



ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY BOARD

Regular Meeting

November 16th, 2023

The Waynesville Environmental Sustainability Board held a regular meeting on Friday, November 16th, 2023, at 4:30 pm. in the Municipal Building Conference Room located at 16 South Main Street Waynesville, NC.

Members present:

William Hite (Chair)
Reid Conway (Vice Chair)
Chuck Dickson
Kay Kirkman
Michael Boss
Mary Kayler
Paul Carlson
David Henderson
Aparna Keshaviah
Case Brown (alternate)

Members Absent:

Buffy Queen
Keith Ray
Betsy Wall

Staff members present:

Rob Hites, Town Manager
Charam Miller, Grants Administrator
Candace Poolton, Town Clerk

A. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman William Hite called the meeting to order at 4:35pm.

B. SELECTION OF VICE CHAIR

A motion was made by Board Member David Henderson, seconded by Board Member Aparna Keshaviah, to nominate Board Member Reid Conway as the Environmental Sustainability Board Vice Chair. The motion passed unanimously.

C. APPROVAL OF 10/13 AND 11/2/2023 MINUTES

A motion was made by Vice Chair Reid Conway, seconded by Board Member Michael Boss, to approve the October 13th, 2023 and November 2nd, 2023 meeting minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

D. VISION AND MISSION DISCUSSION

Town Clerk Candace Poolton collected the Mission and Vision worksheets from the Board Members. She reported that Assistant Town Manager Jesse Fowler said he would compile the information and present it at the next meeting. Town Manager Rob Hites presented two examples of Energy Plans, one from Concord, NC, the other from Greensboro, NC. He asked for the Board to review the plans to get ideas for their Mission and Vision planning session at the next meeting, and so they can begin thinking about an energy plan for the Town of Waynesville.

E. LEAP GRANT DISCUSSION

Board Member Aparna Keshaviah reviewed the application requirements of the LEAP grant. She said the grant offers technical assistance to selected communities that meet low to moderate income thresholds up to \$50,000. The funding is for technical assistance (amounting to an average of \$600k-700k per community selected), with an optional \$50k per community to facilitate the assistance. Nationwide, 24-32 communities will be awarded the grants. She added that eligible communities are low-income, high energy-burdened experiencing direct economic impacts from a shift away from reliance on the fossil fuel industry. Board Member Keshaviah reminded the Board that local governments must partner with at least one local, regional, or state government entity. Mr. Hites said that Haywood County is the Town's Economic Development partner and could fulfill that role.

Town Manager Hites said that according to the census maps, Waynesville has a census tract that qualifies for the program and it's coincidentally the same tract that recently qualified for the Community Development Block Grant.

Board Member Keshaviah emphasized that the Board needs to clearly define how the community will be impacted if they are awarded the grant, in the application.

Mr. Hites asked if the ESB doesn't specifically target the census tract in the grant application if that would make the ESB's application less competitive. Board Member Keshaviah said the application needs to include that group but can include more. Grants Administrator Charam Miller said the census tract includes 904 households. Mr. Hites suggested that the ESB looks at the needs of the census tract group and specifically designs a program that would help them. Board Member David Henderson suggested looking at doing something related to environmental justice.

Ms. Miller said her plan is to meet with Mr. Hites and Mr. Fowler to learn more about the capabilities of the town before applying for the grant. She said over promising and under delivering is something they want to avoid. She added that question number thirty-four on the grant application, "Describe the type of technical assistance you are requesting" is the most important question on the application. Ms. Miller said anytime the town takes on a grant, it puts pressure on personnel, because they must make sure they are meeting deadlines, meeting with contractors, and many other things. Vice Chair Reid Conway said that the Town would have a lot to do if they got the grant. There was discussion about creating a microgrid that doubled as an emergency shelter. Mr. Hites said ice storms are dangerous because people can freeze to death when they don't have power. He said he'd like to see some sort of battery storage that could be used during power outages.

Mr. Hites said a challenge they may face is finding an engineer who is qualified to carry out the goals of this grant. Board Member Brown said the grant could be used on design or the RFP.

The ESB came to a consensus that the community partner for the grant should be Environmental Action Community of WNC. Chairman Hite offered to write a letter of support since he sits on the board of EAC.

Board Member Keshaviah and Ms. Miller said they will have a rough draft of the grant application before the next meeting. Ms. Miller requested a two to three sentence from each Board Member to be used on the grant application.

F. OTHER BUSINESS

Board Member David Henderson asked about the railroad system in town. Mr. Hites said that the Town is looking at trying to get a tourist-oriented rail onto the Watko line, that would run all the way to Sylva and back.

Chairman Hite mentioned the Department of Environmental Quality is holding a public information session on the Federal Climate Pollution Reduction grant opportunity and he said will be attending.

G. ADJOURN

A motion was made by Chairman William Hite, seconded by Board Member Paul Carlson, to adjourn the meeting at 6:10pm. The motion passed unanimously.

The next regular scheduled meeting of the Environmental Sustainability Board will be held on Thursday, December 7th at 4:30pm, located in the Municipal Conference Room at 16 S. Main Street, Waynesville.

ATTEST:

William Hite, Board Chair

Candace Poolton, Town Clerk