

**Orange County  
Commission for the Environment**

**Meeting Summary**

**February 8, 2015**

**Richard Whitted Meeting Facility, Hillsborough**

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PRESENT: Lydia Wegman (Chair), May Becker, Peter Cada, Thomas Eisenhart, Loren Hintz, Bill Kaiser, Bill Newby, Rebecca Ray, Sheila Thomas-Ambat

ABSENT: Lynne Gronback, Jeanette O'Connor, David Welch

STAFF: Rich Shaw, Brennan Bouma

GUEST: Kathleen Smith

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- I. **Call to Order** – Wegman called the meeting to order at 7:35 pm.
- II. **Additions or Changes to Agenda** – There were none
- III. **Minutes** – Wegman asked for comments on the December 14 meeting summary. Eisenhart motioned approval as written; seconded by Cada. Approved unanimously.
- IV. **Welcome / Resolutions of Appreciation** – Wegman welcomed Bill Kaiser back to the CFE on which he had served previously including two years as chair. Wegman also welcomed Kathleen Smith who has applied for CFE appointment and wanted to observe the meeting. CFE members and staff introduced themselves to Kaiser and Smith.

Shaw presented draft resolutions of appreciation for three outgoing CFE members: Jan Sassaman, David Neal, and Gary Saunders. CFE members offered no changes to the resolutions; they were approved by acclimation. Shaw will prepare final versions of the resolutions for Wegman's signature, and then send or deliver to each recipient.

- V. **\$2 Billion Statewide Bond Campaign** – Shaw provided an overview of the \$2 billion bond campaign for North Carolina (Connect NC), scheduled for a vote as part of the March 15 primary elections. He presented PowerPoint slides about the bond and the kinds of projects to be funded in the categories of education, water and sewer infrastructure, National Guard and public safety, agriculture, parks and zoos.

Shaw said that according to the bond campaign there is bipartisan support for the bond, and that no tax increase is expected to pay for the bond over the next 20 years. He said the bond package includes \$75 million for state parks, with \$4 million of that for the NC Mountains-to-Sea Trail. Shaw noted that \$2.8 million of the parks allotment would go to improvements at Eno River State Park, and Orange County would also be in line for funding to acquire land and trail easements for the Mountains-to-Sea Trail (MST).

CFE members discussed the contents of the bond package and identified elements germane to the CFE's purview that could benefit Orange County. CFE members noted Eno River State Park and the MST in particular, and also Jordan Lake since many Orange County residents visit that site. Thomas-Ambat said the county and its municipalities might also benefit from funding to upgrade and retrofit water and sewer infrastructure, thus improving water quality for residents and aquatic organisms.

Hintz motioned that the CFE write a letter to newspapers in support of the State Bond. Eisenhart seconded the motion; it carried unanimously.

Hintz motioned that the CFE letter identify Eno River State Park, Mountains-to-Sea Trail, Jordan Lake, and public water and sewer infrastructure as potential areas of interest to Orange County residents that could receive direct benefits from the bond. Thomas-Ambat seconded the motion; it carried unanimously.

Wegman and Cada offered to prepare a draft letter and then to Shaw for circulation to all CFE members for approval by email. Wegman thanked Shaw for this information.

- VI. **Lands Legacy Program Update** – Shaw provided an update on plans to open two new Orange County nature preserves: Hollow Rock Nature Park and the Seven Mile Creek Preserve. He displayed a master plan map of the 75-acre Hollow Rock park site, which will include new parking area, nature trails, and bridges. Phase 2 will add a restroom facility, interpretive signage, environmental education area, and platform overlooks. The park is expected to open in May 2016.

Shaw showed a map of the Seven Mile Creek Preserve. This site will also feature nature trails and a group camping area on land adjacent to the Moorefields historic site. Construction of a small parking area will occur this summer, and the site is expected to open sometime in late summer or early fall 2016.

Wegman thanked Shaw for the information. No action required.

- VII. **Committee Meetings** – CFE members broke into three standing committees (Air and Energy Resources, Water Resources, and Land Resources) to review a list of priority issues/projects identified by each committee in 2014-15. The committees met for about 30 minutes and then reported back to the full CFE.

**Air and Energy Committee**

Bouma reported that the Air and Energy Committee discussed five issues

1. GHG Emissions Inventory – The committee agreed to continue discussing whether it would be worthwhile to update the County 2005 greenhouse gas emissions inventory. They suggest looking into updating projections from last report based on what we know has changed, and if estimates show large increase this may suggest compiling a more complete update. Look for easy sources of energy usage that are authoritative and updated regularly.
2. Green Building – The CFE submitted its resolution to BOCC in support of developing a rebate on permit fees for green construction. The committee will await any response from BOCC and continue to monitor the Chapel Hill pilot program.
3. Climate Change – The committee will write news article(s) about climate change, alternative energy sources and efficiency, and ways to reduce our carbon footprint.
4. Energy Efficiency – The committee will research the possibility of working with Piedmont Electric Membership Corp. or Duke Energy and a USDA program for low-interest loans for energy efficient upgrades for its members/owners.
5. Food waste reduction issue – The committee recommends coordinating with the SWAG and others to lend more focus on increased composting in the county.

### Water Resources Committee

Cada reported that the Water Resources Committee intends to conduct a literature review of the science in support of maintaining vegetative buffers to protect water quality. Hintz reminded the committee that buffers also protect habitat and biodiversity, and they serve as wildlife corridors. Becker asked the committee to continue monitoring the chemical treatment of hydrilla in the Eno River.

### Land Resources Committee

Hintz reported the Land Resources Committee will collaborate with a group that intends to develop a comprehensive conservation plan for Orange County—and perhaps a more regional plan for Orange, Durham, and Chatham counties. The focus will be identifying the most significant natural area corridors that are essential for native plants and wildlife.

Hintz also reported the committee wants to work with County staff to determine whether conservation land is distributed equitably throughout the county so that everyone has reasonable access to enjoy these areas.

Hintz said the committee wants to continue exploring ways to protect important native plant habitat, including a project with the NC Botanical Garden and educating residents on reasons to landscape with a diversity of regionally native plant species.

- VIII. **Updates and Information Items** – Information on the following subjects was provided in the meeting package; selected items were discussed: a) 2016 CFE meeting calendar, b) CFE news articles re water availability and Solarize Orange, c) airport/airstrip rule amendments canceled, d) Eno River hydrilla management, e) State guidance for local stream buffer rules, f) COP21 agreement summarized, g) 2015 hottest year on record, h) Solarize the Triangle, i) effects of solar panels on farm fields, j) conservative case for solar subsidies, and k) Brumley Forest Nature Preserve.
- IX. **Adjournment** – Wegman adjourned the meeting at 9:40 pm.

Summary by Rich Shaw, DEAPR Staff