms, farmers markets, CSAs, etc. Also highlight Piedmont Food & Agricultural Processing Center (PFAP), farm incubator (Breeze), County’s pledge of 10% local foods, reductions in bee populations & plant pollination [Buckner]
- Consider including an environmental justice component [Neal & Cada]
- Consider translating document into Spanish; use Google translate? [O’Connor]

- Don't include both tables and graphs for same dataset; choose one [Jones]
- Include some photos of urban areas in Orange County [Buckner]
- Include photos of model building projects, such as NC Botanical Garden, new school buildings, geothermal well project, etc. [Hintz]
- Summarize where we are with waste management in county; how much energy is used to haul waste to Durham? [Becker]
- Consider having an external reviewer/editor [Buckner] Shaw said Bill Kaiser has offered to serve in that capacity.

Neal asked CFE members to discuss the report in their respective committees and to provide further comments to staff. Shaw said it would be helpful for CFE to read the report, consider the data, and provide staff with appropriate text to characterize the current status and trends. Shaw also asked CFE to provide recommendations for each environmental indicator and to determine what to highlight in the executive summary.

CFE members thanked Munkittrick for his excellent work on preparing this initial draft and wished him well during the upcoming school year.

- VI. **Updates and Information Items** – Information on the following subjects was included in the meeting materials and some of the topics were chosen for further discussion: a) environmental legislation updates, b) NCDENR's consolidation of its Water Quality and Water Resources divisions, c) Orange County Bus and Rail Investment Plan update, d) UNC/County landfill gas project update, e) UNC System energy savings plan, f) NC's clean energy and energy efficiency programs update, g) a regional renewable energy project in California, h) potential uranium mining in Chatham, Virginia, and i) a quarantine for ash tree materials & hardwood firewood in neighboring counties.

Buckner and Neal asked staff to send a link to information about public input opportunities for the Orange County Bus and Rail Investment Plan. Saunders reported that he monitored the operation of an engine used for the UNC/County landfill gas project. Finally, CFE members discussed the potential mining of uranium in Virginia.

- VII. **Committee Meetings** – Neal asked both standing committees to meet to review priority tasks and to begin discussing their pertinent sections of the draft State of the Environment report. The committees met separately, and the full CFE did not reconvene.
- VIII. **Adjournment** – Neal adjourned the meeting at 9:30 pm.

Summary by Rich Shaw, DEAPR Staff