

Orange County Commission for the Environment

Meeting Summary June 13, 2022; 7:00 pm *Hybrid Meeting*

Present: Kim Piracci, Kim Livingston (via Zoom), Kristie Mather (via Zoom), Veronica Penn Beattie, Jessie Birckhead, Jaya Nair (via Zoom), Elizabeth McWhorter, Bill Ward, Ian Morse, Reade Oakley

Absent: Jane Harris (excused), Carrie Fletcher

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

I. Call to Order

Chair Kim Piracci called the meeting to order at 7:07pm.

II. Additions or Changes to Agenda

No Changes to Agenda.

III. Approval of DRAFT Meeting Summary – May 9th, 2022

Bill Ward motioned to approve meeting summary. Jessie Birckhead seconded the motion. With no objections the May meeting summary notes were approved.

IV. Orange County Residential Solar- Discussion

Amy Eckberg gave a presentation on the email from Mr. Rust, an Orange County citizen and one of the 15,227 customers of Piedmont Electric Cooperative (PEMC), according to Eckberg's research for the presentation. The County Manager asked CFE to talk through and choose the best strategy for filing an appeal with PEMC. Mr. Rust voiced his worries over the start of the climate and the PEMC reimbursement policy in an email to the BOCC. He asked for two things in the email: 1. BOCC assistance for solar adoption by households and businesses, and 2. a modification to the PEMC net metering credit rate. Eckberg contrasted Piedmont Electric's credit rate of 3.47 cents per kWh with Duke Energy, another electric provider in the county, which was at 10.36 cents per kWh. In her presentation, Eckberg emphasized data on solar power in Orange County, where there are presently 662 solar PV systems, 92 percent of which are residential and have increased by 123 percent since 2015. Speaking on the topic, David Stancil said that the County Manager had asked him to react to the resident. Stancil gave the name and contact information for Ed Durham at PEMC, to whom they should write their letter. Reade Oakley shared his personal interactions with PEMC and Duke Energy. As a result of this discussion, the Commission determined that PEMC provides credits to consumers who use solar energy excessively whereas DE does not. The outcome of the discussion and

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response to the letter, according to Stancil, would be a letter sent by the CFE that would outline how to update the website to reflect the payment. Veronica Penn Beattie and Birckhead decided to write the letter to the BOCC after Piracci requested volunteers to do so. Piracci offered to call David Poythriss, a board member of PEMC and get the information from him as outlined by Oakley to forward it to Beattie and Birckhead. Birckhead asked about the method for approving the letter. The Commission resolved that a draft of the letter will be discussed and approved at the meeting in August.

V. Intergovernmental Parks Group- CFE Rep- Action Item

The IPWG and CFE liaison was considered by the Commission. After some time for discussion, Vice-Chair Veronica Penn Beattie offered to serve as the CFE liaison. It was acknowledged and stated that Beattie would represent CFE on IPWG as there were no other volunteers.

VI. CFE Earth Day / Evening Events Retrospective

A review of recruitment efforts at past events, DEAPR Earth Evening and Carrboro Earth Day fair, Elizabeth McWhorter suggested more education information to attract applicants. Kristie Mathie agreed on the best use of time for recruitment and being visible with education awareness. Birckhead explained that on a previous board she volunteered on, there was a dedicated outreach committee for recruitment and partnership opportunities. Members agreed that a flyer would be a good idea for recruitment. Reade mentioned the influence of UNC students and expressed interest in reaching out to campus organizations. Beattie ended this agenda topic with the acknowledgment of interest in the presence of CFE at county activities and events.

VII. Committee Breakouts

The CFE divided in to three breakout session groups; Land Resources, Air, Water and Energy Committees for discussions.

VIII. Updates and Information Items

Staff and/or CFE Members will provide updates on the following items:

- Climate Action Plan- RFQ- Eckberg explained the RFQ was posted on the Orange County website. She said the deadline to submit proposals is June 30, 2022. Piracci asked if she could email the link to members after the meeting.
- Community Climate Action Grant Program- Eckberg said the next round of funding open date was the day of the meeting. Beattie raised the question if the Commission

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- could not hold standard meetings in September and October to review applications. Members did not vote on this but may discuss at a future meeting. Eckberg explained the BOCC passed an amendment on June 9th for the Community Climate Action Grant program. In this amendment the BOCC agreed to have funds not spent at the end of the grant cycle will be made available to any eligible applicant, if the total balance is more than \$15,000. Birckhead raised a questions that related to conversations with schools and participation in the grant program as applicants. McWorther asked about the lack of grant applications from Town of Hillsborough. Eckberg said that she could send an email to municipalities about application period is now open and that she will plan to have discussions with the respective school systems.
- Solarize the Triangle- A follow up from the last meeting. Eckberg provided information about the community based group purchasing program for solar energy with SOLAR Crowd Source. This campaign starts in August and is in partnership with Triangle J Council of Governments with jurisdictions such as the Towns of Carrboro, Hillsborough, Cary, City of Raleigh and Durham.
 - County LEED Status Announcements- An update from last meeting. Eckberg said announcements are being created and will available.
 - Duke Carbon Plan SSDN Letter- Eckberg said that a draft letter is in the works and suggested that Orange County be involved. The letter would be to address the elimination of the use of fossil fuels to Duke Energy and meet local clean energy goals.
 - The Commission discussed applicants and the selection process of applicants. Members decided that all should be allowed to review applications and not just Chair and Vice-Chair. Wesley Poole said that he would email applications with the Commission.

IX. Adjournment

Bill motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9:07 pm; seconded by Veronica Penn Beattie; all in favor: none opposed; motion passed.