

AGENDA

Orange County Commission for the Environment January 9th, 2023

7:00 p.m., Bonnie B. Davis Environment and Agriculture Center

<u>Time</u>	<u>Item</u>	<u>Title</u>
7:00	I.	Call to Order
7:01	II.	Additions or Changes to Agenda
7:03	III.	Approval of DRAFT Meeting Summary- Dec. 12th, 2022 The CFE will consider approval of meeting summary from the last meeting. <u>Action needed</u> (Attachment 1)
7:05	IV.	CFE Annual Report and Work Plan- Action Item C. Hirni will present the final draft for this year's BOCC Report and Work Plan. The CFE will discuss and provide recommendation for next year's goals. (Attachments 2)
7:25	V.	CFE New Member Application Review and Recruitment Chair Penn-Beattie will lead review and discussion of new member applications and recruitment. The CFE will provide a letter(s) of recommendation to the BOCC. Action needed (Attached under separate cover)
7:50	VI.	Committee Breakouts The CFE will break out into committee assignments and discuss goals/projects for the year. Committees will report on projects upon returning to the main meeting.
8:30	VII.	Updates and Information Items Staff and/or CFE members will provide updates on the following items: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sub-Committee Chair Summary• Climate Action Plan• Solarize the Triangle• "2023- Year of the Trail"• CFE Looking Ahead Calendar Any other new information from CFE members and staff
9:00	VIII.	Adjournment

**** Next Meeting Date: February 13th, 2023; Bonnie B Davis
Environment and Agriculture Center***

Orange County Commission for the Environment**Meeting Summary**
December 12, 2022; 7:00 pm
Hybrid Meeting

Present: Veronica Penn Beattie, Kristie Mather (via Zoom), Ian Morse, Kim Piracci, Kim Livingston (via Zoom), Bill Ward, Geneva Gray (via Zoom), Mark Randall, Regina Baratta, Reade Oakley

Absent: Jessie Birkhead (excused), Jane Harris (excused), Jaya Nair (excused), David N. Mcnelis (excused)

Staff: Wesley Poole, Chris Hirni, Amy Eckberg, Kalani Allen, David Stancil

I. Call to Order

Veronica Penn Beattie called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm.

II. Additions or Changes to Agenda

None.

III. Approval of DRAFT Meeting Summary – November 14th, 2022

Motion to approve by Ian Morse; seconded by Regina Baratta; all in favor; none opposed; motion passed.

IV. Orange County Aquifer and Rural Planning – Presentation

Dave Stancil gave a short introduction and former Soil and Water Board Member, Heather Main, presented information regarding rural residential development, planning and its effect on the groundwater in Orange County. She expressed her concern over whether or not the rural aquifer could withstand the current level of development in the County. She shared a recent study conducted in Wake County and asked if it was time to update the study that was conducted in Orange County approximately 20 years ago. She felt as though each development should be required to conduct a water impact study. Dave Stancil followed up with an informative history of the water resources work conducted here in Orange County since he was the primary County staff involved with that work for many years. He agreed that there was new science available now that was not available 20 years ago, so it may warrant being looked at. Wesley Poole added what Orange County is currently doing with the Observation Well Network.

V. Climate Action Tax Grant (Time to Complete) Rescoring – Action Item

Amy Eckberg made an error on the scoring points for the Community Climate Action Grants in the “Time to Complete” section so she explained the situation to the CFE and

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asked members to re-score that portion during the meeting. Discussion ensued and re-scoring was completed.

VI. CFE Annual Report and Work Plan

Chris Hirni presented the template for this year's BOCC Report and Work Plan. Most everything is boiler plate that Chris Hirni will enter except for the last two questions referring to 2023 BOCC goals and priorities and concerns / emerging issues for the upcoming year that will need CFE input. CFE members and staff worked together to enter the information into the Report. The Report is due in January so it will need to be completed by the next meeting so that it can be voted on.

VII. Sub-Committee Breakouts

The CFE broke out into committee assignments and discussed goals / projects for the year. Afterwards, subcommittees came back together and reported information discussed to the overall CFE (*see below*).

Sub-Committee Breakout Meeting Summaries

Air & Energy Resources Subcommittee:

Present: Bill Ward, Geneva Gray (via Zoom), Kristie Mather (via Zoom), Ian Morse, Reade Oakley, Veronica Penn Beattie

Absent: David Mcnelis (excused)

Staff: Amy Eckberg

- *Recap on the issue discussed via email regarding emissions inventory year: 2019 vs 2021. Ultimately decided to go with 2019 to avoid possible discontinuities in the data from the global pandemic.*
- *Revisiting the Energy Efficiency Kits -*
 - *Veronica makes a point that we must be mindful of the length of time for folks to see improvement in energy bill*
 - *Bill asks if businesses will be able to have use of the kits as well*
 - *Kristie advocated for a firm understanding of what a scope, aim, and target population would be.*
 - *What would go in these kits: LED light bulbs, seek thermal cell phone infrared camera attachments (to find gaps in home), smart power strips, educational literature, maps of EV charging spots.*

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- *There was mention that Duke Energy may already do something like that. Reade and Kristie confirmed.*
- *We circled back on the logistics and the whether or not these should be returnable items or not.*
- *Ultimately, we decided to table the discussion for the moment and discuss it over email.*
- *Quickly recapped the project on an agrovoltaic pilot project at Breeze Farms.*
 - *Amy wants to contact folks at the NC Clean Technology Center. Has already gotten in contact with John Bonitz, would like to meet with the director, Steve Kalland.*
 - *Geneva volunteered to reach out through her NCSU network.*

Water Resources Subcommittee:

Present: Kim Piracci, Mark Randall

Absent: Jaya Nair (excused)

Staff: Wesley Poole

- *The group discussed Heather Main's presentation which was informative. We will continue to consider her concerns throughout the year.*
- *The group talked about water quality issues, beyond basic nutrient testing, to include emerging pollutants such as PFAS and PFOAs.*
- *Kim stated that she believes the EPA is already doing this testing locally and nationally and she will get that information.*

Land Resources Subcommittee:

Present: Kim Livingston (via Zoom), Regina Baratta

Absent: Jane Harris, Jessie Birckhead

Staff: Chris Hirni

- *The committee assessed edits needed for the final draft of the Forest Management Policy, and assigned sections for staff and members to provide edits. The expectation is to finalize edits in February meeting to bring back for CFE review in March.*

VIII. Updates and Information Items

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- Kalani Allen presented Bill Ward's Service Resolution for his serving 2 full terms with the CFE.
- Amy Eckberg gave the CFE a status update on the Climate Action Plan. The company is moving forward with collecting data and a team has been established which will be meeting monthly.
- Amy Eckberg gave the CFE an update on the Solarize the Triangle campaign. It is doing well and so far 1200 people have signed up. The deadline to enroll is December 31.
- Veronica Penn Beattie asked the CFE to attempt to recruit some new CFE applicants over the holidays so that we can review at the January meeting.

IX. Adjournment

Regina Baratta motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9:04 pm; seconded by Kim Piracci; all in favor; none opposed; motion passed.

NAME OF BOARD/COMMISSION _____

Report Period January 2022-December 2022

**ORANGE COUNTY ADVISORY BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS
ANNUAL REPORT/ WORK PLAN FOR THE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

The Board of Commissioners appreciates the dedication of all the volunteers on their boards and commissions and welcomes input from various advisory boards and commissions throughout the year. Please complete the following information, limited to the front and back of this form. Other background materials may be provided as a supplement to, but not as a substitute for, this form.

Board/Commission Name: **Commission for the Environment**

Person to address the BOCC and contact information: **Veronica Penn-Beattie**

Primary County Staff Contact: **Christian Hirni, Wesley Poole, David Stancil- Director, DEAPR**

How many times per month does this board/commission meet, including any special meetings and sub-committee meetings?

The board meets once per month (2nd Monday). No meeting is held during the month of July. Committees meet as needed during regular meetings.

Brief Statement of Board/Commission's Assigned Charge and Responsibilities.

Purpose: to advise the BOCC on matters affecting the environment, with particular emphasis on environmental protection and enhancement. Other duties include:

- **Perform special studies/projects on environmental issues as requested by BOCC**
- **Recommend environmental initiatives to the BOCC, especially of local importance**
- **Study changes in environmental science and environmental regulations in the pursuit of the CFE's duties**

- **Educate the public and local officials on environmental issues**

What are your Board/Commission's most important accomplishments?

- Re-assigned subcommittee for County Right of Way Task force, with two CFE volunteers to serve and promote the new committee (2022)
- By request of the BOCC through a citizen concern, conducted research of local electric utilizes allocation/distribution of "solar credits, and provided a letter to the BOCC describing differences between utilities, and the need to continue support of expanding solar in the County (2022)
- Participated and provided several booths/educational activities for both the Carrboro Earth Day and Hillsborough Earth Evening celebrations (2022)
- Reviewed and submitted recommendation for Piedmont Wildlife Society's Outside Agency Funding Request Application (2022)
- Reviewed and submitted recommendations for the 2021-2022 Climate Action Tax Grant application for Chapel Hill-Carrboro Schools (2022)
- As directed by the BOCC, provided comments and recommendations regarding a large development proposal in Efland (Efland Station 2021)
- Provided ranking and comments to the BOCC for three cycles of the Climate Action Fund program (2020, 2021, and 2022)
- Signed Resolution of Support for the Eno New Hope Landscape Conservation Plan (2021)
- Submitted priority recommendations for Lands Legacy Actions Plan 2021-2024
- Ranked and submitted preferences of first recipients for the first distribution of Climate Action Tax Funds FY2019-20. Ranking Funds for FY 2020-21 will proceed through December 2020/January 2021.
- Planning the 2019 State of the Environment report and 12/4/19 Environmental Summit (2018, 2019)
- Prepared resolutions for BOCC consideration concerning: Anti-Idling Campaign, Support for Carbon Fee and Dividend legislation, Request for NC to Divest from Fossil Fuel Corporations, Roadside Wildflower Conservation (2018)
- Developed recommendations for the County's Climate Change Program scoring system (2019)
- Requested the BOCC consider joining the Global Covenant of Mayors and Chairs organization concerned with global climate change (2018)
- Wrote a series of climate change articles (2017)
- Developed and posted a Facebook page (2017)
- Edited and recommended a renewable energy resolution to the BOCC (2017)
- Recruited UNC capstone students to assist with the 2019 State of the Environment report (2017)
- Provided input on updates to the Lands Legacy Action Plan (2017)
- Made recommendations to BOCC on UDO amendment to flexible subdivisions (2016)

- Initiated a series of newspaper articles on environmental issues featured previously in the Orange County State of the Environment report (2015-16)
- Made recommendations to BOCC on 2016 bond package, the use of pesticides at County facilities, and incentives for energy efficient construction (2015)
- Commented to Planning Bd. on proposed changes to impervious surface rules (2015)
- Provided ideas for Public Services Announcements for County radio spots (2015)
- Collaborated with others on energy conservation and mgmt. projects (2015-16)
- Published the 2014 Orange County State of the Environment report (reports were previously completed in 2000, 2002, 2004, and 2009)
- Convened Orange County Environmental Summit (2005, 2009, 2014, 2019)
- Made recommendations to BOCC on food waste and solid waste tax district (2014)
- Worked with Orange County Schools to introduce local environmental indicators into middle and high school science curricula (2004, 2009, 2014)
- Hosted a Solid Waste Forum with the Chapel Hill Sustainability Committee (2013)
- Co-sponsored *The Nature of Orange* photography contest (2012 - 2021)
- Advocated for ½ cent sales tax referendum for Triangle Region public transit (2012)
- Compiled annotated bibliography of the effects of forestry on water quality (2012)
- Developed sustainable landscaping and forest management policies for the administration of County-owned facilities (2010)

List of Specific Tasks, Events, or Functions Performed or Sponsored Annually.

- **Co-sponsor “Nature of Orange” Photography Contest**
- **Liaison to Intergovernmental Parks Work Group**
- **Review and comment on environmental issues (e.g., anti-idling efforts, fracking, biosolids application, water pollution, air quality, forest mgmt.) and other issues assigned by the BOCC**
- **Identify priorities for the Lands Legacy Action Plan (natural areas and wildlife habitat)**
- **Conduct special studies pertaining to Orange County environment (e.g., energy efficiency/sustainability, forestry effects on water quality, herbicides and native flora)**
- **Conduct environmental education outreach events (e.g., Earth Evening)**

Describe this board/commission’s activities/accomplishments in carrying out BOCC goal(s)/priorities, if applicable.

BOCC Goal Five: Create, preserve, and protect a natural environment that includes clean water, clean air, wildlife, important natural lands and

sustainable energy for present and future generations.

- Presented findings and recommendations to BOCC on selected environmental issues: 1) roadside wildflower preservation; 2) effects of forest mgmt. on water quality; 3) effects of herbicides on roadside native plant habitat; 4) potential effects of hydraulic fracturing (“fracking”) in Orange County; 5) need for 100% renewable energy in Orange County (BOCC Priorities #1 and #12)

Stayed abreast of ongoing and developing env. issues of importance to the County, such as Falls & Jordan Lake nutrient mgmt. rules, reducing commercial food waste in solid waste stream, and permitting of biosolids on farmland (Priorities #12 and #16)

Describe the collaboration relationship(s) this particular board has with other advisory boards and commissions?

As needed. Members of this commission are also on the Planning Board and the Intergovernmental Parks Work Group.

If your board/commission played the role of an Element Lead Advisory Board involved in the 2030 Comprehensive Plan preparation process, please indicate your board’s activities/accomplishments as they may relate to the Comprehensive Plan’s goals or objectives.

(The Element Lead Advisory Boards include: Planning Board, EDC, OUTBoard, Commission for the Environment, Historic Preservation Commission, Agriculture Preservation Board, Affordable Housing Board, Recreation and Parks Advisory Council)

The CFE provided extensive input into DEAPR staff development of the *Natural and Cultural Systems Element* of the Comprehensive Plan—specifically the chapters on Air and Energy Resources, Water Resources, and Natural Areas and Wildlife Habitat.

Objective AE-1:

Assess and implement the current countywide greenhouse gas emissions inventory and action plan target reductions.

- The CFE helped to initiate a countywide inventory of greenhouse gas emissions (2005), and continues to advise on ways to reduce the County’s “carbon footprint.”

Objective AE-15:

Foster participation in green energy programs such as installation incentives for solar hot water/solar generation/solar tempering in residential or commercial construction. The County should develop programs that will link citizens and businesses with options for alternative and sustainable energy sources.

- The CFE's Energy Resources Committee has developed proposals that address energy efficiency and renewable power issues, and will pursue further in collaboration with other advisory boards and stakeholders.

Objective NA-3:

Develop a more detailed and consistent methodology for monitoring changes in forest cover throughout the County, and specifically the extent of mature hardwood forest.

- The CFE's State of the Environment report documented significant reductions in mature hardwood forest that occurred from 2003-2008 and since 1988.

Objective NA-11:

Develop a comprehensive conservation plan for achieving a network of protected open space throughout Orange County, which addresses 1) threats to important natural areas; 2) connectivity between protected areas; 3) coordination with neighboring counties; and 4) sustainable management of critical natural resources.

- The CFE's Land Resources Committee is participating in a County effort to identify and preserve important landscape corridors that connect significant natural areas.

Objective NA-16:

Create a system of public and private open space and conservation areas, including parks, nature preserves, and scenic vistas representative of Orange County landscape.

- The CFE advises County's Lands Legacy program in its efforts to protect the most important natural and cultural resource lands through a variety of means.
- The CFE's Land Resources Committee is participating in a County effort to identify and preserve important landscape corridors that connect significant natural areas.

Objective WR-5:

Promote and participate in regional efforts to plan for use of water supplies in the region in an equitable manner, including contingency planning for water supplies during droughts. [Also Objectives WR-9, WR-10, and WR-15]

- CFE advocates for full implementation of the Water Resources Initiative to ensure planning for an adequate water supply for current and anticipated future needs

Objective WR-11:

Provide incentives and educational information to landowners to increase protection of watersheds and ground water supplies and their inter-relationships.

- The CFE distributes groundwater and surface water educational materials at Earth Evening and as part of its State of the Environment reports

NOTE: The Orange County State of the Environment 2019 identifies specific recommendations on ways to help maintain and improve Orange County's environmental quality, many of which address objectives stated in the Orange

County Comprehensive Plan.

Identify any activities this board/commission expects to carry out in 2023 as they relate to established BOCC goals and priorities. If applicable, is there a fiscal impact (i.e., funding, staff time, other resources) associated with these proposed activities (please list).

- The CFE will review and rank grant applications for the fourth cycle of the County Climate Action Grant
- Climate Action Plan involvement
- Re-initiating the Right of Way Task Force
- Land Resources Committee- Tree Canopy Policy,
- Promotion of the Eno New Hope Landscape Conservation Plan
- The CFE will work with staff to develop a Greene Tract “Headwaters Preserve” planning and development program. We would like to form a joint subcommittee with the Parks and Recreation Council.
- The CFE will begin to discuss and make plans to develop the 2024 State of the Environment Report.
- The CFE will review and advise the County plan to tackle water quality issues in the Falls Lake Watershed, with the Upper Neuse River Basin Association (UNRBA), using the Interim Alternative Implementation Approach (IAIA).
- Explore energy efficiency awareness “Check Out Kits” for the general public

What are the concerns or emerging issues your board has identified for the upcoming year that it plans to address, or wishes to bring to the Commissioners’ attention?

- Provide recommendations to the distribution of school funds for Climate Action Grant Funds
- Evaluate for potential opportunities for the Inflation Reduction Act
- The CFE would like to review and comment on County rezoning requests, as soon as the information is available to DEAPR staff.
- The CFE plans to address Equity (DEIJ) across all aspects of our environmental recommendations. We look forward to seeing the Racial Equity Plan and using the implementation tools therein.
- Well Net Expansion- Study Parameters; Reexamination of previous groundwater studies, update to include impacts of climate change