



Environmental and Energy Stewardship Subcommittee

200 College Street, Room 310

March 15, 2024

Meeting Minutes

Subcommittee Members Present

Chairman Newman, Commissioner Sloan, Commissioner Wells, Councilwoman Ullman, Chris Link

Staff Members Present

Sybil Tate, Jeremiah LeRoy, Jennifer Harrison, Ashley Featherstone, Jackie Hamstead, Michael Frue, Ron Venturella, Melissa Moore, Max Taintor, Catalina Otero

Commissioner Sloan called the meeting to order at 10:04 am.

Motion to approve the March agenda and the amended December meeting minutes passed unanimously.

Public Comment:

- Diane Hillgrove- Asheville Tree Protection Taskforce
 - Inquiring if landowners within the City can apply for County conservation easements and if the County is working on tree protection ordinances. Staff will follow up with her.
- DeDe Styles
 - Local pollinators are essential for local food but they struggle to find fall forage
 - Requests that County land is used for pollinator habitat (goldenrod and fall asters)

Electric Bus Follow-Up

- Cherokee case study
 - Have 6 buses funded through NC VW settlement funds
 - Fuel cost savings \$400-\$600 per month per bus
- Buncombe County Schools
 - 210 buses, 1500 miles/day, average route 71 miles, longest routes ~150 miles a day, 10K daily ridership
 - Continues to pursue funding opportunities including EPA grants and Duke Park and Plug
 - Collaborating with Duke, Buncombe County Sustainability, Air Quality, LOS CVC
 - Emma, Woodfin, Johnston have been identified as good candidates for e-buses
 - Short routes (50 miles a day) and eligible for EPA grant
 - Planning range for e-bus routes is 100-115 miles
 - Consider performance variables: # of students, topography, temperature
 - Up-front cost difference between diesel and electric is ~\$170K per bus
 - Yellow buses state owned and activity buses are county owned
- Feedback
 - Once we demonstrate feasibility, shift e-buses to longer routes to maximize investment
 - What modest amount can be put in the budget to advance these efforts?
 - \$50-\$75K per charging station- need 2 (Woodfin and Emma)
 - If schools can secure bulk of funding, contingency funds could help with gap



Environmental and Energy Stewardship Subcommittee

200 College Street, Room 310

March 15, 2024

Asheville-Buncombe Riverfront Commission Update

- ABRC hasn't updated ordinance for about ~10 years
 - Feedback from 2022 River Summit
 - Need for education/ awareness around development and impacts of climate
 - Need broader, watershed perspective
 - Broadened membership
 - Align priorities with local government comp plans
- River Summit influenced the County's Clean Water Fund initiative
- ABRC is looking to improve collaboration with City and County
 - Councilwoman Ullman is a new member of ABRC

Solar Utility Bill Update

- Funded 40+ solar projects since 2021
- Utility rate increases have increased by 4-16%
- Compared estimated bill if no solar (based on rate increase) to actual post-solar bill
 - Seeing a 44% reduction in reduction on County Buildings
 - Asheville City Schools- 40% reduction
 - County Schools- only two schools with year pre and post solar- 61% reduction
- Fuel surcharges/ fees are challenging to account for- they are not a standard percentage of use
- AB Tech bills are difficult to decipher, questioning utility billing- will offer future update

Sustainable Procurement Resolution

- Chairman Newman was contacted by Sierra Club in the wake of the plastic-bag ban discussions- state legislature prohibits bans on single use plastics
 - Want to do something around Earth Day
- Staff saw an opportunity to not solely focus on single use plastics and drafted a broader procurement policy
 - Subcommittee suggested to add bullet "support community campaign to reduce single use plastics" to align with the Sierra Club intention
- City will have similar discussion- would like to move in the same direction

Clean Water Fund Grant Application

- Asheville Greenworks- Trash Trout, Jr. (\$35K requested)
 - \$7500 for the actual trash trout installed
 - The remainder of the request is for staff time
- RiverLink- Disconnect to Protect (\$50K requested)
 - Expansion of existing program to disconnect residential downspouts
 - Proposed 100 households reached
- Town of Black Mountain- Fairview Diversion (\$100K requested)
 - Divert stormwater away from community and minimize erosion
- Ideas for future application cycles:
 - Award points for WAP projects but don't require it to attract more applications



Environmental and Energy Stewardship Subcommittee

200 College Street, Room 310

March 15, 2024

- Recruit more project partners/ champions
- Staff can negotiate with applicants to fund all three projects
 - \$40K to Riverlink, \$10K to Greenworks, \$50K to black mountain

New Member Recommendations

- The subcommittee will need to recommend two new members, and which will have a shorter initial terms
 - One of those terms will end July 2025 the other will end July 2026
- Received 12 applications
- List of candidates to interview
 - Elizabeth Dickenson
 - James Rudd
 - Josh LittleJohn
 - Dede Styles
 - Robert McDonald
 - John David Lippeatt
 - Brad Rouse
- Will conduct 10-minute in-person interviews

Adjournment

Motion made by Commissioner Sloan at 12:11 pm.