

Environmental Subcommittee Meeting Minutes

8/19/2022

Attendees: Parker Sloane, Jeremiah LeRoy, Nathan Pennington, Terri Wells, Mike Frue, Leena Hansen, Ashley Featherstone, Jennifer Harrison, Maggie Ullman, Sybil Tate, Meg Jameson, Jennifer Weiss, Rafael Baptista, Max Taintor

Notes:

- Addition of Electric School Bus discussion after Green Bank Update
- Motion to approve agenda and June/July Minute (TW), 2nd (MU) all approved
- 1 - Green Bank – NC Clean Energy Fund
 - First up – Jennifer Weiss (Senior advisor of climate change / Chairperson of NC Green Bank) – Given discussion around Green Banks at last meeting, prudent to give an update as to where things stand at the state level (nonprofit).
 - Green Bank Model – uses public capital to mobilize more private investment into underserved green and resilient financing markets to fill market gaps. Goal of enabling private, capital partners to enter clean energy markets at scale without a green bank assistance. Currently under consideration in NC.
 - Examples: Michigan Saves, Connecticut Green Bank, Florida’s Solar Energy Loan Fund, Montgomery County Green Bank (MD)
 - Focus on finance gaps in renewable power, building efficiency, industrial decarbonization, clean transportation, reforestation, climate-resilient infrastructure (See Coalition for Green Capital: How a Green Bank can Drive the NC Clean Energy Economy, Oct. 2020)
 - They partner with public and private investors, foundations, and other non-profits to deploy sustainable financing solutions that will create long-lasting environmental, economic, and social benefits.
 - Discussion of Inflation Reduction Act \$27B available in Feb. 2023 for eligible entities (including Green Banks). 20B set aside for national green bank – facilitator for getting money out to state and local green banks (can apply for funding from them).
 - PS – is that funding competitive? JW – It looks like it will be competitive for certain agencies. Local governments will be able to apply for local funding, also for CBFIs, tribal entities, and nonprofit entities. EPA has 180 days to put out those guidelines.
 - They are working towards getting ED and staff, looking to deploy/monitor 2-3 financing products – looking for ideas from everywhere
 - Focus areas – create tariffed on-bill financing for energy efficiency and prerequisite urgent repairs, credit enhancements for local lenders for home and small business projects, financing platform for residential contractors to offer fair financing for HVAC, hot water, insulation, and solar - and secure financing programs for landlords of affordable housing for energy investments.
 - Connecticut utilizes a good platform.
 - Great project in Atlanta that we may be able to highlight in NC

- (MU) Excited about the federal support and state initiatives. So, do we just create a local pipeline? We don't necessarily need to run admin but we can be pipeline partners.
- (MJ) Asked about if capacity was at risk – JW said it wasn't.
- LH – inquired about timeline to hiring ED – JW with passing of Inflation Reduction Act we may push to hire sooner. Will post job our way when it's finalized.
- PS – inquired about application process for funding – so would you apply for funding for financial project – or to capitalize for the bank to distribute funding? Local Governments and CDFIs can apply, but is it a different product for them? JW – TBD – GRB set up for two reasons – set up green banks (there will be funding available to capitalize, hoping for admin support) and product focus where they can just apply. She will keep group in loop on future. PS – excited about list of scalable projects (rooftop solar, electric vehicles, multi-family energy efficiency and solar). It seems like we could brainstorm with community partners to discuss efficiencies. JW – let's think about these opportunities that work with Buncombe and can scale with other counties. Electric School buses as well – to help provide bridge financing for school districts (to get reimbursed from EPA later). Where can we dive in and get things going?
- JW – would love to come back in a few months to discuss initiatives (hopefully we'll have an ED)
- MU – what are the ideal goals you're seeing across the state to fit into your capacity? JW – two real big roles you can play – you can help make the connections that need to be made about what this green bank is, and secondly creating partnerships with CDFIs in the area to make those connections – it's mostly connecting right now. Working with ED to make connections to make programs that work.
- JW – have not partnered with any specific banks yet – we want to help every financial institute in the state.
- PS – excitement in organizing contractors around this and with consumers – we can create a one-stop shop for people
- Electric School Bus Update (Ashley Featherstone)
 - AF mentions air quality funding for diesel and electric school buses – working to get interest from the schools. BC schools submitted their application Wednesday for the grant – Commissioner Wells set up a meeting and a lot of stuff that came together, JL helped get the big lift at the end with Duke, State DPI was involved. We're excited and they should find out in Oct. – it's part of EPA's Air and Climate Initiative (5B in 5 years to replace diesel with electric school buses). DPI is paying for cost in difference in buses. EPA said that everyone that applies will get the award since they have that much money. By getting in on ground floor it puts us in good position. Application was for two yellow buses – buses go about 100 miles. Cherokee Boys Club got the first bus – they have the only bus in NC now. They're going to have a school bus drag race coming up. Cherokee has committed to electrifying entire bus fleet. NC General Statute dictates when buses need to be replaced. ACS doesn't have any eligible, BC has 6 eligible. BC schools own yellow buses, but Raleigh pays for it – they don't pay for buses.
 - How will the charging work? JL – that's when they approached me to speak with Duke about using DC Fast Charging – so what is the capacity remaining at some of these locations – it can be a heavy cost to upgrade. Funding the gaps has been the problem.

We've gotten fortunate with a lot of funding gap assistance. We have two sites we like but still need to be flexible with them. Site was not a requirement to list for application. Hoping to use bus garage and specific schools based on maps.

- Water Quality (Sybil Tate)
 - Focus areas are open space, water quality, climate resiliency, renewable energy transition, and clean energy financing
 - We're talking about non-point source water quality issues. We have the ag side and development side of the house we're going to bring more information around.
 - Framing questions around regulatory pollutants, what other counties are doing, and what programs have been the most successful?
 - Hoping to frame next 4-5 months around water quality, and then water quantity – the goals might be separate.
 - MJ – flooding should be a priority.
 - Hoping to wrap up water quality by January then jump into water quantity.
 - Discussion about the connection between quantity and quality associated with stormwater management. What is the scope of this goal – how granular or large?
 - Tentative timeline presentation
 - JH – there could be changes coming from the rural communities for rain barrels through Cooperative Extension.
 - ST – shows map of our goal areas based on feedback from monitoring sites.
- Erosion Control (Nate Pennington)
 - Discussion of sedimentation pollution control act: we are a delegated local authority of the state EC commission. Erosion control – we can't have anything more stringent than what the state mandates. We provide a lot of services for erosion control to the municipalities (sans AVL) – that creates staffing. If you disturb 1 acre, you need an erosion control permit. Can be incorporated into comprehensive plan for more stringent goals – no guarantees – but whether or not other ordinances can support it.
 - Stormwater – had in place since 2006 – Biltmore flood and development boon – NPDES (National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System). Black Mountain/AVL take care of their own stormwater. Services provided to MS 4's: Biltmore Forest, Montreat, Weaverville, and Woodfin. Our stormwater ordinance reviews construction plans then holds a cash bond (letter credit/insurance bond) so if developer walks away, we can complete the stormwater infrastructure program of the development. Up to 125% of the development cost. Some projects are sometimes 500-600k based on a cost estimate by an engineer. We also hold operation and maintenance agreement (does the system function as intended) – lays out steps – and if development is turned over to an HOA – they must be educated on maintenance – it is put in the deed with the property.
 - Discussion of examples like NC Arboretum Raingarden
 - Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance – It looks like Woodfin is looking in the direction of hiring a stormwater administrator so they will be able to do their own flood review. We are not allowing building in floodway anymore. We should make priority areas based on stormwater pollution based around fecal coliform: Cows > Humans > Pets – utilization of enhanced riparian buffers. Hoping to come up with a program to get multiple programs together to work together organically. Two biggest problems are sediment

and fecal. There are programs out there to help build riparian buffers – it's just about getting the word out and getting people to engage.

- JH - Currently working on WAP – Watershed action Plan for Cane Creek to receive 319 monies to bring in programs to do a wide variety of things.
- Discussions of flooding examples and how to prevent it in the future – concerning construction sites displacing dirt to floodplain areas creating channels and reducing the floodplain's ability to collect water.
- Nate will return in October.
- Floating solar update – Jeremiah LeRoy
 - We're working on it
- Next meeting at landfill
- Motion to adjourn TW – PS Second – all approved.