

**Orange County
Commission for the Environment**

DRAFT Meeting Summary

February 11, 2013

Southern Human Services Center, Chapel Hill

MEMBERS PRESENT: David Neal (Chair), Jan Sassaman (Vice Chair), Lucy Adams, May Becker, Terri Buckner, Peter Cada, Loren Hintz, Bill Kaiser, Tom O'Dwyer, Gary Saunders, David Welch

MEMBERS ABSENT: Sam Yellen

STAFF PRESENT: Rich Shaw, Tom Davis

GUESTS: Brian Wittmayer, Elizabeth Zander, Jae Furman, Jeanette O'Connor

- I. **Call to Order** – Neil called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm. Shaw reported he had heard from new CFE member Sam Yellen that he is out of the country until April.
- II. **Additions or Changes to Agenda** – Hintz asked to make an announcement during the Updates and Information items. Neal agreed.
- III. **Approval of Minutes** – Sassaman motioned to approve the January 14 meeting summary as written, seconded by O'Dwyer. The motion was approved unanimously.
- IV. **Chapel Hill Sustainability Committee** – Neal recognized Brian Wittmayer and Elizabeth Zander, members of Town of Chapel Hill's Sustainability Committee. Wittmayer provided an overview of the committee's mission and activities. He said the committee advises the town board on sustainability issues such as regional transportation, proposed changes to the Town's stream buffer rules, and solid waste management. They were also involved with Chapel Hill's 2020 comprehensive plan.

Wittmayer said the main reason for attending tonight's meeting was to discuss regional solid waste management issues and to see whether the CFE might be interested in collaborating with the Sustainability Committee and others on a solid waste public forum.

He said the Town produced a solid waste report in late 2012 that the committee determined was not regionally focused. He said the committee has prepared a draft proposal for a solid waste forum that would be for like-minded advisory boards, local government staff, and the general public. The purpose would be to find common ground rather than to rehash previous arguments centered on the siting of facilities.

Hintz questioned the benefits of such a forum when the politics of siting a new landfill or transfer station within the county is near zero and the elected officials have already decided to ship waste out of the county. Wittmayer responded that the County will prepare a new county solid waste plan and the writers of that plan could benefit from a community discussion. His committee would like to see better collaboration among local governments rather than each municipality planning for itself. Sassaman agreed with that assessment, adding that recycling is already managed regionally. He said Orange County is within two percentage points of reaching its goal of reducing its solid waste by 61% since 1990. Sassaman pointed out that Orange County will lose its ability to control

what kinds of waste enters the landfill once it leaves the county. He said any way to improve the public's understanding of solid waste issues would be beneficial.

Buckner said she was on a committee that developed waste reduction goals for Chapel Hill's 2020 plan, but those recommendations were not adopted with the plan; they were relegated to the appendices.

Neal asked about the format and timing of the proposed forum. Wittmayer said his committee would be seeking funds to hold the meeting and maybe hire a facilitator. He hopes the forum could be held within the next two or three months.

Sassaman recommended Wittmayer and his committee discuss these ideas with the Orange County solid waste staff and the Solid Waste Advisory Board.

Sassaman motioned that the CFE encourage the Chapel Hill Sustainability Committee to continue its efforts to convene a solid waste forum and to express its willingness to co-sponsor the forum. O'Dwyer seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

Neal thanked Wittmayer and Zander for presenting that information.

- V. **Renewable Energy and Efficiency Work Group** – Neal reported on the BOCC's January 29 work session during which he answered questions about the CFE's 2013 work plan and presented the CFE's proposal for a Renewable Energy and Efficiency Work Group. He said the commissioners had not received the CFE's memo in advance so there were more questions than actual feedback. Neal said the BOCC did not authorize forming a new work group unless it was an extension of the CFE.

Buckner suggested the CFE Air and Energy Resources Committee proceed by choosing a specific problem or topic, bringing in experts, discussing the issues and formulating recommendations, and then presenting recommendations to the BOCC.

O'Dwyer reminded CFE members that the CFE made recommendations to the BOCC in late 2011 but they quickly hit a dead end. The Planning Board considered the recommendations and dismissed them because they were not part of its work plan. O'Dwyer said the CFE needs guidance on how to get the County to fully consider its recommendations. Becker suggested the CFE chair ask to meet with the BOCC chair and/or vice chair to discuss how to proceed. Neal said he is willing to do that.

Neal asked if the CFE wished to identify a specific problem to begin this discussion. Shaw offered to invite County staff to present data on energy and fuel used by County departments and facilities. He suggested that might be a starting point for identifying a topic for the proposed RENEW Work Group. CFE members agreed with that proposal.

- VI. **2014 State of the Environment Report** – Shaw reviewed the contents of the 2009 State of the Environment report and a proposed timetable for developing a 2014 report. He said he would like to hire a part-time employee to gather new data for the different environmental indicators. Staff would share the findings with CFE members who would serve as a steering committee and make recommendations for future action and policy.

Hintz said he liked the pages in the 2009 report containing information on "what you can do to protect the environment." He said that is the sort of information the Biological Resources Committee would like to see included in citizen tax bills.

Neal asked whether it would be good to incorporate an updated greenhouse gas inventory or keep that as a separate project. Adams said the 2006 inventory was incomplete because it did not include the school systems and the ICLEI methodology was difficult to follow. Hintz pointed out that the inventory is supposed to be replicable. Cada said it should be conducted whether or not comparable to the 2006 findings. Sassaman agreed, noting that we can make comparisons where possible and determine if the overall picture is getting better or worse.

Buckner asked why solid waste data was not included in the 2009 report. Shaw said the CFE considered including solid waste in each of the previous reports, but decided to keep the data aligned with the subject matter that was in the purview of the CFE. Sassaman pointed out that solid waste data is readily available to incorporate this time.

O'Dwyer recommended linking the report findings to the 2030 Comprehensive Plan where feasible. Sassaman recommended also linking to the updated solid waste plan.

O'Dwyer motioned to recommend staff find the resources to hire a part-time employee to work on the 2014 State of the Environment report and to include solid waste and energy use data where available. Sassaman seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

- VII. **Updates and Information Items** – Staff provided updates and information (and responded to questions) on the following issues: a) CFE recruitment efforts, b) County budget outlook for 2013-14, c) the NC Mining & Energy Commission's consideration of hydraulic fracturing (fracking), d) carbon emissions down at Duke, and e) OWASA's annual update to the BOCC. Hintz announced tomorrow is Charles Darwin's birthday.

Kaiser pointed out that OWASA has decided to delay action on its forest management plan for lands around the Cane Creek Reservoir. Buckner pointed out that forest management is being carried out at OWASA's mitigation tract. She offered to arrange a tour of the property for interested CFE members. Cada and Kaiser expressed interest.

- VIII. **Committee Meetings** – Neal asked CFE members to break out into their respective committees—the Air and Energy Resources Committee and the Water and Biological Resources Committee.
- IX. **Adjournment** – Neal adjourned the meeting at approximately 9:15 pm. The two committees met for another 30 minutes until approximately 9:45 pm.