



Environmental and Energy Stewardship Subcommittee

Zoom
January 21, 2022

Meeting Minutes

Subcommittee Members Present

Chairman Newman, Commissioner Wells, Commissioner Sloan, Maggie Ullman, Meg Williams, Lena Hansen

Staff Members Present

Sybil Tate, Jeremiah LeRoy, Jennifer Harrison, Jessica Hughes, Michael Frue, Gillian Phillips, Nate Pennington, Avni Naik, and Ariel Zijp

Commissioner Sloan called the meeting to order at 10:03am.

Approval of Agenda

- Terri Wells made a motion to approve the January 21, 2022 agenda, seconded by Maggie Ullman, and the motion passed with the vote.

Approval of Minutes

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

Public Comment

- There was no public comment.

Priority Regions for Farmland Preservation

- Sybil Tate stated the subcommittee goals of water quality, open space, climate resiliency, renewable energy transition, and clean energy financing.
- Ariel Zijp & Avni Naik presented the priority regions for farmland preservation.
- 18% total county lands are protected. There are 61,456 conserved acres in public lands and 181 conserved acres in private lands making the total acreage 76,637 acres.
- Agricultural Advisory Board has a goal to conserve farmland in Buncombe County. The Land Conservation Advisory Board has a broader goal to conserve land and streams in Buncombe.
- The goal for the project is to create a map that will serve as a guide in identifying farmland preservation priority regions in Buncombe County and build a more strategic approach to conservation easements and funding.
- The criteria for the priority regions are proximity to protected lands, soils, parcel size, proximity to Voluntary Agriculture Districts (VAD) and Enhanced Voluntary Agriculture Districts (EVAD), Present-Use Value (PUV) status, and water quality protection.
- Rankings are 26% to proximity to protected lands, 22% to soils and parcel size, 10% to VAD/EVAD, PUV, and Watershed.
- Roughly 78,000 acres are estimated to be left to conserve in Buncombe County.
- Buncombe County is 420,000 acres and currently 76,637 acres are protected.
- Previous land preservation rate was 250 acres/year at \$150,000/year. Current land preservation rate is 850 acres/year at \$750,000/year. To reach 20% it would take an estimated 9 years and to reach 25% It would take 34 years.
- Gillian Phillips also shared 300 participants from the Comprehensive Plan shared they are also interested in land conservation in the priority regions.



Environmental and Energy Stewardship Subcommittee

Zoom

January 21, 2022

Meeting Minutes

- To reach 20% of conserved land 84,000 acres would need to be conserved which would be 7,363 more acres. To reach 25% it would be a total of 105,000 conserved acres which would be 28,363 additional acres conserved.
- Please see presentation for priority region maps.

Comprehensive Plan Overview

- Gillian Phillips facilitated an interactive activity with members to gauge priorities for Buncombe.
- A Comprehensive Plan is a 20-year vision for Buncombe County that works with citizens and partners input to decide on the vision. This plan is used to set policy priorities.
- The plan is in the first and second phase which includes a stakeholder survey and virtual community engagement. There are a total of four phases.
- The top long range planning issue is fostering and accelerating transition to renewable energy.
- 3 big ideas for the vision are increase funding for conservation efforts, carbon free commercial and residential building, and carbon analysis for integral for all land use planning.

Phase 2 Solar Discussion

- Jeremiah Leroy facilitated a discussion regarding the second phase of solar on schools now that it has been approved.
- There are several schools who are good candidates for the program. Chairman Newman asked if it best to combine all the projects into one RFP or if it would be better to do separate RFPs for each site or fewer sites.
- At the staff level the \$12,000,000 has been broken up between three years because it will not be feasible to spend the full amount in one year.
- The RFP process has already started and expected to release a RFP package at the beginning of the fiscal year.

Announcements

- There were no announcements currently.

Adjourn

- Terri Wells made a motion to adjourn at 12:21pm, seconded by Maggie Ullman, and the motion passed with all in favor.

Documents

- Priority Region Presentation
- December 17th, 2021 minutes