

# Orange County Climate Council Meeting Summary

**October 22, 2019**

3:30pm - 5:00pm

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Southern Human Services Building, 2501 Homestead Rd, Chapel Hill

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**Attendees:** Mark Marcoplos (Chair), Brennan Bouma (staff), Cathy Cole, Raymond DuBose, Tyrone Fisher, Hongbin Gu, Caroline Hansley-Mace, Laura Janway, Kathy Kaufman, Adam Long, Melissa McCullough, Sara Pitts, Anna Richards, Donna Rubinoff, Owen Ryerson, Dan Schnitzer, Sammy Slade, Mary Tiger, Stephanie Trueblood, Joshua Van Mater, Jenn Weaver

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- I. **Call to Order** - Marcoplos called the meeting to order at 3:35pm. Council members introduced themselves for the benefit of new members.
  
  - II. **Approval of Draft Meeting Summary from Sept 24, 2019** – A motion was made to approve the meeting summary as written by McCullough, and this was seconded by Kaufman. The meeting summary was approved unanimously.
  
  - III. **Selection of Vice-Chair** – Slade confirmed that he was interested in the position, but in the interest of diversity he would nominate McCullough. Gu indicated her interest as well.

Marcoplos opened the idea of creating a nominating committee to help Council members, many of whom do not know one another, to make a more informed decision. He explained that this would be a small sub-group of the Council who would communicate with each of the members about each nominee and track their preferences. In the event of a close race, the nominating committee would report back to the Council and the race would be decided with an open vote. This process would allow members more time to decide and would avoid a public debate. Tiger, Kaufman, and Ryerson volunteered to be the nominating committee. Gu and McCullough gave brief descriptions of their backgrounds, and agreed to submit a more detailed description in writing to the Nomination Committee.

Bouma asked for Nominating Committee to speak with him after the meeting to make a plan as the next meeting would be coming up a week earlier to avoid the week of the Thanksgiving holiday.

Hansley-Mace reminded the Council that new members had not been able to weigh in on earlier meeting scheduling discussions, and she requested a new poll to be sent out to select the ongoing meeting time for the group. Bouma asked Council members to attempt to choose a meeting day and time for the November meeting today and then said he would will send out a poll for the ongoing meeting time. Council members identified November 19<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> as their preferred dates. Based on their desire to stay open to evening meetings in their desire to be inclusive of the student and professional members, who could not attend

during business hours, Bouma said he would create a poll for those two dates that include evening times.

**IV. Discussion of Climate Council Diversity** – Weaver then led a discussion of the diversity of the Climate Council. She made it clear that her intent was not to disparage anyone who has volunteered their time to join the Climate Council, but there are long-standing forces that have limited the diversity in our group. She feels that the work of the Council needs to be grounded in benefitting underserved communities who will be most impacted by climate change. She added that one thing that would help us is to have a clear mission and values, so that equity is not an add-on after the fact.

Slade agreed and added that representation is also important. Diversity was a component of the way Carrboro tried to make their At-Large position decision.

McCullough offered that a lack of diversity is a long-standing problem in the environmental protection field. She said the Council needs to make strides on diversity while not limiting someone's credentials to only their minority status.

Kaufman said that people of color are better represented in the environmental justice field, and recommended reaching out to the Rogers Eubanks Neighborhood Alliance and other such groups. Richards said that she had already reached out to Rev. Campbell from RENA when she saw this on the agenda, to see if he could recommend someone if the Council decided to open up the a space for them to participate. Richards also pointed out that the time of the meeting is problematic for their student representative who is a person of color.

Rubinoff said that we should work to diversify, and we should keep diversity in our mission and process we use to make each decision. The Council's processes might be excluding the people we aim to benefit, and this goes beyond who is represented on the Council.

Hansley-Mace said that there seems to be a good amount of agreement on this being part of our mission, and thought it might be good to lay out our mission. She offered to be on a committee to draft a mission statement if others would like to join.

Marcoplos gave the history of how the initial list of organizations and positions was created for the Climate Council. Racial and age diversity were both considered and spaces were created for both racial minorities and students. It seems the Council was relatively successful in bringing in youth. Marcoplos and Weaver have both been talking to the Northern Orange Chapter of the NAACP to continue to encourage them to fill their reserved positions.

Weaver offered to join Hansley-Mace on the mission and visioning committee.

Gu reinforced the importance of income diversity as well since poor communities might be most impacted by climate change and have fewest alternatives. She also highlighted that they might not have time to attend meetings. Another key group to Gu is small business, and this depends on good communication because they are also time-limited. In Gu's opinion, they should be invited to be part of our team, perhaps through representatives from the Chambers of Commerce.

Marcoplos agreed with making an additional push for diversity and also cautioned that there is a limit to the number of representatives that can productively join a meeting in this format.

Richards also amplified the need to clarify the vision for this group and include racial equity in that mission and volunteered to join the committee that will be drafting the mission statement, values, and priorities. Richards recommended having everyone on the Council participate together in a structured visioning process so that then everyone can own it as it sets a framework for the way forward.

Rubinoff and Hansley-Mace backed up Richards' idea as being worth spending the time on here at the start of the Council's work.

Hansley-Mace offered once more to form subcommittee to work in the interim and draft something to bring back to the group. Weaver asked if this was what Richards had in mind. Richards agreed that a subcommittee was important to come up with a format and process, and said that she liked the idea of working to craft a vision before the end of the year. It was agreed that the Council would need meetings in November and December to meet this goal.

Hansley-Mace, Weaver, Richards, and Rubinoff volunteered to form the agreed-upon committee.

McCullough recommended that as a part of the creation of the Council's mission and vision, we include a silent brainstorming element or ask people to send in ideas. Gu said that this could be done through a survey as the Chapel Hill Town Council had done previously. Cole recommended Slack as a platform for communication and Kaufman agreed. Bouma highlighted the need to maintain transparency and public records and said that he would ask about the use of tools such as Slack and Google Drive within those constraints.

- V. Discussion of Strengths/Challenges of Climate Council** – Marcoplos introduced this discussion with an acknowledgement of the challenge faced by the Climate Council as well as an appreciation for the will of Council members to engage this challenge. He said that this discussion would help the Council “admire the problem” before attempting to solve it so that we could increase the clarity of our approach.

Bouma began the discussion of the inherent strengths and challenges of a group such as the Climate Council to serve as context for evaluating the proposed joint projects. He highlighted that in the last meetings the Council had highlighted information sharing as a strength, both among members as well as out to County residents.

A challenge was shared by Gu in reference to the previous discussion that the Council does not represent all of the key interests and diverse perspectives we've identified, including the private sector. She offered that perhaps a survey could be used to help the Council make an inventory of the expertise of the members.

Marcoplos agreed that engagement with the private sector was a challenge for the Council. The Chambers of Commerce were previously considered, but had not yet been contacted due to concerns about the influence of Duke Energy.

Slade offered that another strength of the Council might be in the ability to leverage the physical infrastructure controlled by all members. He recalled previous Council discussions about limitations to influencing the community at large, and thought the Council might have a greater impact if it could facilitate the common purchasing of vehicles and clean energy technologies.

Hansley-Mace offered that the Council has a strength in being one of the first groups of its kind in at least the state. This allows the Council to define its role.

Rubinoff thought that the Council would make a strong advocate to other regional entities and coordinate actions with them based on an analysis of greenhouse gas impacts. She recommended that the Council stay at a high level and address issues and problems held in common where individual action is not sufficient such as the planning for the 15-501 corridor. She also asked if anyone knows of a hub for climate information. Kaufman said that lots of hubs already exist and they have different focus areas. Perhaps the Council could help to point to those information hubs such as ACEEE and DSRIE. McCullough said that the new climate action coalition is beginning to gather easy-to-understand informational pieces. Gu offered that Chapel Hill has a new climate action website with information that is right in line with what the Council seems to be looking for.

Richards offered that another weakness of the Council was conflicting priorities. Given the mix of public and non-profit groups on the Council, it may be challenging to unify around common goals and strategies.

Cole observed that the Council has a recurring tension between the desire for quick action and need for a clear and inclusive vision and mission.

Kaufman highlighted that the Council needs a process of how to organize and evaluate projects.

Bouma thanked the group for their thoughts on this topic and illustrated that this discussion of strengths and weaknesses will be used in part to build project assessment criteria that were informed by the capacities of the Council.

- VI. Identifying and Categorizing Joint Project Ideas** – Based on the length of time needed for previous agenda items and the identified need to clarify the Council’s mission in advance of assessing joint projects, Marcoplos recommended we move this discussion to a later meeting and instead offer an opportunity to hear other ideas and reflections from Council members who had not actively participated in previous discussions. The Council agreed.

Fisher said that he will be keeping this group in mind when working with his colleagues at NC State University.

Janway said that it is good that the Council is helping to broaden the climate change conversation and accommodate all perspectives.

Pitts liked the idea of aligning policies and leveraging ideas from others. With Orange County Schools being a small district Climate Council is helping to bring useful resources and research back that there would not otherwise be time to collect.

Schnitzer agreed that the alignment of policies is helpful, as will long-term advocacy, and he highlighted the need for short term actions.

Trueblood offered a reminder that the Council's challenge is time and that there is not much time to plan. She recommended a process where the Council goes ahead and pushes for a list of policies and low-hanging fruit that can be acted on immediately while more deliberate plans were taking shape. She also offered the perspective that it is easy for the focus of the Council to be about people, but we should also work to counter impacts on environmental quality (habitat and wildlife) and acknowledge that people are part of an environmental system.

Van Mater said that he was concerned about nailing down the Council's values and expressed a concern about what he felt was an unclear resolution to the mitigation and resilience discussion in the first meeting.

Ryerson said that as a student, this is an exciting way to engage with community. UNC plays a big part in the total emissions picture for Orange County and students have a strong voice.

Long stated that he was excited to be here and was happy to be seen as a resource to assist the group.

Tiger said that she was thinking about the data the Council could use to aggregate to illustrate a bigger picture and how to use that to help guide action. She also encouraged outreach to marginalized communities as the Council moves forward.

**VII. Adjournment** – Marcoplos asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting and this was provided by Fisher and seconded by McCullough. The Council voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 5:00pm.