



ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS BOARD MINUTES

February 3rd, 2021
Virtual Meeting (Zoom)

Voting Members: Laura Marie Davis (chair), Robin Emmons (vice chair), Chi Vo (secretary), Wafa Khalil, Matthew Kopac, Juilee Malavade, Melanie Allen, Chastan Swain, Roberto Valle Kinloch, Wilson Salls, Ethan Case, Tyjuanna LaBennett, Jennifer Hill

Excused Absences: Donald Addu

Ex Officio Members/Staff: DeDreana Freeman (City Council), Heidi Carter (County Commissioners), Paul Cameron (General Services), Tobin Freid (Durham County Sustainability), Summer Alston (Economic & Workforce Development), Vicki Westbrook (City Water Management Department), Sandra Wilbur (Public Works, Stormwater), Stacey Poston (General Services)

Attendees & Panelists Total: 28

I. Call to Order at 6:01 PM

II. Approval of Minutes: Approval (13-0)

III. Announcements

- a) Next EAB meeting is scheduled for March 3
- b) Durham County, Museum of Life and Science, City of Raleigh has submitted grant for a citizens project around urban heat islands.
 - a. <https://www.capastrategies.com/capa-heat-watch>
- c) Washington state is re-developing sustainable standards for rebuilding certifications for public housing.
 - a. <https://toxicfreefuture.org/protect-low-income-communities-from-toxic-chemicals-in-affordable-housing/>
- d) Hayti Heritage Film Festival: <https://hayti.org/programming/film/>
- e) Annual report will be presented at the next City Council Meeting

IV. New Business and Continuing Business

a) Topic: Standing update on City & County Renewable Energy Plans

Presenter(s): Paul Cameron (Durham City)

- Requested permission from City Council for issuing a RFP for a solar project; RFP was launched on January 25th and due February 15th; in the process of creating review committee – hoping to include members of EAB.

Staff Contact: Paul Cameron, Sustainability and Energy Analyst
919.560.4197 x21244 ▪ Paul.Cameron@DurhamNC.gov

- Angela Strickland from GDS has the first draft ready for EAB on March 3rd meeting and will be looking for feedback.

Presenter(s): Tobin Freid (Durham County)

- Working with Paul with the GSA
- Draft will be expected by April meeting

b) Topic: Sustainability in Durham Public Schools (DPS)

Presenter(s): Dan Schnitzer, Sustainability and Capital Improvements Project Manager of DPS; Dan_schnitzer@dpsnc.net

- Sustainability in schools must pass through 3 lenses: academic, financial, and environmental
- Projects
 - **Development of design standards** for new construction and major renovations from energy goals to plumbing structures. We are pushing the document to be philosophical, an end goal for DPS. (e.g. If we set too stringent lighting restrictions, what we might forget is that going from fluorescent units to LEDs will potentially reduce air conditioning.) What do we want to get out of this? This is not sitting in construction and capital planning office; there are a number of departments working together for feedback. It will be a holistic document of DPS.
 - **Looking at Utility Management:** Getting a grasp on accounts, service, use, and finances.
 - As a response to COVID and a lifelong response, it's time to get kids **outside more**. The discussion has been shifted from HOW to the fact that outside is the safest place to be right now. We are looking at outdoor spaces in the short term and long term. They will be included in our documentation.
 - **Outdoor Teacher Kits:** Developed through working with 20 teachers; a teacher kit with everything they need to teach outside. Working on district-wide policy for what it looks like. Priced \$120 a kit, looking at internal/external funding.
- There's an opportunity for everyone to engage in different spaces.
- Thinking holistically will continue and expedite the transformation that Durham has set out to achieve.
- We want to leave things better than we found them. We want to go from sustainable to regenerative.

Comments:

- 1. R. Emmons:** How is DPS mitigating the impact of CO2 from computers?
 - a. No ideas and plans right now, but it fits into the ecosystem. We have to think about how the e-waste impact affects the ecosystem. I imagine DPS might have data on the e-waste.
- 2. M. Kopac:** Where do you see opportunities in engaging students in landscape management?
 - a. There is a huge opportunity and it's right up there with energy management. The first way is through stormwater which affects waterways and buildings. Small stormwater control measures can help with school buildings, putting in rainwater management system alleviated water in runoff, erosion, and sewage.
 - b. We must consider indoor air quality, foundation, water/waterways.

- c. We have to think about the amount of time and money spent on mowing grass. Grass is ecologically useless. Let's look at restoration of prairie lands, habitats, etc. Let's look at partners for educational opportunities and edible orchids. What type of things can we put on landfill? We could use some of our land to see what kinds of different systems can grow. I'd love to do sample stormwater control measures. We could use that training for staff. We can think of things that are mutually beneficial.
 - d. We don't get new maintenance staff or money; same staff and money to mow more areas.
 - e. Partnerships can help collectively.
3. **R. Valle:** How can we use landscape and extending boundaries for education and learning?
- a. Specifically working with Ellerbe Creek Watershed Association (ECWA) at EK Powe Elementary Schol. Their land stays wet after it rains. Kids are going to naturally engage with this program. There are going to be mosaics, waterways, bridges, etc. We built in funds from the grant acquired for maintenance. It will be naturally where the kids play. These projects don't work well when the sites are separated.
 - b. At Hillandale Elementary School, there's a grove of trees, someone had hung a sign "Tree Habitat". A teacher turned it into a learning opportunity. I almost want to tone down the level of sophistication, nature exists all around, let's sit and observe it.
4. **M. Allen:** What are the plans of student engagement and helping to set the sustainability plan?
- a. I am 100% committed to engaging students but I don't yet know the plan. We have a network of people around the country who has done this effectively. Essentially, I am imagining a youth corps, community engagement in DPS, and environmental clubs. We need to hear from everyone.
5. **R. Emmons:** How are you amplifying this philosophy?
- a. At the end of the day, that's the work. We start with a strong core. We are looking to create an internal professional development program that would take groups of teachers from schools and train them on being outdoors. We will help it grow within their schools. I'm not starting from nothing. I want to give them the tools they need and support them.
 - b. Landscape and grounds management: Leverage my position and financial savings to put some of it back into the system.

c) Topic: Success in Soil & Water Conservation District Programs during COVID-19

Presenter(s): Michael Dupree, Agribusiness and Environmental Services Manager, Durham Soil & Water Conservation District

BETC Program Goals:

- Soil & Water + NC School of Science and Math: Curriculum lesson plans and training for STEM education in the classroom
- Train 240 youth for 21st Century Jobs with virtual lessons
- Install 20 to 40 (Best Management Practices, e.g. rain gardens and cisterns) BMPs to improve water quality; focused on low-income housing in Durham
- Improve community linkages between generations
- Improve environmental literacy
- 240 students will receive extended learning in Math and Science with virtual lessons
- Program has demonstrated significant student knowledge gain in pre/post-tests
- Students earn a stipend for virtual and in person learning

Staff Contact: Paul Cameron, Sustainability and Energy Analyst
919.560.4197 x21244 ▪ Paul.Cameron@DurhamNC.gov

- Teachers earn a stipend for implementing the afterschool and weekend activities
- All COVID-19 protocols are followed

Comments:

1. **C. Vo:** Term “at-risk” / Who defines “at-risk” youth at the state/county level? When thinking about racial equity, do we as a county have a choice of the words we use to describe our communities and young people?
 - a. State dollars have a series of requirements for students in the program
 - b. The term refers to at-risk of failing high school
 - c. State sets up parameters, and we’ve left it up to the teachers for recruitment

d) Topic: Local Government Letter for Duke’s Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) Comments & Improvements

Presenter(s): Tobin Freid

- Town of Chapel Hill, Town of Boone, City of Durham, City of Carrboro, and Orange County have signed on to the letter
- City of Asheville, Buncombe County, and Charlotte will be sending formal letters
- City of Raleigh is still unsure
- Comments due February 26th
- Recommend that we align with all documents and processes in the county and city. Ensure that issues of equity and environmental justice are centered.

M. Allen motions to make formal recommendation for city/council: Approved (13-0)

Topic: Committee Report Outs

Presenter(s): Committee Chairs

• **Education & Outreach/DHA:**

Primary focus on last few months was on relationship-building and engaging in proposing engagement and goals with DHA communities.

- Proposal for engagement:

- Focus on issues at the intersection of human and environmental health with land issues as a priority
- Within these specific issues (e.g. tree request at Club Blvd), bring light to property manager and resident disconnect
- Focus on where there is a resident request
- Advocate for funding where appropriate
- Bringing other Boards and Commissions to engage with issues
- EAB Engagement: Visibility and support with relational meetings with DHA board members

Adjourn at 8:11 PM