



ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS BOARD

MINUTES

February 5th, 2020
Committee Room, 2nd Floor, City Hall
101 City Hall Plaza, Durham, NC

Voting Members: Matthew Kopac (chair), Jessalee Landfried (vice chair), Laura Marie Davis (secretary), Donald Addu, Jessie Birckhead, Casey Collins, Matthew Herman, Jennifer Hill, Rashmi Joglekar, Juilee Malavade, Roberto Valle Kinloch, Chi Vo

Excused Absences: Tyjuanna LaBennett, Wafa Khalil

Ex Officio Members/Staff: Paul Cameron, Heidi Carter Sandi Wilbur, Tobin Freid, Vicki Westbrook, Stacey Poston, Javiera Caballero

Call to Order at 6:01 pm

I. Approval of Minutes, 13-0

With amendment to identify J. Landfried as an Excused Absence

II. Announcements

- a. R. Joglekar shared that there will be a symposium at Duke University on Fri. 2/14 around campus hunger in the Triangle.
- b. D. Addu added that Duke University is hosting a climate change policy forum.
- c. J. Hill shared that the Chapel Hill [UNC Clean Tech Summit](#) will take place February 20-21.
- d. R. Emmons shared that the Ellerbe Creek Watershed Association looking for a community engagement coordinator for one of their projects; contact her for the RFP.
- e. Attendees included 6 Visitors; 3 First Timers.

III. New Business and Continuing Business

- a. **Proposed UDO Change** – Katie Rose Levin, TreesDurham:
 - On February 11th the Planning Commission will have a public hearing on a requested change to the UDO.
 - Public engagement for this situation is usually limited; the process is that proposed UDO changes go through review by the Planning Department “behind closed doors” and then the staff’s recommendations goes to City Council for an approval vote.

- As opposed to a variance, which is a one-time exception to the UDO for a specific development, which always requires a public hearing.
- Developer wants to take advantage of Affordable Housing Density bonus but have requested changes to the Bonus to do so, including removal of environmental protection requirements.
- Planning Department is proposing to make the requested changes, with modifications: a reduction in the required open space and trees, instead of removing them completely.
- TreesDurham is asking the EAB to send a statement to the Planning Commission recommending that the requirements for open space and tree protection for affordable housing developments remain.
- There is a need for affordable housing in Durham, and the Affordable Housing Density Bonus is being underutilized; however, case-by-case variances tend to result in reductions in environmental protections that inherently impact low-income communities.
- L.M. Davis moved to make a statement recommending the Planning Department make no changes to the UDO. J. Birckhead second.
 - Discussion:
 - J. Landfried recommended that we express support for positive changes including in the proposal.
 - D. Addu recommended that we have at least one member of the EAB attend (he is available on the 11th)
- Motion carried

b. Development at 300 and 500 E. Main St. – Perri Manns, Deputy Director, Durham County Engineering; and Little Diversified Architectural

- County approved moving forward with development in November to meet January deadline for tax credit application
- County is developing deck on 300 block, Little Diversified is doing 500 block
- Somewhat of a conflict between the UDO and Historic Preservation
- Plan for 500 block includes 780 spaces in a 7-level design, which guarantees 1 spot per unit for affordable housing residents, which is a decrease from previous requirements.
- Growth of the County has outpaced all estimates, which has created a parking deficit.
- County will continue growing while the development is built, deficit will increase.
- Little Diversified is using a variety of data-driven strategies to reduce the amount of parking that needs to be built
 - Ex: Incentivize public transit/improve access, adjust for absenteeism and flexible work arrangements, plan shared parking where possible.
- Some changes do add capital cost, and there are still uncertainties as to future changes.
- J. Landfried asked about impacts on alternative transportation, like the protected bike lane, and whether there will be rack storage in the decks? (Yes)

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- J. Hill asked about disincentivizing single-occupancy vehicles; Do we really have to have a spot for everybody at all times? Like charging employees for parking.
 - Yes; these disincentives are being considered, but additional metrics are needed.
 - T. Freid shared that County Sustainability is looking at ways to make alternative transportation options more accessible.
- D. Addu asked about the total number of spaces planned: 1,900? Isn't this beyond the projections?
 - Projections don't include the reality that businesses won't take advantage of mixed-use spaces if parking isn't available.
 - But yes, there are opportunities to challenge the status-quo of development by implementing more progressive disincentive measures...but these come with risks that are at-odds with the County's need to generate revenue.
- C. Collins asked about affordable housing units planned: is there potential to change the ratio of parking to housing? Is it a revenue issue?
 - Not a revenue issue necessarily,
- J. Malavade asked whether there is data on including space for dockless bikes or scooters within a parking deck
 - It's being considered for the 500 block deck.
- S. Poston asked whether the County could play a role in allowing residents to subleasing spaces. (Yes, potentially)
- M. Kopac asked for recommendations on how the EAB could act to influence the project
 - Data is everything; If we could provide numbers, particularly around long-term projected growth, it would be help improve the plans.
 - The County is already working with the City and other local/regional partners to try to develop strategies for reducing parking demand, but it's a struggle.
 - There are liabilities that are preventing public/private parking sharing arrangements. (Private parking lot owners don't want the public on their lots.) But if we could find a solution...
 - H. Carter shared that County would appreciate having input sooner in the process for this and similar projects.
- J. Caballero shared that the City's newest deck is not bringing in the anticipated revenue
- M. Kopac: the EAB will continue discussion later on how to influence this project and future parking within the City and County.

c. City of Durham Sustainability Program Progress Report – Paul Cameron, Sustainability & Energy Analyst, City of Durham General Services Department

- Goals & Targets for the program come from a few places, including 2007 Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Reduction Plan, the Sustainability Roadmap, and the Renewable Energy and Carbon Neutrality Resolution #10124
- GHG emissions from City Operations are trending down; biggest challenge is reducing emissions from City Fleet

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- RFP just released to hire a consultant to create an Action Plan to achieve carbon neutrality and renewable energy goals. Ideally contract will run May 2020 – April 2021.
- Looking for EAB involvement in this process; consultant will meet with EAB.
- Sustainability Roadmap covers strategies across 7 focus areas; Online [dashboard](#) tracks progress towards strategies, including specific measures.
- The City received a number of grants this year to support multiple projects, including a study for solarization, and a partnership between the Soil & Water Conservation District and Ellerbe Creek Watershed Association incorporating community engagement with stormwater mitigation and home weatherization projects.
- City Fleet is key to achieving many climate & energy goals, mainly through electrification
 - GoDurham has purchased two electric buses
 - City applied for a grant to install 6 more EV charging stations in public garages. Should the City charge for that? (C. Collins says YES)
- Street lights are being converted to LED
- Geothermal heating and cooling is being installed in two City buildings
- Curbside Composting will be piloted this year
- Participatory Budgeting is a step towards more equitable processes
- General Services will give report to City Council on progress at the beginning of each fiscal year.
- Looking forward to maintaining relationship with the EAB in the coming years.
- R. Joglekar asked what's in store to meet aggressive GHG reduction projections/goals?
 - Energy efficiency projects have a high return on investment;
- J. Malavade asked whether there is data on waste reduction, increase in recycling?
 - Solid Waste has that data, per capita, but education is key.
- J. Birkhead asked about community engagement process for the review committee
 - Mostly an internal committee for RFP review
 - For the Action Plan itself, hopefully there will be a dialoge with the EAB. But it is an "internal" plan, so broader community outreach is not a priority.
- R. Emmons asked for next steps beyond pilot for curbside composting
 - T. Freid shared that part of the pilot is to include food waste in yard waste containers, so that will take place in a neighborhood where there's already high usage of yard waste containers.
 - Center For Advanced Hindsight is also a partner for the project.

Adjourn 7:42pm

IV. Work Session

- a. V. Westbrook shared that City water management offered free water testing for DHA residents, and all results came back safe.

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

- b. J. Landfried attended the Bike and Pedestrian Committee's retreat to learn about their development review process; Learned that the EAB is authorized to provide input during the Planning Departments (City's) official development review process, according to the UDO.
- BPAC has created their own process: a checklist of specific standards and expectations based on their priorities.
 - It is a significant time commitment; there is a standing "Dev Rev" committee on BPAC
 - C. Collins shared strong support for the EAB engaging in development review.
 - J. Hill – Could it be a joint review committee between EAB and BPAC? (To reduce work and capitalize on what BPAC has already learned & perfected)
 - This has actually already been proposed; it would include Open Space and Trails too.
 - While it would be an additional time commitment for at least some members, it would also reduce the amount of time spent discussing development situations in regular meetings.
 - M. Kopac recommends that Green Infrastructure and Planning Committee can continue conversation with BPAC to come up with recommendations for the full Board on how to onramp us into this process.
 - C. Collins – How does BPAC evaluate whether it is truly worth their time & energy?
 - J. Landfried – Seems that they find enough mistakes and oversights that they feel it to be very worthwhile.

c. L.M. Davis proposed re-aligning our yearly planning goals & priorities to the calendar year, which will line up with the timeframe of our annual reports. With this structure, our annual planning meeting would take place in the fall (likely November or December) which would benefit new members coming on in July. (New members will have a few months to learn how we work before giving input on our goals & priorities.) To make the switch, we can extend the timeline for our current goals & priorities to the end of 2020 and reset this fall/winter.

- No one opposed this recommendation. We'll do it!

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