



ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY BOARD

Regular Meeting

April 4th, 2024

The Waynesville Environmental Sustainability Board held a regular meeting on Thursday, April 4th, 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)
Kay Kirkman
Buffy Queen
Betsy Wall

Members Absent:

Staff members present:

Rob Hites, Town Manager
Candace Poolton, Town Clerk

A. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman William Hite called the meeting to order at 4:34pm.

B. APPROVAL OF 3/21/2024 MEETING MINUTES

Board Member Kay Kirkman wanted the minutes to reflect that it takes more than a having an Arbor Day proclamation for a town to become Tree City certified.

A motion was made by Board Member Kay Kirkman, seconded by Board Member Paul Carlson, to approve the March 21st, 2024 meeting minutes as amended. The motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Hite welcomed Julie Grasty, Asset Services Manager, and Stephanie Rausch with the WNC Citizen's Climate Lobby. Ms. Rausch thanked the ESB for the work they are doing. She said that speaking on energy savings is what will influence federal legislatures, and the ESB should reiterate that anytime they have a chance.

C. DOE COMMUNITIES LEAP AWARD ANNOUNCEMENT AND REVIEW

Board Member Keshaviah said Waynesville was one out of the 30 communities in the U.S. were awarded technical assistance for the LEAP grant. She said the Town is waiting to hear if it was awarded roughly \$50,000 to help with technical assistance. She said they will begin meeting soon and it should unfold in the next 12-18 months. She said they want them to help with scenario analysis, work force gap analysis, etc. Board Member Keshaviah said this is a community driven program and technical assistance will help the ESB form an action plan. Board Member Dickson asked if they offer advice on financing. Board Member Keshaviah said they should offer financing options on renewable energy.

D. 2024 STATE ENERGY CONFERENCE-APRIL 23-24, 2024

Vice Chair Reid Conway reported that there will be six tracks at the upcoming State Energy conference (held in Raleigh, NC), Residential Homes/Clean Transportation, Commercial and Industrial Buildings, Governmental and Institutional Buildings, Renewable Energy, Utilities and Infrastructure, and Innovative Technology and Deployment. He highlighted some of the sessions that will be offered. Vice Chair Conway said the conference offers excellent networking opportunities.

Board Member Dickson said he and Mr. Hites have been looking into funding. He introduced the Community Sparking Investments in Transformative Energy (C-SITE) and the Energy Efficiency Community Block Grant. Board Member Dickson said he visited the filled in portion of the landfill and there looks to be 5 to 6 acres where solar panels could go. He also mentioned the Environmental and Climate Justice Community Change grants program. Board Member Brown explained that the EPA grant is significant money and has two tracks, one for education, the other one is for \$10-20 million dollar projects. He said that's a problem because a single solar development wouldn't cost that much. Board Member Brown suggested looking into using the money for the greenway and added that some of the greenway sections sit in the census tracts for disadvantaged communities. Chairman Hite said that Land of Sky is interested in C-SITE in a regional capacity. He suggested that he and Board Member Dickson meet with them.

E. WATERSHED TOUR

Chairman Hite said that Dr. Peter Bates has offered a watershed tour to the ESB. The ESB agreed upon May 2nd for the watershed tour.

Board Member Paul Carlson was wondering about the 14 acres that the Town owns that was Hazelwood's old landfill. He said that could be a potential site for solar panels. Board Member Brown asked if the Town does anything with the methane from the landfill. Mr. Hites said there isn't enough methane to pipe and produce electricity. Board Member Wall suggested inviting Sophie Mullinax with Electrify Asheville Buncombe to an ESB meeting to speak with the Board about what they're working on. Board Member Dickson said they should focus on helping low-income residents with weatherization.

F. TEAM WORKING SESSION

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

Ms. Grasty said she oversees every town asset and would be happy to work with the focal groups. Mr. Hites elaborated on Julie Grasty's background with sustainability. Mr. Hites said she has experience drafting a strategic energy plan in 2008, but the board at the time did not approve it. Ms. Grasty said she would like to look at the Waste Reduction Partners report. Board Member Henderson asked Ms. Grasty about the town's past Tree City recertification. She said that the town no longer has the staff to continue maintaining the Tree City USA status they had four years ago. Board Member Ray asked what would cause the town to lose their certification. Mr. Hites said not having an active tree board. Board Member Kirkman elaborated that the town also must have an annual plan, a financial commitment of \$2/capita that goes towards the maintenance of trees, and document the spending of that money, and an annual proclamation outlining the town's commitment to trees and Arbor Day. Mr. Hites said the town spends \$20,000 a year on tree maintenance, planting, etc.

The ESB broke out into their three focal groups: Energy, Electric Transportation, and Urban Ecology.

G. OTHER BUSINESS, FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES, ACTION ITEMS

Chairman Hite reminded the board that April 17th is the last day to register for the State Energy Conference. He said that Board Members Wall, Dickson, and Conway are attending.

Board Member Keshaviah reported that the Energy group discussed meeting with the LEAP grant technical assistance providers and Board Member Wall will send them the article from the Mountaineer announcing the award. She added they will be scheduling an informational webinar and meet and greet with them to discuss workflow and main contacts. She said the Energy group requested that Ms. Grasty provide a few years' worth of monthly energy uses for town facilities.

Board Member Brown reported that the Electric Transportation group discussed challenges of getting information from private charging companies. He said there's a proposed national charging network that's federally funded-chargers would be every 50 miles along "alternative fuel corridors" and that I-40 is the only EV charging corridor in the area. He said their group discussed how to help the town establish its first set of electric fleet vehicles. He said they did preliminary calculations, and after 10 years of ownership, the town would see 20-50% in savings which equates to tens of thousands of dollars.

Board Member Kirkman reported that the Urban Ecology group has a meeting scheduled with Development Director Elizabeth Teague to discuss the tree removals on Russ Avenue, and how they can work with NCDOT to see what trees can be replanted. She said they will be attending an upcoming meeting regarding tree ordinance revisions and to discuss opportunities to update the town's tree ordinance so it better reflects tree protection. Board member Kirkman said they'll also discuss greenways and the grant program through the NC Forest Service's Urban Community Forestry program. She said the program provides community tree project resources, educational resources, ordinance examples, and planting. She said their group agreed the town should start with tree inventory for Town of Waynesville owned properties and a tree canopy assessment for the town. Board Member Wall said there's a state program called Champion Trees that acts as a registry for larger trees. Board Member Dickson suggested that HCC's forestry program could be a great resource.

H. ADJOURN

A motion was made by Board Member Carlson, seconded by Vice Chair Conway, to adjourn the meeting at 6:38pm. The motion passed unanimously.

The next regular scheduled meeting of the Environmental Sustainability Board will be held on Thursday, April 18th at 4:30pm, located at 16 S. Main Street.

ATTEST:

William Hite, Board Chair

Candace Poolton, Town Clerk