



Environmental and Energy Stewardship Subcommittee

200 College Street, Room 310

December 2, 2022

Meeting Minutes

Subcommittee Members Present

Chairman Newman, Commissioner Sloan, Commissioner Wells, Maggie Ullman, Meg Jamison, Lena Henson

Staff Members Present

Sybil Tate, Jeremiah LeRoy, Jennifer Harrison, Dane Pederson, Jackie Hamstead, Max Taintor, Rafael Baptista, Michael Frue, Ashley Featherstone, Bridget Herring (City of Asheville), Kiera Bulan (City of Asheville)

Commissioner Sloan called the meeting to order at 10:04 am.

Approval of Agenda and Minutes

Commissioner Wells made a motion to approve the December 2, 2022 agenda and September and October meeting minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment:

No public comment

Solid Waste Update:

- Waste Pro fee increase
 - The Waste Pro contract has a 5-year term. There was no option for a fee increase in first two years. Cost was \$19.21 per month per customer.
 - A 6.9% increase based on an automatic inflation adjustment happened last year, resulting in current rate of \$20.54.
 - Another 7.9% automatic inflation adjustment will take place January 1, 2023, resulting in a \$22.16 per month rate.
 - Waste pro will ask for another \$0.39 per month per customer increase due to recycling facility tip fee increases.
 - Not an opportunity to leverage an increase in recycling pick-up services. That would need to be done in the contract or RFP.
- Solid Waste Tipping Fee
 - Solid Waste underwent a tipping fee evaluation process with Strategy and Innovation.
 - Included benchmarking against other locations across the state.
 - Recommended rate adjustments for FY24:
 - From \$47.75 to \$52.00 per ton at transfer station
 - From \$43.75 to \$45.00 per ton at landfill
 - Will impact municipalities
 - 24,000 tons comes in annually from COA, net expected impact =~\$100K.
 - Less impactful to Woodfin and Weaverville because they primarily tip at landfill.



Environmental and Energy Stewardship Subcommittee

200 College Street, Room 310

December 2, 2022

- Waste pro can increase \$0.10 per month per customer for each dollar increase in tipping fees but it is an option to not pass increase to Waste Pro.
- Focus Groups and Public Outreach:
 - Conducted 6 focus groups throughout the County.
 - County is entering year 4 of contract with Waste Pro- looking for feedback to determine:
 - Does the County extend existing contract or issue new RFP?
 - How can the residential waste collection contract better serve residents?
 - CAPE will set up web-based platform to collect feedback. They are looking to the EESS for guidance on which questions to ask the public. Email suggestions to Lillian Govus.

Water Quality Discussion

- What other local governments are doing:
 - Max Taintor shared research into what other local governments are doing in NC and across the country. The subcommittee requested addition information on two that stood out:
 - Leelanau County, Michigan: Septic inspection required whenever a property title is transferred.
 - Huron County, Michigan: Using thermal imaging to detect failing septic systems
 - Buncombe County had done something similar in Newfound Creek watershed in 2009.
 - This could be a more robust strategy to assess how bad the septic tank issue is in Buncombe County.
 - County already has a fly-over contract for property tax, septic thermal imaging could be an add-on.
 - What is already happening in Buncombe County:
 - Jennifer Harrison presented on partnerships, funding sources, available data, and programs that are focused on improving water quality in Buncombe County.
 - Most of funding comes from state or federal partnerships
 - Funding is limited in scope and quantity and is competitive.
 - County has millions of dollars in unmet funding needs for water quality projects/ programs.
 - Water quality improvement strategies have included: Technical assistance, education, farmland preservation are current strategies, streambank stabilization, livestock exclusion fencing, and debris removal.
 - 303(d) listed Water quality ratings (EPA) indicate that fecal coliform and benthos are most widespread impairment in Buncombe County.
 - Discrepancies between locally collected data and EPA data
 - County staff capacity to enforce sediment and erosion control plans is limited.
 - Comp plan process will lead to updates of code and development of land use plan.
 - Water Quality Goal Setting:
 - Potential projects:
 - Stormwater management/ treatment: projects <1 acre, updating old infrastructure
 - Riparian buffers



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200 College Street, Room 310

December 2, 2022

- Streambank stabilization/ debris removal
- Septic and sewage leak repair programs (sewage MSD)
- Considerations for goal setting:
 - Short-term vs long-term (French Broad improvements might take 30 years)
 - Geographic scope: French Broad watershed vs sub-watershed
 - Cane Creek identified as good candidate for focus area
 - Opportunity to start in a small geographic area to learn more about strategies
 - Challenge of starting in a small area is to ensure equity that all residents are benefiting
 - A long-term goal around French Broad water quality captures the complexity of water quality issues
 - Focus on particular water quality issue(s): fecal coliform, sedimentation, etc.
 - Need for more data:
 - What are leading causes fecal coliform and sedimentation?
 - How do we correct limitation of existing data?
 - Option to hire external engineering firm to design data collection system
- Opportunity to address water quality issues in the development of the Land Use Plan (part of comp plan)
- Potential policy could state “French Broad would improve x by y by 2050”
 - Work to achieve this long-term, geographically-broad goal through targeted short-term goals in specific watersheds.
- Use the strategic planning cycle to update short-term goals every 5 years
 - EESS should remain the group to make the recommendations

Solar Updates

- Solar on schools
 - Bid opening next wed for 4 schools + judicial center
 - These are the last ones out for bid until we have decision on how to move forward
 - Feedback from local solar companies- are having a hard time hearing about RFP opening
 - Jeremiah has sent it out directly to local developers
 - Buncombe County schools has 40 schools, 13 are done or will be done. They are hesitant to move forward on other projects until roof repairs are done.
 - CIP funding committed to do these solar projects but not to do roof repairs
 - School Capital Commission reviews requests for funding. Look a list of repair needs- maybe roofs can be elevated?
 - Consensus that it doesn't make sense to replace a roof ahead of time but many school roofs are at end of life
 - Possible to do a combined RFP for roof repairs and solar



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200 College Street, Room 310

December 2, 2022

- The goal was to assess feasibility and install solar when it makes sense, not at all costs. Maybe its okay to stagger solar project over the next 15 years to coincide with County Schools suggested roof replacement schedule.
- Subcommittee requested a prioritized list of schools where roofs are a barrier to solar.

Green Energy Financing Discussion

- IRA support for a federal and state-level green banks and point-of-sale rebates for appliance have been announced.
 - EESS recognizes these opportunities as key strategic pathway towards achieving renewable energy goals and helping residents decarbonize their homes.
 - Guidance on how to apply for funds is forthcoming.
- Current programs through BHP aren't big enough to capture this federal money or meet our carbon reduction goals.
 - New RFP for BHP comes out in spring of 2023.
 - Increase in administrative burden required to take advantage of new programs may require additional funding from the County.
 - SSDN will be training GBA on IRA opportunities in Jan 2023.
- Buncombe County is well-positioned to take advantage of these programs but needs a "deal maker" to connect partners. Maggie Ullman and Commissioner Sloan are interested in starting/continuing these conversations.
 - Look to partners to start developing these programs: local non-profits like GreenBuilt Alliance, City and County staff, state green bank, local CDFIs like Mountain BizWorks.
- NC Green Bank needs help identifying pilot projects
 - Examples: Solarize campaigns, On-bill tariff programs with utility companies, Smart-E program, contractor training, missing middle campaign, low-interest EV financing,...
 - Components of a successful project: good contractor relationships, equity centered mission.
- Timeline and next steps:
 - County budget requests due in Jan 2023.
 - Details on state green bank funding applications expected by end of 2023.
 - Other funding opportunities (i.e. climate justice block grant) currently available that we could work on in the meantime.
 - County staff will talk to CDFIs and discuss opportunities for contractor relationship-building with the building inspector.
 - Updates on the BHP RFP at will be given at future EESS meetings

2023 Meeting Schedule Review

Meg and Maggie are unable to attend the January 20th meeting. Motion made by Commissioner Wells to approved schedule, approved unanimously.

Subcommittee Membership Update

Need one community member to volunteer to end their initial term in June 2023. The initial term doesn't count towards the two-term limit.



Environmental and Energy Stewardship Subcommittee

200 College Street, Room 310

December 2, 2022

Maggie Ullman asked subcommittee to consider any conflicts that her new role on City Council might have for this group and to bring those thoughts to a future meeting.

Adjournment

Motion made by Commissioner Wells at 2:04, approved unanimously.