

**Orange County
Commission for the Environment**

Meeting Summary

June 8, 2015

Orange County Solid Waste Administration, Chapel Hill

PRESENT: Jan Sassaman (Chair), May Becker, Tom Eisenhart, Loren Hintz, Rebecca Ray, Gary Saunders, Lydia Wegman, David Welch

ABSENT: Peter Cada, Lynne Gronback, David Neal, Bill Newby, Jeanette O'Connor, Sheila Thomas-Ambat

STAFF: Brennan Bouma, Tom Davis, Rich Shaw

GUESTS: Terri Buckner, Ed Kerwin (Orange Water and Sewer Authority)

- I. **Call to Order** – Sassaman called the meeting to order at 7:37 pm.
- II. **Additions or Changes to Agenda** – Shaw asked to present information about Blackwood Farm Park. Sassaman said he could add that to the updates.
- III. **Minutes** – Hintz asked for a correction on page 2; noting that he withdrew his motion pertaining to the proposed rule change for impervious surfaces. Wegman motioned to approve the May 11 minutes as amended; seconded by Welch. Approved unanimously.
- IV. **OWASA's Energy Management Plan** – Terri Buckner, a member of the Orange Water and Sewer Authority (OWASA) board of directors, reported that OWASA is developing an energy management plan for its water, wastewater, and reclaimed water utility operations. She was accompanied by Ed Kerwin, OWASA Executive Director.

Buckner asked if the CFE might be interested in collaborating with OWASA, the schools, and the towns in a forum discussion of energy management.

CFE members asked questions and responded to the proposal. The following issues were among those discussed:

- Greenhouse gas emissions inventory and methane production
- An inventory of energy use by OWASA, County government, and other entities
- Town of Carrboro recently completed an update of its greenhouse gas emissions
- The CFE's previous collaboration with the Chapel Hill Sustainability Committee on a community forum about solid waste in Orange County
- EPA's BENmap database contains air quality data for Orange County
- Local sources of energy include electric (Duke), natural gas (PSNC), and solar

Hintz said a community forum on energy management would be opportunity to share information, to evaluate our collective approach toward managing and conserving energy consumption, and to chart a course for the future.

CFE members asked Buckner how such a forum might be structured. Buckner said each entity would be asked to discuss its approach for managing energy use and present its outcomes and future objectives. She would like the CFE and other entities to decide

whether they are interested in pursuing this idea, and if so, she would assemble representatives who would develop the scope, the goals and objectives, and the format of a potential community forum. Buckner said she also plans to meet with the Town of Carrboro, the University of North Carolina, and others to ask for their participation.

The consensus of CFE members was that the CFE is interested in collaborating with OWASA and other entities in a proposed forum discussion of energy management.

Wegman pointed out the CFE's Air and Energy Resources Committee may be particularly interested in this initiative. Saunders offered to serve as a representative from the CFE to work with Buckner and others to develop a potential plan for this forum. CFE members agreed to have Saunders represent the CFE in developing a plan.

The CFE thanked Buckner for bringing this matter to its attention. Sassaman asked that this matter be placed on the August CFE agenda for an update and further discussion.

- V. **2016 Orange County Bond Package** – Wegman presented a draft memo to the BOCC for CFE consideration. She reminded CFE members the BOCC has proposed a \$125 million bond referendum in fall 2016, and all funds would be allocated for the schools. The draft memo asks the BOCC to reconsider including other kinds of projects in the bond package, including funding for parks and open space.

Hintz noted some members of the BOCC would like to revisit this decision and it would be helpful if advisory boards requested further consideration of the bond package. He suggested funding for affordable housing is another issue that ought to be considered for inclusion. Hintz asked if funding for parks and open space could be used to acquire conservation easements. Shaw said that it could if worded as such in the bond language. Hintz suggested adding language in support of conservation easement funding in the draft memorandum.

Hintz motioned to approve sending the proposed memorandum asking the BOCC to reopen the process for determining the contents of the proposed 2016 bond referendum with the inclusion of language in support of funding for conservation easements. Ray seconded the motion and it passed unanimously. Sassaman asked Shaw to revise the memo and send to him and Wegman for final review and approval.

- VI. **Green Building Incentives** – Sassaman noted that Neal had asked that this item be placed to the agenda for the CFE to continue its discussion of potential incentives for energy-efficient construction, but Neal could not attend this evening's meeting.

Shaw reminded CFE members this item follows the April presentation of Chapel Hill's pilot program of providing incentives for "green building" in the Ephesus-Fordham district. He said town staff researched incentive programs in other jurisdictions and will re-assess the benefits and costs of this pilot program after the first couple of years.

Hintz suggested this effort has social justice implications, noting that installing energy-saving features in more affordable homes and residential buildings could reduce utility costs for lower-income homeowners and residents. Wegman said she looks forward to hearing the results of this Chapel Hill pilot program; however she believes a similar program could be a "hard sell" for the county's unincorporated areas.

Hintz motioned to table further discussion until Neal and others could participate at the next meeting. Saunders seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

- VII. **Updates and Information Items** – Information on the following subjects was provided in the meeting package; selected items were discussed: a) CFE comments on draft changes to impervious surface rules, b) herbicide used to control hydrilla in the Eno River, c) electric vehicle fast charger station installed in Hillsborough, d) electric vehicle workshop (June 18), e) a CFE news article (Why Plant Natives?), f) What we can do to protect bees, g) fracking having a difficult start in NC, h) a second solar array planned for White Cross community, i) NC Forest Service in Orange County – 2014 Annual Report, j) Court denies challenges to EPA's ozone designations, and k) Duke Forest stewardship and sustainability tour (June 27).

Shaw reported that he sent the CFE comments on the proposed impervious surface rule change to Michael Harvey in the Planning and Inspections Department. Eleven CFE members had voted in favor of the comments via email; there were no objections.

Bouma reported that the Chapel Hill Environmental Stewardship Advisory Board is developing a proposed Green Restaurant Challenge and may want to collaborate with the CFE. He said he could contact a member of the board to see whether they would like to present the idea to the CFE. CFE members agreed with that.

Bouma suggested that in addition to sending memoranda to the BOCC it might be helpful if a CFE representative addressed the BOCC during the public comment portion of its meeting agenda. Wegman offered to attend the June 16 meeting to call BOCC members attention to the CFE memorandum pertaining to the 2016 bond package. CFE members agreed and thanked Wegman for doing that.

- VIII. **Adjournment** – Sassaman adjourned at approximately 9:02 pm.

Summary by Rich Shaw, DEAPR Staff