



ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY BOARD

Regular Meeting

March 21st, 2024

The Waynesville Environmental Sustainability Board held a regular meeting on Thursday, March 21st, 2024, at 4:30 pm. in the Municipal Building Conference Room located at 16 South Main Street Waynesville, NC.

Members present:

William Hite (Chair)
Chuck Dickson
Mary Kayler
Aparna Keshaviah
Case Brown (alternate)
David Henderson
Keith Ray
Paul Carlson
Reid Conway (Vice Chair)

Members Absent:

Kay Kirkman
Buffy Queen
Betsy Wall

Staff members present:

Rob Hites, Town Manager
Candace Poolton, Town Clerk

A. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman William Hite called the meeting to order at 4:33pm. He announced that the ESB was the recipient of the LEAP Grant. Board Member Keshaviah said she will put together a press kit and the Communities LEAP will notify the public by the end of the week.

B. APPROVAL OF 3/7/2024 MEETING MINUTES

Board Member Paul Carlson wanted the minutes to also reflect that the breakout groups had flexibility in their members.

A motion was made by Board Member David Henderson, seconded by Board Member Keith Ray, to approve the March 7th, 2024 meeting minutes as amended. The motion passed unanimously.

C. REPORT ON ELECTRIFICATION CONFERENCE-CHUCK DICKSON AND WILLIAM HITE

Board Member Dickson reported that they went to the Electrification Conference in Savannah Georgia. He said there is a nationwide effort to be more sustainable.

Board Member Ray asked if it seemed that Waynesville was keeping up with what other communities are doing. Board Member Dickson said that Waynesville is on track. Chairman Hite added that other towns also seem to be in the early days of enacting environmental sustainability initiatives. The Board discussed different options for borrowing money to fund certain projects and the cost savings that would allow the town to pay off the loans quickly.

D. CHALLENGES TO EFFECTIVE AND TIMELY DATA AQUISITION

Chairman Hite said with the upcoming budget cycle, it is imperative to get data sets. Board Member Dickson said that the Town's Asset Manager has training in energy efficiency and can probably help with that. Board Member Dickson suggested meeting with Julie Grasty, the asset services manager, so she could examine the energy audits and figure out the costs of making the suggested upgrades. Mr. Hites said she was interested in helping the ESB and is invited to the next meeting.

E. TEAM REPORTS FROM LAST MEETING

- A) Energy**
- B) Electric Transportation**
- C) Urban Ecology**

Board Member Keshaviah reported on behalf of the "Energy" group. She said that being awarded the LEAP grant changes things, so they may want to reevaluate their goals. She recommended that the "Energy" group be the liaison with the technical assistance providers for the grant. Board Member Keshaviah suggested putting policies in place that require new developments to have renewable energy options, EV charges, etc. when the town doesn't have the budget to do those things themselves.

Board Member Brown reported on behalf of the "Electric Transportation" group. He said they are working on gathering information and the specs for EV chargers. Chairman Hite said that DC fast chargers are being installed for free in certain communities based on potential usage, and that the chargers have built in battery storage.

Board Member Henderson reported on behalf of the “Urban Ecology” group. He said they met with Haywood Waterways to discuss what their priorities are which was very helpful. He said their goals are to be recertified as Tree City USA. Mr. Hites said a Board dedicated to trees is recommended. Board Member Henderson said that Board Member Kirkman looked on the website and she read that the town having a resolution about Arbor Day may be sufficient to be declared a Tree City. He said their group is also in the information gathering stage and would like to do a tree canopy inventory. He said he reached out to Natural Resource Management at Western Carolina University and said they could do a class project to help with the inventory, but they may need additional funding to help support that project. Board Member Henderson suggested that they compare the Town’s tree ordinances and lighting ordinances with other town’s and make recommendations. He also suggested that they find a way to articulate that greenway improvements would help make the town resilient to flooding. Board Member Henderson said the town should compare their use of pesticides and herbicides to best practices and make changes based on that. Mr. Hites said he can schedule a tour for the ESB to go to the watershed.

F. CREATING A DECARBONIZATION PLAN

Chairman Hite recommended putting together a subcommittee to work on a decarbonization plan in time for the new budget year. He said that many grant applications ask for a decarbonization plan. Board Member Keshaviah said the town will receive an action plan at the end of the LEAP grant process. Board Member Kayler asked if a decarbonization plan is the same thing as a climate action plan. Chairman Hite said they are different from each other. He said that a decarbonization plan would be covered by a climate action plan.

G. DISCUSSION OF SUSTAINABILITY OFFICER POSITION: QUALIFICATIONS & DUTIES

Mr. Hites said the budget is the tightest it’s ever been in his career. He recommended funding the position from different line items so the General Fund doesn’t take a hit. He said that the budget will most likely be approved by mid-June, and the ES Manager could be onboarded by October. He said that they could hire someone with a B.A. at \$45K that focuses on stormwater management. Mr. Hites said the proposed stormwater fee can help fund the position.

Chairman Hite asked if there are any electric vehicles on the budget. Mr. Hites said no. Board Member Carlson asked what it would cost to solarize the Public Services building. Mr. Hites said the town can’t afford it this time. Board Member Brown said it’s estimated at \$1/watt for larger scale solar. Board Member Dickson mentioned that the NC Energy Conference is April 23 and 24 in Raleigh and he would like for Mr. Hites and another Board Member to attend. Board Member Kayler added that Citizens Climate Lobby’s group leader will be presenting at the Southern Regional Conference, and she would like to share information on how the ESB was established.

Board Member Carlson asked Mr. Hites if the town can take any charity for certain projects. Mr. Hites said yes and referenced the donation from an individual that helped build the greenway bridge. Board Member Ray asked if there's a town-wide strategy for attracting donors. Mr. Hites said it's usually by word of mouth and such a strategy would most likely require a staff member just dedicated to building donor relations.

H. OTHER BUSINESS

The ESB discussed creating a press release to announce the DOE LEAP grant.

I. ADJOURN

A motion was made by Board Member Carlson, seconded by Board Member Ray, to adjourn the meeting at 6:31pm. The motion passed unanimously.

The next regular scheduled meeting of the Environmental Sustainability Board will be held on Thursday, April 4th at 4:30pm, located at 16 S. Main Street.

ATTEST:

William Hite, Board Chair

Candace Poolton, Town Clerk