

# Orange County Commission for the Environment

## Meeting Summary September 13, 2021; 7:30 pm *Virtual Zoom Meeting*

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**Present:** Bradley Saul, Kim Piracci, Frank Binkowski, Bill Ward, James Eichel, Eric Scheier, Carrie Fletcher, Veronica Penn Beattie, Ulrich Hartmond, Kristie Mather, Elizabeth McWhorter Jeremy Marzuola

**Absent:** Kim Livingston (excused), Jaya Nair (excused), Alan Parry (excused),

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**I. Call to Order**

Kim Piracci called the meeting to order at 7:34 pm.

**II. Additions or Changes to the Agenda.**

None

**III. Approval of DRAFT Minutes from June 14<sup>th</sup>, 2021**

Motion by V. Beattie; seconded by J. Eichel; none opposed; motion passed.

**IV. Climate Action Tax Fund - Round 2**

B. Bouma provided a brief summarization of the application and ranking criteria discussed in the previous meeting. Kim Piracci and Bill Ward officially recused themselves from the discussion due to individual involvement with two of the applications. Each application was sent prior to meeting and Bouma presented each for initial review.

Bouma led the group discussion to review and submit individual ranking and comments to each application (8). After discussion, Jeremy Marzuola motioned for vote that Bouma will compile final thoughts, scores, and comments on the proposed projects and submit to BOCC (see attached), Frank Binkowski seconded, all in favor, motion passed.

**V. Updates and Information Items**

C. Hirni presented information on development proposal for Efland Industrial Park, a site plan for the same parcels involved in a previous proposal for the Efland Station project in the fall winter of 2020/21.

**VI. Adjournment**

Frank Binkowski motioned to adjourn the meeting at 9:05 pm; seconded by Kristie Mather, none opposed; motion passed.

**CFE Final Scoring and Ranking Table:**

<u>Project</u>	<u>Applicant (Collaborators)</u>	<u>Amount Requested</u>	<u>Amount Recommended by CFE</u>	<u>Running total</u>	<u>Total Score (Out of 25 pts)</u>	<u>CFE Rank* (Out of 8 applications)</u>
Low Income HVAC Replacement	Rebuilding Together of the Triangle	\$113,000	\$113,000	\$113,000	18.1	1
Food Waste Monitor	Eno River Farmer's Market	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$117,000	16.6	2
Neighborhood Energy Resiliency Project (NERP)	NC Sustainable Energy Association	\$125,000	\$90,000	\$207,000	16.2	3
203 Project Solar PV Array and Green Roof	Town of Carrboro	\$178,507	\$57,568	\$264,568	16.0	4
Food Waste Monitor	Town of Carrboro	\$3,765	\$3,765	\$268,332.50	15.8	5
Energizing the Fleet	Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools	\$68,616	\$0	\$268,332.50	15.6	6
Wayfinding Implementation	Town of Chapel Hill	\$100,000	\$0	\$268,332.50	14.6	7
Sustainability Upgrades	Carrboro Arts Center	\$371,290	\$0	\$268,332.50	13.8	8
<b>Total Requested by Non-School Applicants (Funds available for 2021-22: \$268,332.50)</b>		\$895,562	\$268,332.50			
<b>Total Requested by School Districts (Funds available for 2021-22: \$268,332.50)</b>		\$68,616	\$0			
<b>Total Requested Overall in FY21-22</b>		\$964,178				

\*All projects, including those that tied in their scoring and those that exceed the funding limit were placed in rank order by CFE voting.

**CFE Final Summary Comments:**

<b>Project Name</b>	<b>Applicant</b>	<b>CFE Comments</b>
<b>Low Income HVAC Replacement</b>	<b>Rebuilding Together of the Triangle</b>	<p>The CFE felt that this project was well-conceived and the application was well done.</p> <p>The proposed project uses money efficiently, leveraging funds from private donors as well as rebates from Duke Energy. The project also focuses on the most impactful energy-saving upgrades and will have a long-lasting benefit for 40 individual households. CFE reviewers pointed out that this project will benefit a relatively small number of County residents, but that the benefits could be significant in cost savings and quality of life improvements. The project will employ local Orange County residents and prioritizes using local sources for goods and</p>

		<p>services. The project plans include community outreach to explain and support the goals of the project. The agency has a good reputation in the area and existing relationships with the low-income households to be served.</p>
<p><b>Food Waste Monitor</b></p>	<p><b>Eno River Farmer's Market</b></p>	<p>CFE reviewers felt that this was a cost-effective and highly visible project that would increase access to the County's composting services. Keeping food waste out of the municipal waste stream avoid a good amount of greenhouse gas emissions as it reduces the tonnage of waste transported by heavy trucks out of the County. The applicants' proposal outlines a project that appears clear and obtainable.</p> <p>Not all CFE reviewers were convinced with the applicants' claim that that the presence of a compost collection site at the market increases the number of weekly visitors to the market, thus increasing the market's economic success. Also, the CFE was concerned there was no longer-term plan for funding the compost monitors after the grant period is over.</p> <p>In the end, the relatively low cost and potential for diesel emissions reduction, coupled with the applicant's commitment to use media to engage with the community to encourage composting, were all factors that led to a higher rank.</p>
<p><b>Neighborhood Energy Resiliency Project (NERP)</b></p>	<p><b>NC Sustainable Energy Association</b></p>	<p>The CFE felt that this project was very much in line with the goals of the grant program as it directly reduces energy use and bills and improves quality of life for households in a marginalized community. NCSEA, through support from Coastal Credit Union, will be providing \$10K towards the project to support the creation of educational materials.</p> <p>Relatively few residents will receive support, but the project will create significant benefits for those who do, and other County residents will receive information about the improvements and ways of saving energy.</p> <p>Wherever possible, the project will purchase from Orange County vendors, although collaboration with partners outside of Orange County likely reduces the amount of funding that will be spent in Orange County. The applicant has the capacity to complete the project.</p> <p>If insufficient funds remain to fully fund this project based on its rank, the CFE would recommend partial funding of up to \$90K.</p> <p>The CFE points out that the budget line items for data analysis and/or educational materials might be reduced in favor of more direct energy efficiency materials and labor for more homes. Once the impacts of this pilot program are clearer, a larger focus on outreach might be better justified to spread the model. The CFE acknowledges that education is</p>

		important to encourage participation, but would recommend a focus on more direct impact in this initial phase. Data analysis might be done directly by NCSEA in order to redirect funding towards energy efficiency work or reduce overall project costs.
<b>203 Project Solar PV Array and Green Roof</b>	<b>Town of Carrboro</b>	<p>The CFE felt that it is good to have a visible commitment to the environment such as rooftop solar and a green roof on a new public building. Some CFE members felt that new public buildings like these should have these sustainability features as standard elements and not grant-funded additions.</p> <p>Applicants’ proposal outlines a project that appears clear and obtainable. This project could showcase environmental technology and promote renewable energy for a large segment of residents.</p> <p>If insufficient funds remain to fully fund this project based on its rank, the CFE would recommend partial funding with the remainder of the funds available (\$57,567.50 as calculated by the CFE).</p> <p>Based on the stated timeline that the project is not going to break ground until 2022, the CFE encourages the applicant to apply for the rest of the funding in the next round of grants.</p>
<b>Food Waste Monitor</b>	<b>Town of Carrboro</b>	<p>By assisting with diverting food waste from the landfill waste stream, this composting project reduces greenhouse gas emissions. Compost monitors increase the use of the compost drop off location and also help reduce the amount of non-compostable waste that enters the compost stream. This quality control helps keep the composting process profitable. The grant funding will help ensure that an established program with positive impacts can continue, and the applicant has sufficient capacity to successfully complete the project.</p> <p>It was not clear to the CFE that the existence of compost monitors would increase use of the farmer’s market overall as the applicant stated, but the presence of compost monitors would very likely be good for waste reduction education and the promotion of composting. There was also some concern about this program becoming dependent on continued grant funds in the future.</p> <p>In the end, because the cost request was small and the impacts immediate, there was consensus among CFE reviewers to recommend funding this project.</p>
<b>Energizing</b>	<b>Chapel Hill-</b>	The CFE recommends not funding this application. While electric vehicles should be added to the CHCCS fleet, the administrative vehicles

<p><b>the Fleet</b></p>	<p><b>Carrboro City Schools</b></p>	<p>proposed would be the least impactful to electrify since they are driven so little each year. There were several unresolved questions about how these vehicles would be used by staff and whether they were necessary.</p> <p>Further, a lack of charging infrastructure at the schools where these vehicles would be placed raises additional questions about whether they would be ready for use when needed for the proposed administrative travel.</p> <p>Two of the three proposed electric vehicles, the Tesla Model 3 and Ford Mustang Mach-E are expensive and impractical sports cars. The CFE reviewers questioned whether this choice of vehicle was an effective use of grant funds.</p> <p>The CFE liked the idea of using electric vehicles as teaching tools to make sustainable technologies more exciting and tangible. The idea of exposing a new generation of our community’s leaders and thinkers to electric vehicles in our schools was well-supported by reviewers. Unfortunately, the lease arrangement for these vehicles makes it hard to believe that they would be useful teaching tools as they would not be able to be disassembled and reassembled by the students. Electric vehicles that students could simply view up close but not work on could likely be provided for free in other ways by parent volunteers or local non-profits.</p> <p>The CFE understands that this project proposal had to be written very quickly and is impressed by what the brand new CHCCS Sustainability Director was able to pull together in such a short time.</p> <p>For these reasons, the CFE recommends that the applicant address these concerns and for the project to be resubmitted in the next round.</p>
<p><b>Wayfinding Implementation</b></p>	<p><b>Town of Chapel Hill</b></p>	<p>While expressing appreciation for the proposed project's focus on supporting additional biking and walking, CFE members gave this project a low ranking based on some widely held questions about the project design and the relatively high requested amount of funding.</p> <p>The CFE's main question about this proposed project was whether the existence of wayfinding signage would convince residents to drive less, particularly given that the hilly terrain poses an additional challenge to walking and biking. The CFE wondered if a less-expensive digital wayfinding map would be as effective and easier to update going forward.</p> <p>Based on an acknowledgement of the high capacity of the applicant, and the potential for an active transportation project to provide quick and long-lasting benefits when it has appropriate guidance from the community, the CFE encourages the applicant to update their proposal</p>

		<p>with further evidence to support their claimed impact and resubmit. Project benefits may be easier to illustrate once routes or signage locations are identified through the planned community engagement.</p>
<p><b>Sustainability Upgrades</b></p>	<p><b>Carrboro Arts Center</b></p>	<p>The CFE recommends not funding this application. While the CFE feels it is important to make highly visible sustainability investments to important community buildings such as this, there are problems with this proposed project and the application itself.</p> <p>Fundraising is still ongoing and therefore the funding for these sustainability upgrades might be able to come from other sources. The application is also incomplete as it contains no greenhouse gas emissions estimates.</p> <p>The CFE liked that these proposed upgrades would provide value over a long lifetime, but were concerned that their proposed energy efficiency impacts overlapped and cancelled each other out in many cases. For instance, the expensive Solarban window film would be applied to primarily north-facing windows, limiting its impact. If those windows also had automatic roller shades that would further reduce the impact of the window film and the daylight available to supplement the proposed smart LED lighting system.</p> <p>Also, given that the designs for this large commercial building have not yet been finalized, this project may not be able to be implemented within two years.</p> <p>The CFE recommends that the applicant address these concerns and reapply.</p> <p>The bike rack and the bike and vehicle charging station component of the application was discussed favorably by the CFE, though some felt that these should either be added to the basic project design, or they could be added in later once the need for grant funding was clarified and the greenhouse gas impact of the proposal could be estimated.</p>