



Environmental Advisory Committee MEETING AGENDA

Wednesday, February 12th, 2025

In Person: King Street Meeting Room - 100 North King Street

Present Members: Erik Weber, Jane Edgar, Jere Brittain, Arielle Emmett, Deb Johnston, Nancy Diaz

Others Present: Nora Sjue, Marcus Jones, Janna Bianculli

1. **Call Meeting to Order** 12:08
2. **Informal Public Comment** N/A
3. **Approval of February Agenda** Unanimous
4. **Approval of December Summary** Unanimous

5. New Business

- a. New member intro

Jane Edgar introduces herself. She has 30+ years of experience in the field of sustainability, mostly from the perspective of businesses.

- b. ESB collaboration – Update from Jane

Jane is also on the City's ESB and provided an update from their last meeting. At that meeting, Mike Huffman provided a presentation on the Sullivan Park stream restoration project. The Green Partnership Initiative is being spearheaded to identify businesses that are engaged in sustainability practices. Jane is wondering if the County has already implemented such a program in the past. Nancy Diaz adds that MountainTrue and ESB collaborated a few years back on the Working to be Plastic Free initiative which identified businesses reducing plastic use. Nancy also says that a challenge of that program was that as the group was identifying businesses taking green steps, they also saw the hurdles of reducing plastic waste. Perhaps this initiative would want to help businesses pursue sustainable practices. Jane adds that the Mayor Monarch Pledge deadline is coming up and that the Tree Board is helping through their pollinator program.

6. Old Business

- a. Event ideas for EAC

Field Trips: Last year, the EAC toured the convenience center and compost facilities to educate the members about the sustainability practices of the county. Nancy hopes that perhaps such an event could be replicated.

Strive Not to Drive: This is a week-long event that the County used to be heavily involved with and is intended to show off alternative modes of transportation,



explains Janna Bianculli. The event is happening this year, with the hopes of seeing some post-COVID success. The event is slated for late May, so planning is beginning now. Blue Ridge Bicycle Club as well as Walk Bike Hendo are interested in partnering for the programming. The County would like to be involved to highlight transit initiatives: including Apple Country bus transit, greenway projects, and sidewalk prospects. Transit is now fare-free and has extended service hours. The County also wants to highlight the Ecusta Trail and Greenway Master Plan, including the purchase of property for the southern Oklawaha extension. In addition, Highway 191 is going to have a multi-use path connecting the High School and Middle School, the first time that the county has built and maintained a sidewalk. Janna asks if the EAC would highlight some environmental components to not driving, exploring benefits beyond transit and recreation. EAC's role could be educational or organizational/publicity. The Planning Department/PIO might be able to step in with some communication assistance. Arielle recommends that the group distribute maps of bike routes. Nora will compile them for the next meeting. Clean Vehicles Coalition events might be a good model to consider as well. Nancy mentions that Strive Not to Drive might be a good opportunity for collaboration with ESB, including potential incentives for attendance. Focusing on public transit could also be crucial, as the committee feels like those services are underutilized. Highlighted options for public transit in the county include Apple Country, Paratransit, and Rural Transit (operated by WNC Source). Public transit app to be released soon. In terms of their sustainability, Apple Country buses are currently CNG, though it is not an economically viable program at the moment.

b. Subcommittee groups

i. Tree Canopy Preservation Committee

Arielle Emmett starts by describing the memo they have been working on, and her desire to add Helene tree loss estimates. Marcus Jones adds that we don't have quality estimates of tree canopy loss but do have vegetative debris estimates. This memo is a request to reevaluate the current regulations on tree canopy preservation, which this subcommittee sees as insufficient. Arielle adds that this revision should be included in the LDC rewrite. Arielle summarizes statistics on tree canopy loss in the county, articulating that stronger guidelines would help protect tree canopy cover. Janna noted that regulations such as what are being proposed here are currently considered illegal in North Carolina, so approaching the Planning Department about recommendations would be a more productive avenue than going immediately to the Board of Commissioners. Janna also notes that instead of creating a new committee, developing those recommendations within the EAC would be timelier. Starting with the research included in this memo will provide the foundation that we can bring into drafting rewrites. Arielle asks for EAC support in working on this language for an LDC recommendation.

ii. Balloon Release Ban Conversation



Debbie Swick has changed her approach to the Balloon Release Ban to target State legislature instead of local governments. If the committee feels like they want to advocate on behalf of this issue, we can vote to write a letter to support the balloon release ban.

Approved Motion: *I move that Nancy Diaz writes a letter to the Commissioners to express support for Ban Balloon Releases NC.*

c. Adopt A Highway on Berkely Road

i. March 11, 2025 at 9am

The Adopt a Highway litter clean up is scheduled for this day and time. More information can be found on the flyer.

d. ECO Heroes award program (Jr. and adult recognition)

We will conduct another round of solicitations for the Eco Heroes Program and hope to review applications at our April meeting.

7. Environmental Programs Update

a. Foam collection

Events are continuing as usual. We hope to expand programming as staff capacity allows.

b. Compost Program update

Compost programming is operational for schools and from convenience center.

c. EV charger update

Chargers are installed; physical hardware is there. We are waiting for software to be installed, which is being hung up in the procurement process.

d. Community events

Debris collection is a large component of the Solid Waste staff's energy at the moment. As of today, there were approximately 13,000 truckloads of debris removed from the right of way. Hendo Earth Fest is in April, and 50-55 vendors have been confirmed. We might be able to do the demonstration station at this event.

e. New Environmental Program Coordinator Hire

The position was posted once, and Marcus Jones said that they did not pick any of the applicants. The position has since been taken down, and partially due to his own time constraints, they have not attempted to hire again.

8. Adjournment 1:16


Nancy Diaz, EAC Chair
Approved April 3, 2025