

**Orange County
Commission for the Environment**

DRAFT Meeting Summary

December 8, 2014

Orange County Solid Waste Administration Building, Chapel Hill

PRESENT: Jan Sassaman (Chair), May Becker, Peter Cada, Loren Hintz, Donna Lee Jones, David Neal, Steve Niezgod, Bill Newby, Jeanette O'Connor, Gary Saunders, Sheila Thomas-Ambat, Lydia Wegman, and David Welch

ABSENT: Rebecca Ray

STAFF: Rich Shaw, Tom Davis, Brennan Bouma

GUEST: Thomas Eisenhart

- I. **Call to Order** – Sassaman called the meeting to order at 7:35 pm.
- II. **Additions or Changes to Agenda** – There were none.
- III. **Minutes** – Sassaman asked for a motion on the November 10 meeting summary. Hintz motioned to approve as written; seconded by Wegman. Approved unanimously.
- IV. **Introduction of New CFE Member and Staff** – Sassaman welcomed new CFE member Sheila Thomas-Ambat, and Brennan Bouma, Orange County's new Sustainability Coordinator. Sassaman asked both to introduce themselves and to describe some of their background and interests, which they did. CFE members introduced themselves.
- V. **2015 Meeting Calendar** – The CFE approved its meeting calendar for 2015.
- VI. **Potential action items from CFE/BOCC dinner meeting** – Sassaman asked CFE members to review the list of subjects that were raised and discussed during the October 14 dinner meeting with the board of county commissioners (BOCC). He referred members to Attachments 5 and 6 in the meeting materials.

Niezgod observed that the BOCC seemed receptive and interested in the recommendations put forward by the CFE. Other members agreed.

Wegman noted Commissioner Gordon's recommendation that the CFE help educate the public on the pros and cons of hydraulic fracturing, or "fracking." Becker noted the CFE and BOCC adopted resolutions concerning fracking in 2012. Davis noted the CFE summarized the fracking issues in its State of the Environment report. Sassaman suggested the CFE use new modes of communication to help educate citizens about this and other issues in the SOE report, such as an electronic newsletter and news articles. He recommended sending this issue to the Water Resources Committee for consideration. Hintz said this is not a high-priority issue for the CFE and Orange County.

Wegman noted Commissioner Dorosin's interest in the CFE re-examining environmental issues from a social justice viewpoint, including his example of overlaying groundwater contamination maps with basic census data.

Neal recommended some sort of response to the BOCC indicating the CFE appreciates that feedback and is exploring adding a consideration of social justice in the CFE's overall charge from the BOCC.

Hintz noted some of the issues raised are in the purview of other advisory boards, such as the Solid Waste Advisory Group (SWAG), the Orange Unified Transportation Board, and Planning Board. O'Connor agreed, adding she does not believe the BOCC will pay attention to what the CFE recommends on matters of solid waste and food composting until the SWAG has had an opportunity to consider and discuss. Sassaman noted the CFE only recommended that it would monitor these issues and support the SWAG.

Hintz suggested the issue of increasing the County's composting of food waste may be something the CFE should continue to push prior to it being addressed by the SWAG. Sassaman noted that when he served on the former Solid Waste Advisory Board they spent a lot of time on this issue. He agreed there ought to be an increase in volume of food waste collection and composting. Becker suggested recommending that the County establish a County composting facility. Sassaman noted that the current process of collecting food waste, trucking it to Chatham County, and then bringing back the finished product, is inefficient, however establishing a County facility is would require land, machinery, and staff. Sassaman asked that this matter be considered by the Land Resources Committee.

Sassaman asked that these and other matters raised by the CFE and BOCC be discussed by the committees when they meet later on the agenda.

- VII. **Updates and Information Items** – Information on the following subjects was provided and selected items were summarized by staff: a) CFE Annual Report and Work Plan (2014-15), b) Orange County resolution on climate change, c) potential for solar energy at County-owned buildings, d) Orange Well Net, e) Chapel Hill's new incentives for green construction, f) Chapel Hill/Carrboro Schools diverting trash from landfill, g) improvements at the Mason Farm Wastewater Treatment Plant, h) Carrboro's Energy and Climate Protection Task Force, i) Orange County adopts parks and rec master plan, j) Duke Energy's plans for removing coal ash from four NC sites, k) Dan River spill damage, l) the USEPA proposes lower ozone standard, and m) the proposed new rules for the permitting of hydraulic fracturing in NC.
- VIII. **Committee Meetings** – The CFE broke out into its standing committees (Air and Energy Resources, Land Resources, and Water Resources) to initiate discussions of issues assigned to each committee. Sassaman asked each committee to prioritize the issues that it would like to work on in 2015 and to identify one spokesperson for reporting back to the full CFE in January and to send its list of prioritized issues to the staff.
- IX. **Adjournment** – Sassaman adjourned the meeting following the committee discussions, at approximately 9:20 pm.

Summary by Rich Shaw, DEAPR Staff