

MEETING NOTES

Orange County Commission for the Environment
June 10th, 2019
7:30 p.m.

Southern Human Services Center, 2501 Homestead Road, Chapel Hill

CFE Members Present: Bradley Saul, Laura Doherty, Jim Eichel, Carrie Fletcher, Kim Piracci, Bill Ward, Jody Eimers, Alan Parry

Staff Present: Tom Davis, Brennan Bouma, Dave Stancil

I. Call to Order

Saul called the meeting to order at 7:35 pm.

II. Additions or Changes to Agenda

Ward requested that the CFE allow time to discuss the ¼ cent property tax devoted to combating climate change that the BOCC is going to consider at their meeting on June 11th.

III. Approval of Draft Minutes – May 13th 2019

The CFE considered approval of the draft minutes from the last meeting. A motion to approve was made by Eichel and seconded by Parry. The minutes were approved unanimously.

IV. CFE Activities Update

Staff relayed that additional volunteer assistance has been offered to generate eco-tips. Saul and Stancil then explained the history and current status of CFE engagement on the Forest Management Policy for County lands.

Bouma also mentioned green building standards, and the tree policy may also be something that could be discussed in the future with Planning staff. Eimers asked about county powers versus state powers and what is delegated to the local government. There was additional discussion of what the CFE may be interested in learning more about concerning development and regulatory ability.

Parry then provided some information concerning the status of the draft carbon fee and dividend resolution. At the federal level, David Price has recently signed on as a co-sponsor of the carbon dividend act, so the draft CFE resolution is essentially moot at this point. Bouma informed the CFE of the option that the BOCC could send a letter of thanks to Rep. Price instead of the draft resolution. Fletcher liked the idea of supporting Rep. Price in this endeavor. Ward asked about our senators, but Parry stated that there is not currently a similar bill in the US Senate. Next there was

some discussion of how to proceed. Parry will tweak the draft resolution and then submit it when he is finished.

Davis announced his pending retirement. Stancil discussed plans for new DEAPR staff members and staffing of the CFE as well as some historical background of the CFE and his previous work with the CFE.

V. Preliminary Discussion of Orange County Development Process

Bouma began by discussing some of the overlap between the CFE and the OC Planning Commission regarding environmental concerns. He also reported that he met with M. Harvey of the Planning Dept. who will be available to speak to the CFE in the fall, and also to answer specific questions. Bouma recommended CFE members begin compiling specific questions for the Planning Dept. Bouma specifically asked Planning staff about the 1 inch of rain in 24 hours standard for stormwater control measure design, as an example of possible future topics to discuss. Harvey could also provide information about state versus local regulations. Bouma may also meet regularly with Planning staff in the future so they can update each other as new areas of mutual interest emerge.

VI. State of the Environment Event

Saul discussed a conference call that took place last week with members of the Collaborative Conservation Group, some of whom have expressed some interest in having a joint event around the release of the SOE 2019. This could be an event with representation by regional environmental folks from a four-county area (Wake, Durham, Orange, and Chatham) because this is the area included in the collaborative effort, making this a broader event than just Orange County. The target audience would be elected officials and staff, and it would be a weekday event at the NC Botanical Gardens, tentatively in mid-November 2019. The event would allow other jurisdictions to also participate and present something of interest. Saul asked the CFE members what they thought of this new approach- Eimers expressed concern that we may lose some contact with the OC BOCC but the group discussed that before this event, the SOE report would be presented to the OC BOCC. She also wanted the report to be disseminated to the local earth science classes for their use. Eichel indicated that his daughter (Amanda Eichel, who is the Executive Director, Global Covenant of Mayors for Energy and Climate) is interested in possibly speaking at the pending event.

VII. State of the Environment Report

Saul led a discussion of how to proceed. There is no July CFE meeting. He asked the group to agree to two rounds of comments on draft issue pages – the first ending the end of June, and the second ending at the August CFE meeting.

A limited mock-up of the report that was developed by OC Public Relations staff was presented. Piracci suggested that the photos included in the report should include some images showing the negative consequences of environmental inaction and not all be beautiful pictures of pristine landscapes. The group asked if some of the

photos that were used were taken in Orange County or not. Group stated that the photos should be only from Orange County.

VIII. Updates and Information Items

Ward initiated discussion of the proposed ¼ cent property tax devoted to combating climate change that will be considered by the BOCC tomorrow evening. He estimated that the tax would raise about \$450,000 each year. Bouma has assembled some ideas for how these funds could be used, including weatherization of low income housing, other energy efficiency efforts, etc. The BOCC will be meeting tomorrow to debate and possibly adopt the proposed budget. Parry indicated that some of the BOCC members appeared to be on the fence concerning this item. He also discussed emails that are circulating that include bullet points of items supporting this proposed tax. Eichel asked how closely related this issue was to affordable housing, which the BOCC is very interested in currently. Ward was unsure of the tie-in to this issue. Piracci thought that the BOCC members were concerned that this proposed tax has not gone through the entire budget process as it only came to light recently. Parry re-emphasized his desire to craft something to send to the BOCC indicating the CFE support for this proposed tax. Parry also said that the BOCC may welcome the support of the CFE. Members asked how they could proceed at this late time and date. Piracci made a motion that some of the CFE members come up with some info that they would send to Saul and he would craft a document to send to the BOCC in support of the proposed tax. Further discussion ensued of who might be able to put together this document. Saul said it could possibly be a very short document. Ward suggested putting together a small committee and having them put something together that would be forwarded to the BOCC before their meeting tomorrow. Piracci withdrew her motion, and then the members decided to quickly draft an email in support of this proposal that the CFE could vote on. The CFE then crafted a short message of support. Eichel offered a motion in support of the message to be sent to the BOCC by the Chair which was seconded by Parry and then approved unanimously. Parry said he would send it to Saul and staff and then Saul would forward it to the BOCC.

IX. Adjournment

Parry offered a motion to adjourn at 9:11, this was second by Ward and approved unanimously by the CFE members.