



Environmental and Energy Stewardship Subcommittee

200 College Street, Room 310

December 17, 2021

Meeting Minutes

Subcommittee Members Present

Chairman Newman, Commissioner Wells, Commissioner Sloan, Maggie Ullman, Jamie Ager, Meg Williams

Staff Members Present

Sybil Tate, Jeremiah LeRoy, Jennifer Harrison, Jessica Hughes, Michael Frue,

Brownie Newman called the meeting to order at 10:03am.

Approval of Agenda

- Terri Wells made a motion to approve the December 17th, 2021 agenda, seconded by Maggie Ullman, and the motion passed with the vote.

Public Comment

- There was no public comment.

Approval of Minutes

- Minutes from November 19th, 2021
- Terri Wells moved to approve the minutes and Meg Jamison provided a second, and the motion passed with all in favor.

Goals and Priorities – Ag & Land Resources

- Jennifer Harrison presented the goals and priorities of Ag & Land Resources
- Ag & Land Resources is two departments, the Soil & Water Conservation District and the N.C. Cooperative Extension.
- Bring both land conservation Advisory Boards under Ag and Land Resources Dept.
 - Agriculture Advisory Board
 - Land Conservation Advisory Board (previously with Planning)
- Increase annual acres conserved
 - 2020 – X acres conserved
 - 2021 – X acres conserved
- Create Open Space Plan
 - Mapping priority regions (creating GIS layers)
 - Developing criteria for conservation
 - Consecutive tracts of land
 - High quality/prime agricultural soils
 - Recreation/Greenways
- 700 acres are set to close on easement in 2022 between the two conservation boards.
- In order to receive federal and state funding for conservation easements the land needs to prime soil.
- 61 projects submitted for the Emergency Watershed Protection Program to repair damage from Tropical Storm Fred.



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- Contracting with EQI (Environmental Quality Institute) to monitor 16 sites for water quality. 45 sites are being monitored throughout Buncombe County.
- Commissioner Sloan asked if there is a way to pinpoint where the fecal coliform is coming from. Harrison stated there is a universal misunderstanding that water quality issues are related to our livestock producers however studies the majority of fecal coliform comes from wildlife and failed septic's.
- There are some programs to help with failing septic's in the area. For example, Mountain Valley RC&D has a program to help with failing septic's but it is only for those along the Ivey River. The funding is a cost-share program that can help repair or replace a septic.
- All programs in the Ag & Land Resources are on a voluntary basis, there can be assistance in the regulation but the department cannot enforce the regulations.
- Each watershed area has a different area of concern. In Cane Creek and Swannanoa the issue largest issue is sedimentation. In Ivy the issue is fecal coliform. As Buncombe County continues to develop the pollutants change.
- Land Conservation Plan
 - Actively recruit landowners in priority conservation areas
 - Integrate Comprehensive Plan data into conservation planning
 - Open space
 - Land use
 - The Ag Advisory Board has over 30 landowners waiting to receive funding for conservation easements.
- Water Quality Task Force
 - Work with EQI and partners to develop a task force to interpret the water quality data
 - Set priority watersheds for improvement
 - Create a plan for addressing water quality one watershed at a time
 - Apply for and manage additional Federal/State funding from TS Fred
- Feedback from Subcommittee
 - Resource Institute has lobbied the State Legislator's for funding for water quality initiatives in North Carolina. \$7 million was awarded. Funding for these projects will be competitive, but there are numerous projects that can be funded in Buncombe County.
 - Focus on not only the issues that are currently in front of us but also looking to other municipalities that have had increased development and issues they are facing now. What programs can be implemented to ensure a decrease in issues for the future.

Goals and Priorities - Sustainability

- Jeremiah Leroy presented on the goals and priorities for sustainability
- Energy Efficiency (internal)
 - Continual efforts to improve efficiency, reduce consumption
 - LEED Gold standard, renovation, consolidation, elimination of facilities
- Solar on public buildings
 - 41 total projects (16 County); ~6MW
 - 3 energized, 5 others substantially complete
- Weatherization/Efficiency Upgrades (LMI)
 - Energy Saver Network (goal of 100 homes annually)



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- Solarize: Neighbor to Neighbor Solar program
- Cities Initiative/ Duke Climate Collaborative/SSDN
 - State and Utility level discussions and advocacy
- Sustainability is at 32%-40% towards its 100% renewable energy goal.
- Solar on schools
 - Design contract has been executed; structural contract underway
 - 24 sites initially identified by BCS; other sites TBD
 - CIP (Capital Improvement Plan) Placeholder has been requested, a \$12 million placeholder has been requested through the CIP group.
- Vehicle Evaluation Team
 - Vehicle requests evaluated; 6 EVs recommended in FY23 CIP
 - EVSE charging requested for FY23 in CIP
 - Decisions have not been approved by the CIP yet.
- EVSE Mapping project (LOS and COA)
 - Collaboration with City and Land of Sky to develop EV mapping tool
 - Anticipation of IIJA funding potential; useful community tool

Buncombe County Duke Energy solar rebate inflows

- \$75,000 is the max amount allotted for the rebate. The Initial investment would be \$1.2 million of eligible rebates. Projects are in the que. Once the projects are online checks are sent 6 weeks after.
- Sustainability is borrowing \$10.5 million and the interest on that loan would be \$1.2 million therefore the rebates are paying for the interest for the \$10.5 million loan.
- The last project will close in December 2022 at the soonest.

Update on Buncombe County's 100% Renewable Energy Plan and Associated Resolution

- Commissioner Sloan shared the Biden Administration goals and encouraged the subcommittee to think about future goals and how Buncombe County can align with the Biden Administrations goals.

Announcements

- There were no announcements at this time.

Adjourn

- Terri Wells made a motion to adjourn at 12:13pm, seconded by Maggie Ullman, and the motion passed with all in favor.

Documents

- Presentation
- November 18th, 2021 minutes