

# Orange County Climate Council Meeting Summary

**February 27, 2020**

7:30pm - 9:00pm

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Southern Human Services Center, 2501 Homestead Road, Chapel Hill

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**Attendees:** Mark Marcoplos (Chair), Melissa McCullough (Vice Chair), Brennan Bouma (staff), Pat Clayton, Cathy Cole, Robb English, Caroline Hansley-Mace, Laura Janway, Kathy Kaufman, Jonas Monast, Ruth Rouse, Donna Rubinoff, Owen Ryerson, Sammy Slade, Stephanie Trueblood, Josh Van Mater

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**I. Call to Order, Additions or Changes to the Agenda** - Marcoplos called the meeting to order at 7:35pm.

Slade brought up a topic that he would like to discuss during this or a future meeting. HE wondered if it would be possible for the schools to take the avoided energy costs they derive from energy efficiency and renewable energy projects and roll that money back into further action.

Marcoplos said that this discussion might be good for a future agenda when school representatives were present.

Rubinoff added that when the Council does discuss this, it would be good for the student representatives to weigh in as well.

Van Mater said that it sounded good to him for the schools to be able to roll that savings back into further climate action, and maybe also to fund a class or a club focused on climate action.

**II. Approval of Draft Meeting Summary from December 17, 2019 and January 23, 2020**

No comments were offered on the December and January meeting minutes. English motioned for the minutes to be approved as written, and Kaufman seconded. The minutes were approved unanimously.

**III. 2020 Meeting Schedule**

Bouma began the discussion saying that it would be good to finalize an ongoing regular meeting schedule. He then summarized earlier discussions reflecting the Council's stated preferences around establishing a regular meeting schedule:

- 1.) The meeting should be scheduled for the same time and day every month.
- 2.) Some interested parties outside of the Council and some members have been advocating for meetings to be held in evening hours for equity and access reasons.

- 3.) After reviewing the posted evening meeting schedules for elected officials on the Council, it appeared that the 3rd or 4th Monday or Thursday might be a time when most were available.
- 4.) Monday evenings are also an option for many members although the meetings may need to be in Hillsborough to accommodate tight schedules on that evening.
- 5.) Some members had expressed an interest in alternating meeting locations between Southern Orange and Central Orange.
- 6.) Our meetings are a matter of public interest and records, though there is no regular place on the agenda for public participation.

Rouse affirmed that OWASA has standing commitments the 2nd and 4th Thursday evenings but that the 3rd or 4th Monday or Thursday might be OK if an evening meeting time were chosen.

Trueblood said that standing meetings during business hours would allow for more staff participation, and if we identify any items that call for more direct public outreach we could hold special evening meetings.

Bouma offered that if the Council regularly met during business hours, when the meetings are advertised it might be possible to actively solicit input from our interest list as soon as the agenda goes out.

Marcoplos added that in addition to special evening meetings, we could have an annual report out event and invite the community, or do these twice per year, once in the end of fall and once in June to wrap up the fiscal year.

McCullough offered that we could also do outreach at festivals and other events.

Rubinoff said that when the Council wants feedback on something we can also go to other official stakeholder meetings.

Nearing the end of the allotted time for this item, Council members agreed on a compromise regular meeting schedule with the understanding that it could be changed later if there was any difficulty reaching quorum. The Council would continue to meet at the Southern Human Services Center on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of each month and alternate the meeting time between business hours (3:30pm to 5pm) and evening hours (7:30pm to 9pm). Council members also agreed to aim for a public-facing meeting in Early May to report out on Climate Council accomplishments to date.

#### **IV. Update on LEED for Cities and Communities Grant**

Bouma and McCullough updated the Council on the status of the LEED for Cities and Communities grant through a brief presentation. A press release from the US Green Building Council (USGBC) who runs the LEED program went out Tuesday morning announcing Orange County as one of 20 communities nationwide who won the technical assistance grant to assist them in achieving LEED certification. Charlotte is the only other NC community in the 2020 grant cohort. Greensboro was part of the

2019 cohort, and there were no NC communities in the first year, 2018. Next steps for the grant include an onboarding webinar in the following week, working to assemble inter-departmental team to assist in data gathering, and 2 days of training in DC in late March.

After the presentation, McCullough commented that these LEED standards will assist with the Climate Council's efforts in that the USGBC is well-respected for their role in vetting sustainable features of projects, they have an integrative approach, and they already have useful definitions for key terms and concepts.

Rubinoff asked where the overlap was in these standards with climate action and goals like those set by the Paris Climate Accords. While she appreciated that these standards are a good monitoring and evaluation tool, she wanted to make sure that these broad standards would be helping to meet those climate objectives.

McCullough pointed out that there were sections directly aimed at reporting your climate performance and carbon intensity, and other sections relate to supportive actions such as transit improvements. LEED is encouraging continuous improvement and updates their standards over time to keep certified projects and communities moving forward. They are pushing the edge and looking at net-zero and even net-positive buildings and practices, so this is a good place to help us get started and stay attuned to national best practices.

Rubinoff expressed a concern that a credit measuring compact and mixed use development would only be worth 2 points, given how important land use policies are to driving greenhouse gas emissions reductions.

Trueblood expressed an interest in knowing more about how Orange County's cities are going to be represented in a countywide certification.

Marcoplos said that there is no way that the County can tell the cities what to do, and that the LEED standards do not require that all constituent governments have the same policies and practices. This grant and certification effort will simply allow the County to share well-vetted actions and resources to help all members' climate efforts. He then mentioned that this item may need to be discussed further in a future meeting and that in the interim Bouma and McCullough can share the links to the USGBC webinars.

## **V. Formation of Policy Committee**

Bouma introduced this discussion by summarizing a proposal to create a Policy Committee that came from Hansley-Mace, Trueblood, English, and Monast. The proposal was that this group could work with the Climate Action Reporting committee to identify low-hanging fruit in the policy arena (how we operate, invest, build, purchase, etc.) and make recommendations where we see gaps. Then the group would move to proactive new policy options all could implement as new ideas are tested around the state and country.

Trueblood added that the focus would be on internal policies that impact how governments or organizations operate, more than on imposing policies on private citizens and businesses. Examples include anti-idling policies and green purchasing policies. The committee could

create a list of best practices for operations that are within the control of organizations themselves.

Rubinoff added that an internal focus could also help to mainstream climate actions for other organizations.

Hansley-Mace then said this Policy committee could also help to prepare for policies that are under development at the state and federal levels.

Monast reinforced the idea that the committee would focus on actions that are in the control of the 4 governments on the Council such as the linkage between urban and rural areas or helping to influence Duke Energy in moving to low carbon energy production, and then models could be developed for use elsewhere.

Marcoplos said that this sounded good and recommended that the research on current best practices begin with NC, and called for a motion to create this committee. Monast made the motion and it was seconded by McCullough, and passed unanimously.

Bouma then asked for volunteers who were interested in being a part of the new Policy Committee and recorded the new members as: English, Hansley-Mace, Trueblood, and Slade. The new committee members asked if John Richardson could be invited to be a part of the committee to give a voice to Chapel Hill. Bouma agreed and also offered to send Trueblood a recent list of local government sustainability actions that had been generated by the Southeast Sustainability Directors Network.

#### **VI. Update on Existing Committees –**

Bouma said that there were no updates from the new Climate Action Reporting Committee except that Josh Van Mater has agreed to serve as the co-chair with Bouma.

Shifting to Identity and Standards, Bouma then said that besides the LEED certification effort, the Committee was formed with the idea of making appeals to community identity to expand commitment for necessary climate actions.

Rubinoff said that it may be a good idea to split the performance tracking role of this committee and the communications/identity role into two groups.

McCullough agreed.

Kauffman said that it may be good to do more brainstorming at first to help flesh out the kinds of tasks that would support the formation of community identity around climate action.

McCullough made an appeal to anyone with communication skills to join these committee discussions, and Marcoplos and Cole both volunteered.

Trueblood offered to send a link to a webinar by the National Civic League on local climate actions that made several good points in this area.

**VII. Adjournment** – Marcoplos asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting and this was provided by Monast and seconded by McCullough. The Council voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 9:02pm.

