

**Orange County
Commission for the Environment**

Meeting Summary

March 10, 2014

Orange County Environment and Agricultural Center, Hillsborough

PRESENT: Jan Sassaman (Chair), May Becker, Peter Cada, Loren Hintz, David Neal, Jeanette O'Connor, Rebecca Ray, Gary Saunders, Lydia Wegman, David Welch

ABSENT: Donna Lee Jones, Steve Niezgoda

STAFF: Rich Shaw, Tom Davis

GUEST: Bill Kaiser

- I. **Call to Order** – Sassaman called the meeting to order at 7:35 pm.
- II. **Additions or Changes to Agenda** – There were no changes or additions, however Hintz informed the CFE of an Orange County Expo that would be held April 4.
- III. **Approval of Minutes** – Sassaman asked for comments on the minutes for February 13. Wegman motioned to approve as written; Neal seconded. Approved unanimously.
- IV. **Orange County Recycling Program update** – Sassaman reminded CFE members that the County will hold public hearings on the proposed solid waste service tax district. The hearings will be on March 18 in Chapel Hill and April 1 in Hillsborough. He noted that former CFE member Terri Buckner has asked members of the CFE to help provide factual information at the meetings. Hintz and O'Connor said they plan to attend.

Sassaman reminded members of the CFE resolution in support of the proposed tax district that was adopted at the February meeting. He said members were welcome to reference that resolution in any remarks that they might make on this subject.

Sassaman handed out a draft letter that he and Neal prepared for submittal to the Chapel Hill News. The letter describes reasons for supporting the proposed solid waste service tax district for Orange County. He asked members to read the letter and offer any feedback. Comments and editorial suggestions were provided by Wegman, O'Connor, Hintz, Welsh and Ray. Neal and Sassaman thanked members for the comments and said they would submit a revised letter to the newspaper the next day.
- V. **Environmental Summit** – Sassaman thanked O'Connor and other ad hoc committee members for securing the Maple View Agricultural Education Center for the May 31 environmental summit. Sassaman said Dr. Norm Christensen is lined up as keynote speaker for the event. Shaw suggested the committee identify other potential speakers to discuss important issues highlighted in the State of the Environment report.

CFE members discussed potential topics for a panel discussion or concurrent sessions. Among the topics mentioned were invasive species identification and remediation, energy efficiency and renewable energy options, the effects of the anticipated reductions in state monitoring of surface and groundwater resources, and the ongoing conversion of hardwood forest to pine plantations across the rural landscape. Saunders noted that many people will be interested to learn more about the recent coal ash spill and fracking.

Sassaman asked the ad hoc summit committee to develop a draft program for the event. He asked Shaw to provide example materials from the 2009 summit for consideration.

CFE members agreed to begin the meeting at 9:30 a.m. with refreshments and displays, start the presentations at 10:00 a.m., and end the summit by 12 noon. Hintz suggested having note cards for members of the audience to ask questions on any topic. CFE members agreed on a panel format, and that speakers be limited to a reasonable length of time and that that all be communicated and agreed upon in advance.

Sassaman asked if staff could present an overview of the State of the Environment report, noting that David Stancil performed that duty in 2009. He asked staff to invite BOCC members to participate and to send a “save the date” notice to elected officials, advisory boards, the media, and others that were informed prior to the previous summits.

- VI. **State of the Environment 2014** – Shaw reported on the status of the report, including a summary of the changes made with help from CFE members since the February meeting. He thanked those who had provided comments on the various sections.

Shaw handed out copies of Draft #7 of the report and referred CFE members to a staff memo (Attachment 6) that listed things that still needed to be done to complete each section of the report. Shaw asked each committee to identify “critical issues” and specific recommendations to highlight at the front of the report.

Ray reported on the work she had done to develop better symbols to convey the status and trend for each environmental indicator. She asked those members who had previewed her different concepts prior to the meeting what they thought about the styles. She also passed around different samples for those who had not previewed the work. CFE members chose the image of a graduated dial, or meter reading, to convey status.

Neal noted it was difficult to convey information on both the status and trend in such an abbreviated manner. He suggested showing only the status as Good, Fair, or Poor. Other members suggested including some wording to convey trends, such as “declining,” “improving,” or “no change.” Becker noted that the trends for some environmental indicators cannot be characterized so simply. CFE members agreed to use the term “uncertain” in those cases. Ray said she would prepare a new template based on the discussion and provide to CFE members and staff by March 31.

Sassaman asked CFE members to communicate with their respective committees and decide on what issues and recommendations to highlight in the report. He asked that comments to staff be provided by March 31 so that a final draft could be distributed for review before the April 14 meeting.

- VII. **Committee Meetings** – The committees did not meet.
- VIII. **Updates and Information Items** – Information on the following subjects was included in the meeting materials and selected items were summarized by staff: a) the Renewable Energy and Efficiency Work Group proposal, b) a solar array project in Rougemont, c) wildlife pest problems, d) the Dan River coal ash spill, and e) climate change.
- IX. **Adjournment** – Sassaman adjourned the meeting at 9:30 pm.