

**Orange County
Commission for the Environment**

Meeting Summary

November 10, 2014

**Orange County Central Recreation Center, Hillsborough
[relocated from the Richard Whitted Meeting Facility]**

PRESENT: Jan Sassaman (Chair), May Becker, Loren Hintz, Donna Lee Jones, Cliff Leath, David Neal, Bill Newby, Jeanette O'Connor, Rebecca Ray, Lydia Wegman

ABSENT: Peter Cada, Steve Niezgod, Gary Saunders, David Welch

STAFF: Rich Shaw and Tom Davis

- I. **Call to Order** – Sassaman called the meeting to order at 7:38 pm.
- II. **Additions or Changes to Agenda** – O'Connor and Shaw asked to make some announcements. Sassaman added both items to the updates. No other changes.
- III. **Minutes** – Sassaman asked for a motion on the September 8 meeting summary. O'Connor motioned to approve as written; Leath seconded. Approved unanimously.
- IV. **Review of the Environmental Summit/SOE** – The CFE reviewed the venue, format, and discussions from the Environmental Summit, and considered what improvements could be made for future meetings of this kind.

CFE members agreed that the facility and refreshments were good choices. They also agreed that the speakers were excellent; however it would have been better if they had engaged the audience in a conversation. Hintz said he had hoped to see high school students and teachers. Newby said he had hoped to see more environmental advocates.

Sassaman said he felt the meeting went well for a Saturday morning event. He asked what others thought about holding an annual or biennial summit and including social justice issues on future summit agendas. Sassaman said summits could be held without there having to be a state of the environment report, and pointed out the on-line version of the SOE report could be updated as new information and data became available. Finally, Sassaman suggested the CFE develop better methods of public outreach, including an improved webpage, newspaper articles, and an electronic newsletter. Wegman said she likes the idea of the annual or biennial summit, but pointed out the difficult work of putting the program together.

Ray said she would like to see the next edition of the state of the environment use a web-based format that enables people to access information more easily. She noted the Mecklenburg County report is available in a web-based format.

CFE members discussed how best to engage high school science teachers and whether they could incorporate the SOE status and trends in their classroom teaching. Hintz said it would be difficult to include this in an already-crowded science curriculum. Sassaman suggested the idea of a contest for students to find information in the SOE report. Jones

said the US EPA includes something like that in its citizen outreach efforts. Wegman suggested combining something like that with the annual photography contest.

Shaw reported on other current and planned outreach efforts for State of the Environment report, including another news release, direct contact with school teachers and other interested parties, and publishing two-sided flyers with the “What You Can Do” information and web links for handing out at exhibits and street fairs.

- V. **Review of the CFE/BOCC dinner meeting** – The CFE reviewed its discussion of issues with the BOCC that occurred October 14. Hintz said he was disappointed the discussion of solid waste management issues was limited to commercial food waste, however he hopes the CFE will follow the work of Solid Waste Advisory Group in hopes that the County find a better long-term alternative to trucking its waste to Durham. He also noted that Commissioner Dorosin’s interest in locating transportation hubs near low-income communities would be difficult for residents living in rural areas and that this issue may be more suited for the County’s transportation advisory board (Orange Unified Transportation Board, or OUTBoard). Shaw will contact the OUTBoard staff to inform them of this interest; Sassaman offered to contact the OUTBoard chair. Neal asked if the CFE has a liaison to the OUTBoard; Shaw reported that Saunders is in that role.

Wegman noted Commissioner Jacobs would like to see renewed support for the County’s Lands Legacy program as a common goal, and for the CFE to have a role in educating the public about the need to protect natural areas and open space should that become part of a bond package for the citizens to consider.

O’Connor noted Commissioner Gordon’s interest in the CFE working on updating the County’s inventory of greenhouse gas emissions and working with the towns to reduce those emissions. She also pointed out Commissioner Jacobs’ announcement that the County was hiring a sustainability coordinator who could help address this matter.

O’Connor also reported that BOCC members seemed to like the CFE’s proposal to reduce building permit fees or provide partial rebates for construction that meets or exceeds energy efficient design and construction principles.

Sassaman noted Commissioner Dorosin said the SOE report is outstanding, but recommended that the CFE also look at environmental matters from social justice perspective. Sassaman suggested the CFE find ways to incorporate this viewpoint in the SOE report and to update the on-line version of the report.

Sassaman asked the staff to prepare a list of potential action items resulting from the dinner meeting discussion and to include on the December meeting agenda for CFE consideration, prioritization, and delegation to the committees.

Finally, Sassaman explained his written response to Commissioner Rich’s question to the CFE of what solution would be better than trucking solid waste to Durham. He said it was difficult for him to express matters adequately during the meeting so he prepared a more thoughtful response after conferring with the Solid Waste Management staff.

- VI. **Annual Report and Work Plan (2014-15)** – Sassaman offered some new ideas for the CFE’s draft annual report and work plan, including a) holding a biannual environmental summit independent of there being a State of the Environment report, b) developing more public outreach including an electronic newsletter, and c) updating the County’s greenhouse gas inventory. O’Connor reminded members of Commissioner Dorosin’s

interest in the CFE looking at environmental matters from social justice perspective and Commissioner Gordon's interest in the CFE addressing energy conservation and the lack of data on for assessing ground and surface water quality/quantity. Neal suggested applying for funds from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) to help tackle energy issues. Newby noted that the USEPA maintains an inventory of greenhouse gas emissions, which may provide useful information for Orange County.

Shaw introduced the CFE's draft annual report and work plan prepared by the staff. CFE members suggested edits to the list of concerns and emerging issues, as well as the addition of social justice considerations and supporting the work of the Solid Waste Advisory Group to improve the County's handling of solid waste. Shaw said he would make those changes and asked for further ideas over the next week before the plan is finalized for submittal to the BOCC Clerk by November 30.

- VII. **Election of Officers** – Sassaman reviewed the process for electing officers as provided in the CFE policies and procedures. Hintz nominated Sassaman to remain as chair for a second one-year term. Wegman seconded the nomination; approved unanimously. Sassaman said Hintz informed him earlier that he could no longer serve as vice chair. Sassaman noted he prefers that the next vice chair be willing to assume the chair's role in the future. Sassaman nominated Wegman as vice chair, seconded by O'Connor. There were no other nominations. Hintz motioned the nominations be closed; seconded by Newby. The motion carried. Wegman was approved as vice chair by acclamation.

- VIII. **Updates and Information Items** – Information on the following subjects was provided and selected items were summarized by staff: a) Chapel Hill-Carrboro schools begin composting lunch, b) fracking study finds no water pollution, c) review of local solar facilities permitting in NC, d) McDougle Middle School's new solar array, e) potential for solar at closed landfill, f) ozone layer recovering, g) UNC trustees look at clean energy investments, h) US Dept. of Energy issues green building certification system, i) OWASA recognized for sustainable water utility management, j) Duke Forest's deer management program, k) Hydrilla threatens Falls Lake, and l) Orange County received "NC Smart Fleet" award.

O'Connor notified CFE Members the Town of Carrboro has formed an Energy and Climate Protection Planning Task Force that will meet over the next nine to twelve months. She said some members of the task force hope to find ways to reduce Carrboro's year 2000 carbon emissions by 40 percent.

Shaw announced the BOCC has appointed Sheila Thomas-Ambat to the CFE and re-appointed five current members to another three-year term: Becker, Cada, O'Connor, Wegman, and Welch.

Shaw also announced the County's hiring of its first sustainability coordinator, Brennan Bouma. He noted Bouma's responsibilities will include providing staff support to the CFE, and especially the Air and Energy Resources Committee.

- IX. **Adjournment** – Hintz motioned to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Neal. The motion was voted on and approved unanimously. Sassaman adjourned the meeting at 9:05 pm.