

Orange County Climate Council Meeting Summary

June 16, 2021
7:00pm - 8:30pm

Online Meeting

Members and Alternates in Attendance:

Melissa McCullough (Chair), Sammy Slade (Vice-Chair), Brennan Bouma (staff), Mark Marcoplos, Kathy Kaufman, Mary Tiger, Stephanie Trueblood, Cathy Cole, Jonas Monast, Wendy Kuhn, Marc Miller, Sarah Smylie, Tina Moon, Bill Ward, Tyrone Fisher, Amy Ryan, Patricia Clayton, Jamezetta Bedford

Other Attendees:

- Chloe Allen (intern)
- Hannah Rubenstien (intern)
- Rande Haven-O'Donnell
- Amy Fowler
- Pam Hemminger
- Anna Richardson

Public comments received by advertised deadline: None

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- I. Call to Order, Land Acknowledgement, Changes to the Agenda** - McCullough called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

McCullough gave a native lands acknowledgement for Orange County, recognizing that Orange County sits on the historic lands of the Occoneechi, Saponi, and Tutelo people, and historically the land where Orange County is now was also the land of the Tuscarora, Sissipahaw, Eno, Shakori, Saura, and Catawba people.

No additions or changes to the agenda were suggested.

- II. Approval of Meeting Minutes from May 20, 2021**

With no discussion on the May minutes, Kaufman moved to approve. Smylie seconded this motion and the minutes were approved unanimously.

- III. Report and Discussion of Key Roles and Functions**

Bouma gave a presentation to summarize previous discussions on the key roles and functions of the Council to provide context to new members. He then reported on a proposal from the Chair and Committee Leads to restructure and clarify and focus the work of the Council.

The Climate Council has done good work so far and yet there are a couple of key issues that are regularly causing friction. The proposal to address these issues that the Council was asked to discuss is to restructure our 3 committees and create more flexible working groups that are focused on our 3 audiences: Community, Local governments (internal practices and

policies), and Partnerships (public, private, and non-profit organizations, competitive grants, etc).

It was proposed that these working groups identify and develop proposals for specific products for each audience each year. Working groups may change year to year based on need and member interest, but they would always focus on providing useful products to each audience. It was acknowledged that the three existing Committees roughly align with these audiences already, but further definition of Working Groups may be desired.

Ideally we would have both professional staff and elected members in each committee. All members would be encouraged to join a Working Group. Working Groups may not provide updates as a regular part of every meeting. These could be emailed to the chair and/or sent out as needed.

Once formed, working groups would identify the product(s) they will deliver at each annual Community Update Meeting in September. The overall Council would discuss and approve the planned product(s). Delivering the approved product(s) should help to organize and guide the work of each Working Group throughout the year.

Miller made a comment that building the constituency around greater climate action would be an important role for the Council and to that end the Chambers of Commerce would be important voices on this Council to represent the business community.

McCullough clarified that we've had several different new members suggested and that the final decision on our membership rests with the 4 elected boards who created the Council.

Marcoplos made the point that the Council should move past this continued discussion of limitations and pick some projects to pilot.

Monast made the point that the Council could continue generating and vetting and scoping ideas, and it could also operate well if we were taking questions or requests from local elected leaders and providing the information they wanted. There are lots of climate actions that we can come up with to work on, but it may be more focused and effective if those ideas came from the local government leadership.

McCullough made the point that the elected officials may not be the ones who know the details on what specific actions or insights might be the best to pursue. It may be that staff has that knowledge.

Slade agreed, and articulated the tension that climate action plans have already been adopted, except Orange County. These plans would provide the appropriate direction, and perhaps the Council could help inform a Climate Action Plan for the County as the encompassing entity. This might be the most appropriate way for the Council to encourage and inform greater climate action.

Kaufman agreed and noted that the Council could be a forum for projects and partnerships that cut across each of the plans.

Bouma also agreed, noting that many of the plan's elements are complete or underway.

Slade also mentioned that the schools and the County's businesses would also be important players with whom to coordinate actions and a county-wide Climate Action Plan might be a good mechanism to do this.

McCullough made the point that staff may be able to advocate for climate actions if they are included in their adopted Climate Action Plans. Slade agreed.

Bouma then ran through an example of how it would look to work through the proposal of the Council taking the idea of community solar and scoping it to add detail to show feasibility, and then handing it off to our members to implement individually.

Trueblood then referred back to Monast's idea of getting further direction and project ideas to scope from the member governments' climate plans since those ideas have already gotten some level of approval and vetting by staff.

Kaufman mentioned that there are several actions in the Carrboro plan that have not yet happened, and there may be in the Chapel Hill plan as well. Some of these ideas might take more than one jurisdiction to complete and may benefit from the Council's review and input.

Tiger added that it may not be likely or necessary that all partners are ready to act on the same project at the same time due to funding schedules and other factors, but members can still accelerate their individual action on these kinds of larger projects by leveraging each other's plans, projects, and guidance on what works best. Some projects from the CARD might be able to be done individually, but could be scaled up through mutual action, and others need mutual action to get started, but both would be useful.

Monast thanked the Council for their thoughts on his previous point about asking the member governments how the Council could best assist, and reiterated that no matter where it comes from, having a central question that the Council was trying to solve would be really helpful before going into our Working Groups.

Bouma asked for a distinction on how this central question might differ from the overall mission statement of the Council and the specific work products to be proposed in the Working Groups.

Monast clarified that for him it would be best if the Working groups were all working on a piece of the same larger issue. Going back to the previous example shared by Tiger on Community Solar, if that is an idea from the climate action plans that we decide would be most beneficial to work on, then each working group looks at that same issue through their lens and coordinates their products towards assembling a package to address that central project or idea.

Trueblood reinforced the idea that the overall workplan should be set by the Council overall.

Slade offered that the County's Food Policy Council gets its directions from the work groups and then get approved by the central council.

Trueblood clarified that she is proposing something similar. The ideas could come from the Workgroups initially at the beginning of the year and then be coordinated, refined, and approved by the Council overall. This way all the priorities are coordinated.

Bouma then summarized that there seemed to be good agreement around restructuring by audience and product. He also mentioned that having a membership driven workplan would not exclude the Council's ability to respond to requests from any of our authorizing member governments.

Monast clarified that our assistance to local governments does not have to be in response to an explicit request, but rather should come from the Council being aware of where the jurisdictions are on climate action, what barriers and questions they have, and what they would like to accomplish that they haven't been able to. This may work better than starting with our own action ideas. Bouma agreed.

Smylie offered that OC Schools does not have an overarching climate plan and limited staff capacity for additional work, and that what would be most useful from the Council would be a sense of what the biggest opportunities are.

Slade offered that advisory boards and contractors might be a good source for these kinds of ideas and one idea in particular to consider is performance contracting.

Smylie responded that they do not have an advisory board on climate.

Kaufman responded that the Climate Council might be able to offer some ideas to OC Schools on things like building energy efficiency.

Bedford offered that there are school construction standards that speak to energy efficiency, but they may not have been updated since 2009. It's another idea that could be impactful for this group to lend their expertise to.

Kuhn offered that the Working Groups may want to meet and discuss the details of how they want to focus their work, based on this discussion. This could be brought back to the next meeting. Trueblood and Tiger agreed.

Trueblood asked for a copy of the meeting recording to be shared with all the members. Bouma said that he would send it out.

Bouma called back to Miller's comment about the importance of private sector involvement. Slade mentioned that regarding the business community is that Duke Energy is a big funder of the Chamber of Commerce, and that may makes it more

complicated. Perhaps there are ways to work with the private sector outside of the Chamber.

IV. Guidance for Communications Committee

At the last meeting, the Council approved the request for another round of internships to support this Committee's work, but had insufficient time to discuss the recent work and provide guidance on next steps.

Bouma asked the interns working with the Communications Committee if they needed direction.

Rubenstein reported that they've been working with the Orange County Human Rights and Relations Director, Annette Moore, trying to operationalize the Yale SASSY survey process. They have developed a list of organization to reach out to based on their work over the Spring. Given that they were following an action plan, they did not require further direction and this time on the agenda was given to continuing the Roles and Functions discussion.

V. Announcements and housekeeping

Bouma announced that the Orange County Community Climate Action Grants program's second round of funding is open. The funding structure has changed based on the County's approved budget for next year which set aside ½ of the total funds for k-12 school projects. These projects still need to fill out an application and would be evaluated in the same way that other projects would be. Bouma said that he is available to assist grant applicants as he is not involved in scoring the applications.

Bouma and Bedford clarified that any funds not awarded to the schools in this round would go into the full pot of funds during the next round of the grant.

He also reminded the Council that the July meeting will also be at 7pm.

VI. Adjournment

McCullough asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting and this was provided by Bouma and seconded by Slade. The Council voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 8:29pm.