**Attachment 1**

# Orange County
# Commission for the Environment

## DRAFT Meeting Summary

### January 12, 2015
### Richard Whitted Meeting Facility, Hillsborough

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

ABSENT: None

STAFF: Rich Shaw, Tom Davis, Brennan Bouma

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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 December 8 meeting summary. Becker offered a correction to a sentence on Page 2. Wegman motioned to approve as amended; seconded by Hintz. Approved unanimously. Sassaman asked staff to draft a response to the BOCC indicating the CFE is exploring ways to address social justice issues in the State of the Environment report and perhaps also recommending the BOCC add a consideration of social justice in the CFE's overall charge.

IV. **Committee Meetings** – Sassaman asked CFE members to break into committees and continue prioritizing issues and work items for 2015. Each of the standing committees met for about 45 minutes (Air and Energy, Water, and Land resources committees).

V. **Committee Reports** – Representatives from each committee reported on what they have prioritized as issues to work on in 2015.

Neal spoke on behalf of the Air and Energy Resources Committee, which prioritized its work items as follows:

1) Update the greenhouse gas emissions inventory, but first determine whether it will be feasible and worthwhile to perform a complete update of the 2005 inventory.
2) Encourage the County to implement a rebate for permit fees for green construction.
3) Educate county residents about climate change, alternative energy sources and efficiency, and steps to reduce their (and the county's) carbon footprint.
4) Partner with Piedmont Electric Membership Corporation to take advantage of USDA program for low-interest loans for energy efficient upgrades for its members/owners.
5) Proceed with creation of the planned Renewable Energy and Efficiency Work (RENEW) Group (utilizing the current CFE / Air & Energy Committee structure).

Hintz asked why the committee felt it needed to assess whether to conduct a complete update of the greenhouse gas emissions inventory, because he said any additional baseline data would be valuable. Cada agreed that the update would be valuable. Neal said the group wants to make sure any recommended measures would be implemented; for that reason they recommend some sort of cost-benefit analysis. Also, they want to

make sure any new inventory could be measured against the 2005 baseline data. Saunders noted that so much of the software technology has changed in the ten years since the initial inventory. We may not want to "drill down" to the same level of detail, but rather focus on more high-impact measures.

Hintz reported on the Land Resources Committee priorities as follows:

1) Help initiate the development of a comprehensive conservation plan for Orange County to be used by the Lands Legacy program and other land conservation programs to protect natural areas and wildlife habitat. Consider ways to ensure conservation land is distributed equitably throughout the county so that everyone has reasonable access to enjoy these areas.
2) Help educate homeowners and businesses on reasons to choose regionally native species for landscaping. Educate the public about ways to promote biodiversity in the home landscape.
3) Renew collaboration with NC Botanical Garden and others to identify significant roadside habitat for native plants; then asking NCDOT and other utilities to eliminate the use of herbicides to manage vegetation in those special roadside habitats.
4) Advocate for including land conservation (i.e., support for Lands Legacy program) as part of the planned bond package for 2016; then take the lead in educating the public about why protected space and natural areas are important for Orange County.

Hintz also reported that the committee recommends the CFE continue to co-sponsor the annual DEAPR photography contest (The Nature of Orange), help plan for and participate in DEAPR's annual Earth Day event, and continue to update the State of the Environment 2014. He also said the committee identified the following issues for public outreach efforts: native species, land conservation, and composting food waste.

Cada reported on the priorities that were identified by the Water Resources Committee:

1) Public education about invasive species of concern, their extents/locations, and what steps can be taken to address them.
2) Increase the collection of data for surface and ground water quality (also increase public education so that it might lead to more funding for data collection).
3) Increase public education of our water supply, and what steps can be taken to improve/maintain quality and quantity of water supplies into the future.

Cada noted that efforts for each of these topics include a public education component.

VI. **Public Outreach – SOE Report** – The CFE discusses various ways of conveying information from the State of the Environment report to the general public. Shaw noted that the information on various topics (such as fracking, invasive species, etc.) could be reformatted for different venues.

Wegman said her committee discussed preparing articles for printing in the News of Orange County and the Chapel Hill News. Niezgoda pointed out that it's also important to post information to the social media, and as an example he has established a Facebook page for the CFE and will name O'Connor as manager of the page, which will allow to her post new entries on behalf of the CFE. Ray agreed that electronic media is important for getting out this information.

Wegman and Cada suggested the CFE use a combination of printed and electronic media, being mindful of the many segments of the community that use one over the

other. O'Connor suggested that some of the articles also be translated into Spanish. Sassaman, Hintz, and Ray noted that some of the church and civic organizations might be willing to help spread the information to their members. Sassaman said the Interfaith Council is one such organization that operates in southern Orange County.

Staff was asked to find out whether the County's IT department can formulate web information for mobile devices. Also, to find out if there is an opportunity to include information as inserts in the County tax information that is sent to households and businesses in January and September. Thomas-Ambat also suggested looking at the public water/sewer utility bills from OWASA and the Town of Hillsborough.

Sassaman asked Wegman to work with staff and members of each committee to identify the initial topics for the CFE to focus on for this public outreach effort.

VII. **Updates and Information Items** – Information on the following subjects was provided and selected items were summarized by staff: a) County to purchase roll carts for rural recycling, b) prospects for fracking in NC, c) coal ash toxicity, d) relative rates of ozone production by different car types, e) The Nature of Orange photo contest 2015, and f) OWASA's consideration of ending its program of applying biosolids to farmland.

VIII. **Adjournment** – Niezgoda motioned to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Wegman. The motion was approved unanimously. Sassaman adjourned at approximately 9:15 pm.

Summary by Rich Shaw, DEAPR Staff