

**Orange County  
Commission for the Environment**

**Draft Meeting Summary**

**September 9, 2013**

**Solid Waste Management Administration Building, Chapel Hill**

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PRESENT: David Neal (Chair), May Becker, Terri Buckner, Peter Cada, Loren Hintz, Jeanette O'Connor, Tom O'Dwyer, Jan Sassaman (Vice Chair), Gary Saunders, David Welch

ABSENT: Lucy Adams, Susie Enoch, Steve Niezgodka

STAFF: Rich Shaw, Tom Davis

GUESTS: Donna Lee Jones (CFE prospect)

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- I. **Call to Order** – Neal called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm.
- II. **Additions or Changes to Agenda** – None
- III. **Approval of Minutes** – Neal asked for comments on draft August 12 meeting summary. Hintz motioned to approve as written; Saunders seconded. Approved unanimously.
- IV. **Updates and Information Items** – Information on the following subjects was included in the meeting materials and two topics were chosen for further discussion: a) proposed screening of film about industrial hemp, b) Orange Well Net – 2013 Annual Report, c) Duke Forest annual closure, d) Native plants along Buckhorn Road, e) Triangle smart grid dominance, f) OWASA's treatment and recycling of wastewater and biosolids, g) Town of Hillsborough's stormwater newsletter, h) NC conservation trust funds, i) NCDENR reorganization, j) food waste as a source of fuel, and k) FestiFall.

O'Dwyer discussed his interest in the CFE sponsoring a screening of a new, 55-minute documentary film advocating for the legal production of industrial hemp in the United States. He encouraged members to watch the trailer and to read the Congressional Research Service white paper ("Hemp as an Agricultural Commodity") he sent via email.

CFE members asked what O'Dwyer hoped could be gained from the screening. He said it would be beneficial for people in this area, including farmers, to learn about the benefits of hemp as an alternative crop and to then encourage others outside of this county to also learn about this issue. O'Dwyer listed some of the benefits of hemp. He suggested the CFE consider inviting other groups to co-sponsor a film screening, including Agricultural Preservation Board, Economic Development Commission, and Orange County Cooperative Extension.

Sassaman suggested that CFE members view the film before considering whether to sponsor a wider screening. O'Dwyer offered to acquire the film and schedule a private viewing for CFE members, with a date tentative scheduled for Monday, September 30.

Shaw asked CFE members if they wished to have an exhibit table at Chapel Hill's annual Festifall, scheduled for October 6. He said if there was interest he would work with Davis to prepare for the event. Saunders, Hintz, O'Connor and O'Dwyer said they may be available to work at the exhibit. Shaw said he would report back within the next week on whether we could reserve space and get an exhibit together for this year.

- V. **Committee Meetings** – Neal asked Shaw to provide a status report on the State of the Environment (SOE) report before breaking up into the two standing committees. Shaw handed out a memo describing what has occurred since the August CFE meeting and repeating the proposed schedule for publishing the SOE report. He noted there were paper copies of the report draft #2 available for CFE members to use for reference and note taking during the committee meetings.

CFE members raised questions and issues for discussion prior to the break-out session. Sassaman noted some issues were of interest to members of both committees, and he was interested in commenting on one or more items in the Land Resources section.

*[As it turned out, the CFE decided not to break out into committees. Instead, CFE members continued to discuss the report format, content, and editing process.]*

VI. **State of the Environment 2014**

Buckner said some of the draft narrative is too technical for most county residents. She asked who are the intended audiences for the SOE report. Shaw said the CFE usually aims for county residents and secondary school children.

- Buckner recommended including more information on what county residents and households can do to protect or improve the environment.

O'Dwyer and Sassaman agreed. Hintz said the technical level of the draft report is suitable for high school students that he teaches in Chapel Hill. He agreed, however, that the narrative could be more concise and could include more about what is being done and what else county residents and households could do to lend a hand.

CFE members discussed the merits of listing “What You Can Do” in each section of the report as well as including a more comprehensive listing with the executive summary.

- Neal recommended including tips found on the Clean Energy Durham website
- Saunders recommended looking at the NC Air Awareness Program information on the NC DENR Division of Air Quality website (ncair.org).
- Sassaman said he likes the current report format, but would like to include more about what is being done in Orange County to address the issues, what the County could do, and what residents, institutions and others could and should do.
- Jones said the information provided for each environmental indicator seems appropriate, but recommended that the introductory background narrative for each section explain why the indicators were chosen for inclusion in the report.
- O'Connor suggested rearranging the information to make the material more interesting and accessible. She suggested moving “What You Can Do” information to the beginning of each item.
- Buckner recommended writing to the 8<sup>th</sup> grade educational level; she agreed that the report needs to grab the reader’s attention up front;
- Buckner said Water Usage indicator should include water conservation measures
- Neal recommended placing technical information in an appendix
- Cada said the executive summary will be an important component

Neal led a discussion on how to format the document. He listed components for each report section as follows:

- What's the concept?
- Why is it important?
- What you can/should do
- How are we doing (include local gov'ts., challenges/opportunities, trends)
- How is it measured /How do we know → Appendix

Saunders and Buckner offered to edit and reformat the Air Resources section for CFE members to consider before further wholesale edits are made to the Land and Water resources sections, and CFE members agreed with that strategy. Staff will provide a Word version of the Air Resources section to facilitate their editing.

Shaw was asked to provide a list of new topics and issues identified by CFE members.

Neal encouraged CFE members to continue to read through the draft report work with committee members to provide staff with recommendations for further County action.

VIII. **Adjournment** – Neal adjourned the meeting at 9:15 pm.

Summary by Rich Shaw, DEAPR Staff