



## ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS BOARD MINUTES

**September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021  
Virtual Meeting (Zoom)**

**Voting Members:** Chi Vo (chair), Juilee Malavade (vice chair), Wilson Salls (secretary), Roberto Valle Kinloch (at large), Ethan Case, Aissa Dearing, Jennifer Hill Carrigan, Wafa Khalil, Matthew Kopac, Katie Barnhill-Dilling, Bill Busa, Melanie Allen

**Excused Absences:** Jillian Riley, Sherry Taylor, Chastan Swain

**Ex Officio Members/Staff:** Paul Cameron (General Services), Summer Alston (General Services), Vicki Westbrook (Water Management), Sandra Wilbur (Dept. Public Works, Storm Water & GIS), Tobin Freid (Durham County Sustainability Manager), Scott Whiteman (City & County Planning)

Attendees & Panelists Total: 23

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- I. Call to Order at 6:03 PM**
  - II. Adjustments to the agenda**
    - a) Change of agenda order: Chris Dreps (ECWA) will speak before Tobin Freid
  - III. Approval of Minutes: Approval for August Minutes (10-0)**
  - IV. Centering & Reflection**
  - V. Announcements**
    - a) Next EAB meeting is scheduled for October 6th, 2021, 6-8 pm
    - b) Juilee to run the remainder of the meeting after Chi steps out for another commitment
    - c) Paul Cameron provides update on Carbon Neutrality Action Plan: consultant had completed plan and city will be presenting it at planning and work session on October 7
    - d) Tobin Freid reported that County will present the same at work session on October 4

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## VI. New Business and Continuing Business

### a) New Topic: DPS Letter of Support for Outdoor Learning

*Presenter: M. Kopac*

- Encourage DPS to do more outdoor education and training for teachers
- Motivations:
  - covid mitigation during pandemic;
  - longterm benefits: emotional physical health, team building
- District plans to hire outdoor learning coordinator
- No complete letter yet, but maybe we can agree on high level points

#### Comments:

**W. Khalil:** How can the Board help? Is desired outcome for Board to encourage DPS to engage in this effort?

- **M. Kopac:** Recognize what work has been done while encouraging district to be ambitious and do more; include follow-through on hiring and investments.
- **W. Khalil:** DPS did hire outdoor teacher, but one for all schools is not enough. Propose suggesting ideas about budget, outdoor lessons, additional equipment.
- **M. Kopac:** SWCD could bring additional resources and methods that are working well.

**J. Malavade:** Have you thought about how this could be used to teach about environmental and land stewardship, especially involving climate?

- **M. Kopac:** Not yet, but supports the idea.

**J. Hill Carrigan:** Suggest adding a consideration for safety of outdoor spaces. Space should be safe for kids to be in. Encourage DPS to consider health/safety when deciding where to do this.

**K. Barnhill-Dilling:** There may be existing ways we suggest how to partner/support.

- **M. Kopac:** can provide brief letter first, and opportunity to follow up with additional advice.

**Chris Dreps:** Important to ensure DPS science teachers in elementary schools since they're more likely to do outdoor education. Not all teachers are comfortable bringing students outside.

**B. Busa:** Consideration of physically handicapped children with regard to outdoor education?

- **Chris Dreps:** If school doesn't have the setup, they may not feel comfortable doing it.
- **B. Busa:** Maybe there could be a district-wide opportunity specifically for those children.

**K. Barnhill-Dilling:** Consider how professional development can support: trainers, facilitators.

**Movement by C. Vo to write a letter to DPS to support this effort (12-0).**

### b) New Topic: Resolution for Ellerbe Creek Heron Rookery Dedicated Nature Preserve

*Presenter(s): Chris Dreps, Ellerbe Creek Watershed Association*

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- Working group (Chi, Juilee, Melanie, Wafa) attended DOST meeting and listened to NC Natural Heritage staff give presentation on natural value of this land and why recommended to designate as a preserve.
- DOST resolution is available (attached to agenda). Motion to develop a resolution of support.
- Natural Heritage staff available at time of next meeting, if that's appropriate.

**Comments:**

**J. Malavade:** How much should EAB tailor language to be specific to our purview vs DOST's? Anything specific we can add that hasn't already been addressed?

- **Chris Dreps:** DOST has been focused on ecological values. Several groups have emphasized ecological value. One thing that hasn't been brought up as much as impact (potential benefits) on Falls Lake water quality. Though publicly owned, not protected.

**Chris Dreps:** ECWA began reaching out to neighborhoods to build more trust with the community, putting together engagement goals, and reaching out to potential consultants. Timeline: need to get support from EAB and others to raise this to Council, eventually leading to staff review. Goal to pass resolution in October to hand to new mayor.

**B. Busa:** If no objection, can move forward. Any potential objections from Council?

- **Chris Dreps:** Not aware of any, but if so, would arise from staff.

**M. Allen:** There was a question on stewardship and maintenance that should be considered.

**W. Salls:** Timeline: have draft resolution before next meeting?

- **J. Malavade:** Yes, we will circulate to board.

**c) New Topic: Environmental Legislation**

*Presenter: Tobin Freid*

- Provided an informational presentation on NC Energy Legislation.
- Two-year cycle: odd years = long session (6 months), even years = short session (6 weeks).
- A bill is introduced in one house or the other; if passes, goes to other house. If a bill has not passed out of first house by May, it dies; if it passes over, it can sit until consideration in short session (with some exceptions).
- Currently at the end of the long session, ending in next couple weeks. Session between long and short this fall to discuss redistricting, but during that time they can talk about any issues.
- Efficient Government Buildings & Savings Act (state owned gov building incl universities): 40% increase in next decade.
- Clarify Deed Restrictions/Solar Collectors ("HOA bill"): Would make it illegal for new HOAs to restrict solar panels.
- C-PACE (property assessed clean energy mechanism): property owners to take out a loan for improvements related to energy efficiency or renewables - tied to property if sold (takes away some disincentive of big investments).
- EV Charging Station/Parking: make it illegal to park in space if not charging (\$100 fine). Potentially controversial, though still good to encourage EVs.

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### Concerning bills:

- Assuring Choice of Energy Service: would ban bans on natural gas for local governments.
- Utilities Customers' Right of Refusal Act: can allow you to refuse a smart meter
- NC Farm Act: has a provision added that streamlines permitting for certain activities that may have negative impacts on local citizens - reduces public voice and transparency.
- Energy Modernization (HB 951, "Stakeholder Bill"): created by small group (invite only), excluding consumers and local governments, among others. Some stakeholders present did not share in consensus. Accelerates coal retirement, but allows for natural gas. Builds in emissions into the future. Requires NCUC to approve plans if they've met criteria. Limits NC Utilities Commission's regulatory oversight. Funding for new nuclear. Solar inclusion not very big, and could be anywhere in NC or SC. Changes to Green Source Advantage program, but no increase or expansion; as of now program will end. Restricts ability of governor from joining RGGI. Bill is now back behind closed doors, and this time includes governor.
- Billboard bill: currently left up to local government; this bill would make it state regulated.
- Bill to prevent schools from using lottery funds to approve LEED certification.

### Comments:

**W. Khalil:** Is there a bill that allows solar companies to do PPA? (Power Purchase Agreement: allows third party to install solar.) NC is one of 4 states not allowed to do this.

- **Tobin Freid:** One of these bills does have a limited ability for schools to do so.

**E. Case:** Positive: C-PACE equity implications: local governments could encourage commercial property owners to make improvements without passing on costs to renters. Negative: HB 951 doesn't respect equity or democratic process; need to safeguard against future bad bills like this.

- **Tobin Freid:** Agree on C-PACE equity and impact to real people. Trying to build better relationships with associations, members of local governments.

**M. Allen:** Strongly agree on 951 regarding process. How are other municipalities weighing this?

- **Tobin Freid:** We would like to hear from lobbyist groups. Deciding whether to weigh in on IRP letter. SE Sustainability Directors network did write a letter to weigh in. Lots of movement without a formal declaration.

#### **d) Continuing Topic: Green Infrastructure Committee**

*No updates at this time.*

#### **e) Continuing Topic: Community Engagement Committee**

*Presenter: K. Barnhill-Dilling*

- Developing a mission and value statement to begin to have a presence in community. Work with city to share our mission with public since limited EAB social media presence permitted.
- Reflect on past successes.
- Important to establish role in community more clearly.

#### **Working group established: Juilee, Katie, Bill**

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**f) Continuing Topic: Club Blvd Community Garden**

*Presenter: K. Barnhill-Dilling*

- Trees will be planted.
- Looking into getting water supply installed.

**g) Continuing Topic: Comprehensive Plan**

*Presenter: J. Hill Carrigan*

- Has just joined Environmental Policy Working Group, and will provide updates moving forward.

**h) New Topic: Solarizing Schools**

*Presenter: W. Khalil*

- Proposal to school board and county commissioner on how and why to solarize schools, including calculations of annual consumption and cost (\$65M dollars).
- Energy consumption is second highest cost in our schools, after salary.
- Has spoken with Heidi Carter, who was encouraging and provided ideas.
- Will prepare a presentation for EAB; preparing to present to city and county.
- Invites other board members to be involved.

**i) New Topic: West Point Development - Black Meadow Ridge**

*Presenter: Chris Dreps*

- High density development undergoing planning review.
- Legal battle: comprehensive plan says it should not be developed, but zoning allows it.
- Want to make Board aware. This points out a lot of issues when considering parks and development. However, discourages political pressure as it may seem inappropriate.
- Decision lies in Board of Adjustments.
- Website: <https://www.blackmeadowridge.org/>

**J. Malavade:** Suggests reaching out to leader of movement to give Board more info. Include in next agenda.

**Adjourn at 8:02 PM**

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