

**ORANGE COUNTY  
COMMISSION FOR THE ENVIRONMENT**

**MEMORANDUM**

To: Board of County Commissioners

From: David Neal, Chair, Orange County Commission for the Environment

Date: January 22, 2013

Re: Proposal for a Renewable Energy and Efficiency Work Group Convened by the CFE

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Goal #1 of the 2030 Orange County Comprehensive Plan, Natural and Cultural Resources Element: *Energy conservation, sustainable use of non-polluting renewable energy resources, efficient use of non-renewable energy resources, and clean air* (Page 6-9).

The BOCC requested that the Orange County Commission for the Environment (CFE) propose a response to the August 8, 2012 letter from Jim Warren of NC WARN. The CFE recommends convening a standing work group that would support energy efficiency, renewable energy, and related sustainable development strategies in Orange County. This Renewable Energy and Efficiency Work Group (RENEW Group) would be charged with bringing public and private stakeholders together to develop policies and initiatives that promote sustainable economic development, energy efficiency, and renewable energy in Orange County. The CFE would, in turn, bring vetted proposals from the RENEW Group to the BOCC for consideration.

As it presently operates, the CFE has an Air and Energy Committee. The present committee would act as a host and liaison with the CFE for the work group and would convene meetings, workshops, and other activities of the RENEW Group. The work group would consist of CFE members, representatives of municipal and county planning boards and staff, municipal and county sustainability staff or committee members, and any BOCC who might wish to participate. The RENEW Group would host individual public workshops and forums with emphasis on specific topics such as:

- Reducing energy use in existing buildings and new construction
- Maximizing the production and use of renewable and clean energy
- Reducing carbon emissions in transportation
- Promoting strategies for offsetting carbon emissions
- Eliminating or altering existing policies or code provisions that hinder any of the above at the county level

Reducing our collective carbon emissions should be a high priority for Orange County. Global climate change is accelerating at a rate exceeding scientific projections, exacerbating drought, storms, and flooding with devastating effects. Climate scientists agree that society must make dramatic changes in the way we source and use energy in the next several years. The consequences of inaction threaten to be drastic.

The RENEW Group would provide an opportunity for Orange County to promote forward-thinking local policies with the cooperation of local government representatives, private businesses, and environmental groups. With collaboration and input from a variety of experts, municipal and county staff, elected officials, and other stakeholders, we can find creative ways to lower our carbon footprint while also giving a boost to our local economy. By coming together at a central point to share information and coordinating action, we can avoid the pitfalls of working in isolation. Finally, the RENEW Group would enhance information sharing and communication with the deployment of an Orange County Green webpage.

The CFE unanimously approved this proposal and requests the BOCC's consideration and endorsement of CFE's convening a Renewable Energy and Efficiency Work Group.