

Orange County Climate Council Meeting Summary

May 28, 2020

3:00pm - 4:30pm

Online Meeting

Attendees: Mark Marcoplos (Chair), Melissa McCullough (Vice Chair), Brennan Bouma (staff), Crystal Cavalier, Pat Clayton, Cathy Cole, Ray DuBose, Caroline Hansley-Mace, Laura Janway, Kathy Kaufman, Adam Long, Jonas Monast, John Richardson, Donna Rubinoff, Owen Ryerson, Sammy Slade, Mary Tiger, Stephanie Trueblood

Public comments received by advertised deadline: None

I. Call to Order, Additions or Changes to the Agenda - Marcoplos called the meeting to order at 3:03pm. Marcoplos asked to add to the agenda an introduction for Crystal Cavalier at the point when she joins the meeting.

II. Approval of Meeting Minutes from February 27, 2020

No comments were offered on the February meeting minutes. Kauffman motioned for the minutes to be approved as written, and Rubinoff seconded. The minutes were approved unanimously.

III. Update from Climate Action Reporting Committee

Bouma began the discussion reminding the Council of the membership of the committee, including Van Mater, Long, Tiger, Janway and himself. He also reviewed the purpose of the CARD was to identify gaps and overlaps in climate action among members and to accelerate further action.

The Council had expressed an interest in making the CARD public-facing whenever each of the members had a chance to ensure it was complete to their satisfaction. The committee set a deadline to make the CARD public of September before the annual event. Since the CARD isn't necessarily newsworthy on its own, including it as part of a larger event or communication is advisable.

The committee said that it would work to align the CARD with the Policy Committee's list to the extent feasible, before asking members to spend more time filling it in. Once this had been done, the committee would make a final push to complete it and likely make individual calls to assist and set fields as "note applicable" when appropriate.

Council members agreed that they like the idea of a public-facing event in September to report on the Council's first year of work.

Rubinoff reminded the Council of her request to link to the CARD in the agenda for quick reference. Bouma stated that we would in the future.

IV. Update from Identity and Standards Committee

McCullough briefly updated the Council on the status of the LEED for Cities and Communities grant and turned to the Committee's desire to split its members to have the "Standards" element of its charge to go the Policy Committee and the "Identity" portion to form the beginning of a Communications Committee that the Council had discussed previously.

The Communication Committee would help to frame issues for the Council, and potentially get out ahead of the messaging of opposition groups, work on in-person engagement post-COVID. They could also survey residents or align with other messaging campaigns.

Marcoplos asked for comments and discussion and added that Comm committee could begin with basic definitions and aligning language.

Slade asked who the audience would be. There may be more value is to advising the entities that are a part of the Council on issues of interest to County residents, and to help hone our language. Or are we talking about public messaging campaigns?

McCullough reminded the Council that they had already discussed many of these points. Not everyone on the Council is on the same level of scientific understanding information. This committee could 1.)Get all members up to speed, 2.) inform local governments represented on the Council as well as others. Perhaps this committee could communicate with local government environmental advisory boards and synergize support. 3.) Provide regular engagement. This is an interesting opportunity to reach out to the public, for example having a table at street festivals to collect input. The committee, once formed, could lay out it's charge more fully.

Kauffman added that the committee could also put pieces in the local media and build support for local actions.

Marcoplos called for a vote to create the Communication Committee.

McCullough made a motion to dissolve the Identity and Standards Committee and create a Communications Committee per the discussion, and this was seconded by Marcoplos. The motion passed unanimpusly.

McCullough then called for volunteers and the following members indicated their interest: Bouma, Rubinoff. McCullough, Kauffman, Cole and Marcoplos

Marcoplos then said that we can add more members based on need and interest as we move forward.

McCullough indicated her interest in joining the Policy Committee as well.

V. Update from Policy Committee and Discussion

Trueblood updated the Council on recent discussion and work of the Policy Council, saying that the easiest way to understand is to go back in time. The initial task given to committee

was to put together a list of internal strategies for climate action that were fully within our control. As they met initially, they also saw lots of needs to advocate for external policies at state or regional level. SO the committee then began by brainstorming a huge list of ideas and then boiled the list down by removing actions that were too narrow or too ambitious to create a more concise list of recommended policies.

Given the pandemic, they also identified a potential opportunity to ask the state government to allow community resilience efforts in pandemic response. The budget picture is constricting all spending statewide.

On the recommended list they shared, the color coding is there to help identify the lower cost items that might still go forward and then set aside items that will likely require partnerships. Another color shows items that depend on political will

The spreadsheet is not complete, and they are open to questions and suggestions, as this committee works for the larger group. They need feedback before they go much farther.

Monast added that Hansley-Mace and Trueblood did the lion's share of the work to get us to this point. And highlighted the importance of planning given budget constraints. How might COVID relief funding align with costs savings as well as energy savings?

Trueblood added that they see their work as being related to the CARD, and the Policy Committee's role is to think about what is not being done. They would like to be able to share this list broadly to show all of the things that can be done.

Slade added that the categorization of the low-cost items is not meant for everyone to just do the low hanging fruit and that over time the higher-cost items would need to be done as well.

Marcoplos asked if we could add some descriptive notes beside costs to help with prioritization, and Trueblood agreed saying that time was a limiting factor but more description and cost details are intended to be added.

Kauffman said that the list is great and very thorough. As we deal with pandemic, how do we prioritize these items? How to we recover in a greener and smarter way. Does the Policy committee have ideas on where to start on this?

Trueblood said that prioritizing is the next step in our work. Their committee is interested in hearing from other Council members on this. We need to keep in mind that each local government will make their own decisions.

Hansley-Mace added that there were 8 criteria used to boil down the larger policy list to create the recommendations. One example was if the item already on the CARD. This prioritization was done pre-COVID, so a second look is advisable.

Tiger then asked would the impact of ARRA-funded projects that worked in communities help to inform current efforts. What were the shovel-ready projects that really moved the needle?

Trueblood pointed out that there are many groups in NC working on this type of database. EDF Cities, and League of Municipalities are two examples. The ARRA funds are a great

example of what worked and did not work so well, and we can look into the other groups' lists as well.

Janway praised the work of the committee and said that the color coding is helpful. She recognized some of the numbers on the list as having come from Carrboro. They were meant to be one hypothetical way to reach Carrboro's own goals, so they may not apply more broadly.

Rubinoff added that this is a great body of work and was looking forward to seeing this list merge with the CARD. Also, regarding prioritization post-COVID., this is a good opportunity to tie the two agendas together because there will be significant overlap. She then turned to other questions related to the proposed letter to Gov. Cooper. Are you trying to suggest actions to solicit funding from the next round of relief funds or to help shape the state's recovery agenda?

Trueblood clarified that the spreadsheet and the letter do not necessarily go together. The spreadsheet is meant to be a place to hold ideas for the future. Please send in ideas to add. Monast can speak to the letter.

Monast said that the letter came together quickly last week. Part of the motivation for the letter is to think about current opportunities and needs. It's not meant to replace any other activities, but meant to put the letter in front of the Council to see if we want to do anything with it. Recovery actions are happening quickly. Part of the intent is to frame the issue along with other recovery efforts still ongoing from hurricanes. We could send it out ourselves or send it around to our elected boards for more official approval. This relates to what the role of the Climate Council should be. The window of opportunity will close soon, at least for this year.

Slade said that one role of this Council is to communicate to our state government. The trillions of dollars being spent to address this emergency coincides with the investments needed to address the climate emergency. WHO manifesto referred to in the letter does this well.

Marcoplos agreed that it is our role. We could get all of our local governments and school boards to endorse letter, and then we can send it around the state for additional signatures. One addition would be to think about all of the practices and tools and behaviors we are doing to address the pandemic. Which are most valuable for the climate to maintain after the crisis is over? Examples would be digital meetings. This would be good to add to the letter.

McCullough agreed and said that there are lots of good examples and highlighted a couple example webinars and a meeting of the Congress of New Urbanism.

Kauffman agreed that this is well within our purview to talk to the state. It's important to be clear if we are requesting a response. The letter is important, and it will be good to stress resilience on the local level. The state has an interest in increasing resilience in local governments.

Rubinoff agreed we need to do this, and agreed it will be more valuable to endorse or sign or collaborate. The questions she asked in an email before the meeting centered on making this letter and our requests more concrete. It would be good to help connect to an effort underway for the state. The 3 phases they are using on the international level might be

helpful to refer to: Emergency phase, early recovery phase, resilience phase. If the next phase of the state's response is aligned with early recovery type actions it would be good to follow that context.

Slade then said that the counterpoint to being very specific, is that we might be in this for a long time and recovery depends on federal leadership. This letter might be better received by the next government.

Rubinoff then asked if this letter is political, how do we distribute it?

Marcoplos said that if there is value in having governments across the state sign on to the letter, we do not have much time. It's still worth the time to do this even if we can only get a few additional supporters identified.

Kauffman said that in the progressive caucus, they included 3 principles of FDR's plan Relief, Recovery, Reform.

Monast responded to Marcoplos's point about the number of meetings, do we want to move forward with this letter as is, or take the time to develop a more complete letter. Monast indicated his opinion that it's more valuable to send the letter as-is to help the governor frame the issue even if the letter is general.

Janway agreed and stated a question for staff. Does this letter represent the Towns? Staff representative might not have the capacity to sign on as they are not elected officials.

Marcoplos said that he thought the letter needs to come from the elected bodies.

Trueblood said that the Council would ask the governments to sign. We don't know what the next phases will be but the Governor would be one good audience and then the federal legislators would be good as well.

Marcoplos called for a decision.

Rubinoff agreed that we should not send this out ourselves without involving the other elected bodies in the County.

Marcoplos confirmed.

McCullough said that she was excited about sending the letter, and might have comments but agreed with getting the letter out. She pointed out that the Council is more than just the local governments. We are non-profits and the community as well. If we send all communications through the governments, we might lose that synergy of representation that we have.

Slade then reinforced the importance of the WHO letter in aligning the interests of COVID response and climate change.

Clayton then weighed in to say she agreed and thanked everyone for the work. She reinforced that if we want to send a letter we should go ahead and not wait any longer.

Marcoplos then asked for a quick show of hands to see who might want to move the letter forward. He saw a majority of hands and then asked if Monast would feel comfortable

making the changes that we'd discussed and then sending the letter out for approval over email next week. He then asked Bouma if that process would meet the standards of good governance.

Bouma weighed in to say that based on his best understanding, there could not be a voting decision made over email. But if we could summarize the kinds of changes we were asking Monast to make then we could structure a motion now referencing those items and take a vote. That would likely be more solid ground.

Janway then asked a question of other staff members. We were selected to represent our governments, but do we have the authority to sign off on a letter that would go to another government?

Richardson weighed in to say that he agreed that we would need our own governments to see the letter before sending it on to the state, and that is the process we are proposing.

Janway thanked John for clarifying and said that sounds like a good process.

Marcoplos said that the Council could send it out to whoever we wanted as the Climate Council, but the governments would have to vote on it and send it under their names. He then asked Monast what were the key edits to the letter that he heard in the discussion so far.

Monast said that the changes to the letter itself would be to note that there are practices related to managing the pandemic that we should consider keeping as regular practices, stressing resilience as a way to reduce stresses in the long run, making explicit reference to the WHO manifesto. Those are the main items. In terms of making the letter more concrete, he was not sure that he could represent the Council on that. He would feel comfortable making the other changes for the Council following a vote and then sending it out a final copy to the Council. Perhaps the intention to make more concrete statements could be satisfied by sending additional letters in the future.

Marcoplos agreed that those were the changes he heard and asked if any other members had other changes for the letter. Hearing none, he asked for a motion.

Rubinoff then clarified the issue of "concreteness" not being a list of particular projects that we want but providing example actions that respond to both COVID and the climate as a way of describing our point. If you feel like our audience might benefit from that.

Hansley-Mace then noted the short time remaining and made a motion that Monast make the changes that he just listed and that the Climate Council send the final letter to the local governments so they can choose to send it.

This was seconded by McCullough.

Marcoplos then called for a vote and the vote appeared to pass unanimously and there were no dissenting comments.

McCullough then volunteered to assist Monast in making the edits to the letter over the weekend.

Monast said that the changes would not likely be difficult but welcomed her assistance if she wanted to help.

Cole then volunteered Rubinoff to assist with the edits as well.

McCullough then said that the changes that Rubinoff had suggested are logical and would be easy to include such as non-offensive examples like bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.

Monast objected based on process and personal reasons to the inclusion of examples. If the Council was to include a list of example actions, we should all agree on those examples, and also providing examples runs the risk of looking like those specific projects are the main points of the letter, rather than providing the context and reframing what we are trying to accomplish with COVID relief. Also keeping the letter broad will make it and the reframing we are proposing more acceptable to people across the state who may define resilience in different ways.

McCullough agreed that those were good points.

Marcoplos also pointed out that the motion had passed without including the examples. The Council can always address that later as we will have other opportunities during the long recovery.

VI. Succession planning for Chair, Vice-Chair, and student members –

Due to time constraints, Marcoplos suggested that this item be brought back on the June meeting agenda.

Bouma agreed and reinforced its importance as student members and leadership would soon be cycling off.

Additional discussion not on printed agenda -

Marcoplos attempted to introduce Crystal Cavalier, but she had just dropped off at 4:30.

Marcoplos then called upon a few members who had been quiet during the meeting and asked if they had anything to add.

DuBose said that he was happy to be a part of the group and was glad we made a decision to move the letter forward. He also asked that in preparation for the succession planning discussion, that a proposal be prepared for the Council to review and comment on.

Bouma then agreed that was a good idea and offered to go back into the minutes to review consensus decisions of the Council on the topic of succession made last fall, and provide that as context. He would also work with the Chair and Vice-Chair to see if they wanted to propose anything more.

DuBose said that would be fine, and just highlighted the utility of having something to generate and focus the discussion around.

Ryerson then said that he echoed the decisions others had made about keeping the letter broad and moving it forward quickly given the timeline of relief distribution.

Long then said that he had agreed with Janway's concern that he did not have the authority to make the decision to endorse the letter.

Marcoplos then also asked Jim O'Connor who had been participating as member of the interest list and non-voting observer if he had any comments.

O'Connor reinforced that the letter was a good idea as a way to help spread our mission. He then made a comment about an earlier point on education, and he'd be happy to help with that effort as he had some experience in creating curricula on renewable energy.

Marcoplos asked him to send an email to document his desire to volunteer.

VII. Adjournment – Marcoplos asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting and this was provided by McCullough and seconded by Kauffman. The Council voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 4:35pm.