



ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS BOARD MINUTES

April 7th, 2021
Virtual Meeting (Zoom)

- I. Call to Order at 6:01 PM
- II. Approval of Minutes
- III. Announcements
 - a) April is Water Conservation Month. www.mywaterpledge.com. We are in 7th place, but we'd love to end up much higher. Please encourage your circles to take the pledge. National Drinking Water Week (May 2-8) proclamation acceptance video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-XOhk5Hev6s>
 - b) 2021 Carolinas Climate Resilience Conference: City is granting funds for two board members to attend by Friday, April 9th. There is a record number of people registered to present. It will be hybrid in-person or virtual; 100-person in-person limit; professional credits available.
 - c) All folks over age 16 now eligible for vaccine; call number on NC Vaccine Shot for a quicker appointment.
- IV. **New Business and Continuing Business**
 - a) **Topic: Financial Hardship Criteria Recommendations for Septic to Sewer Cost-Share**
Presenter(s): Jonathan Baker
 - Project recommendations from Board workgroup (in addition to recommended criteria):
 1. Make a contingency plan if applicants cannot pay for the remainder of the cost.
 2. Provide an alternative payment option such as a payment plan or on-bill financing.
 3. Compile resources in a brochure to help residents find additional financial assistance.
 4. Identify cost-savings for the combined effect of converting several septic systems near each other.
 5. Prioritize households that need additional assistance after identifying households with failing septic systems.
 - Criteria considered:
 1. Retired and on fixed income
 2. Receiving a property tax exemption
 3. Receiving hardship funding from Water Management

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4. Loss of employment
 5. At or below median household income for Durham County
- Final recommendations:
 1. City resident for at least 90 days
 2. Enrolled in a Durham County property tax exemption program, or
 3. Household income is less than or equal to Durham County's median household income
 - Board also suggested considering household size (via some threshold of poverty level)

Comments:

M. Allen: Challenging to assess need given what's available (namely income). Also, grateful to Jonathan and others working on this.

M. Kopac: Property tax exemption - how common is that, and what does it cover?

- We will be talking to the county about programs available.

M. Kopac: Is "or" in the criteria to expand universe of available folks?

- Yes. Household size and income together may expand eligibility even more. (Showed federal poverty guidelines based on household size.) Water Management uses 200%. We may need to look higher than that since conversion cost is quite high.

R. Valle: Assuming you have an idea of the properties requiring work, are you able to know which properties may be eligible?

- We have an idea of which properties are failing, and we will start there.

b) Topic: Update on Durham County Renewable Energy Plan

Presenter(s): Tobin Freid, including Kristin Cushman and Sam Hill-Cristol

- Thanks to consultants: several folks from EcoShift and Optony.
- We are working through environmental justice lens. All projects will be implemented on county facilities with minimal/no impacts to nearby residents. This presentation is not intended for the public yet.
- We are thinking about who's affected positively and negatively? How we can optimize. One example: switching to electric vehicle (benefit to air quality) in neighborhoods historically facing challenges and poorer environmental conditions; or, how we do purchasing and contracting: instead of one large company, maybe opening up to a variety of other companies. We are talking with workforce development folks to recruit skills from local students.
- Strategies
 - Electric Vehicles (EVs): transition to EVs; purchase renewable diesel
 - Solar (rooftop and large scale): on County facilities (roofs, parking lots, old landfills); Duke Energy's Green Source Advantage program; Sell-All projects
 - Energy Efficiency

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- Electrification: reduce/replace natural gas boilers with heat pumps
- Renewable Energy Credits/Certificates (RECs): purchase credits from others who have generated them, and retire them (this is last resort)
- Statewide engagement pervades all of these.
- Considerations
 - What will Duke Energy's renewable energy mix be in the future?
 - How many projects can County implement each year given staff and budget limitations?
 - What are trade-offs to investing more funding upfront versus phasing over time?
 - What role do renewable energy credits play?
 - How can County plan for budgetary alignment?
 - Who do the projects/policies benefit?
 - What needs to be done to shift burdens away from disadvantaged communities?
- Scenarios
 - (All assuming we get a Green Source project to fund ~45%?)
 - Phased Investment
 - If we don't hit our goal in 2030 or 2050; difference made up by Duke Energy putting renewables into grid and/or RECs
 - Accelerated Investment
 - Retire things faster than baseline scenario
 - Big jump at 2030, but almost same place in 2050 as Phased Investment
 - County makes up difference with RECs
 - Leaves us with less uncertainty in policy and market factors
 - High Impact Solar Investment
 - Includes Sell-All projects
 - By 2030 we hit goals
 - Some investment, but not all that much more since hope is to entice developers to put in some of these projects
- Implementation
 - Engage stakeholders
 - Prioritize projects
 - Develop partnerships
 - Secure funding
- Continuous Activities
 - Monitor progress, update public
 - Monitor emerging tech, markets, policies
 - Outline backup projects in case Duke E doesn't deliver
 - Continue to be a leader and assess benefits and negatives for various communities

Comments:

J. Malavade: potential community engagement options?

- Great ideas from EAB Education and Outreach subcommittee: getting on blogs, radio stations, Nextdoor, Youth Council

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- **M. Allen:** Excited to see partnerships for cutting costs and for collaboration. Minorities and women businesses? Justice 40, federal funds? Federal mandate likely to come out committing 40% to underserved communities. Let's make sure to ask questions in RFPs, etc. to ensure folks we're working with are aligned with our goals.
 - Yes, County will be considering this. Would love to follow up about this for federal level opportunities.
- **A. Dearing:** How much is the County counting on Duke Energy to meet their mark?
 - Not relying on them meeting their mark, but assuming they'll do something; conservative models by Duke U. Duke Energy Green Source Advantage Program - additionality - they're only going to build it if County steps up and commits.
- **E. Case:** Supports Melanie's point on RFPs. Natural gas - curious how that was treated in modeling.
 - Discussion of future County buildings no new natural gas, but not the case yet. There is a bill that would pre-empt counties preventing no new natural gas! Keep an eye on this and other emerging legislation.

c) Topic: Revisit Draft Resolution in Support of Landscape Plan

- Scott Whiteman: questions had been answered in email that LM. Davis had forwarded. Though this has the word "plan", it serves as a guide for future research/development of similar plans
- LM: Durham Open Space and Trails (DOST) has already passed resolution and are looking for us to provide further support for it. Please clarify whether comments apply to the Plan or DOST's resolution to approve the plan

Comments:

M Allen: Approve passage, but wants to emphasize importance of recognizing that a decision to put something in a given place is a decision to not put it somewhere else.

Julie Tuttle, Eno-New Hope Group: "As part of a funded project, we are currently interested in and working on recognizing some of the issues that Melanie raises."

LM. Davis: Ethan had made some grammatical comments, so if a motion to approve were made, we could move to approve with edits.

Motion and second to approve resolution with grammatical edits.

R. Valle: If you don't consider equity questions at the beginning, you're going to have a limited view moving forward. Hard to say how this would manifest here, but something seems off in the process if it's considered at the end.

Jane Korest: Data is showing where wildlife corridors are. Interpretation of data is where equity concerns comes in. The mapping in and of itself is not the equity issue, but that is considered when deciding what to do with the data.

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LM. Davis: There's always an inherent bias in deciding how data is collected.

M. Allen: Sometimes data collection is considered ahistorical, but it never can be.

M. Kopac: Considering why it is we chose to protect habitats in the first place. Curious about what steps we have taken or can take to consider how indigenous communities?

C. Swain: Thinking about process. I have the same hesitations, but given where we are do we chose not to approve, or do we consider these questions moving forward?

LM. Davis: We could approve, and then use this example as a springboard moving forward.

Motion passes. (Approved 10 – 0)

d) Board Membership and Leadership Transitions

Presenter(s): Laura Marie Davis

- There has been high member turnover recently. Executive committee would like to improve recruiting, and set time expectations. Members of Board can expect to commit 6 hours per month, and 8 hours for executive committee members.
- LM has decided to move back to Ohio this Summer, leaving EAB at end of June. We will be recruiting new membership and new leadership. Inviting any Board members to attend Executive Committee meeting (Tuesday after monthly Wednesday EAB meeting).

Adjourn at 7:43 PM

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