

APEX ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY BOARD

MEETING MINUTES

Meeting Date:
May 20, 2021
6:00 p.m.



Remote Meeting
Details located on the Town website:
<https://www.apexnc.org/calendar.aspx>

ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS:

Katie Schaaf, Chair
Suzanne Mason, Vice Chair
Patrick Adams
John Garrison

Kim Pierson
Mike Rusher
Pranathi Sana
Marilee Szczerbala

Call to Order & Roll Call

The remote Environmental Advisory Board (EAB) meeting was called to order by Chair Katie Schaaf at 6:03p.m. Members present were Chair Schaaf, Vice Chair Suzanne Mason, and Board members Patrick Adams, John Garrison, Mike Rusher, Pranathi Sana and Marilee Szczerbala. Board member Kim Pierson joined the meeting at 6:10p.m.

Councilmember Brett Gantt was in attendance and Town staff members present were Planner II Shelly Mayo, Long Range Planner II Jenna Shouse, Environmental Engineering Manager Jessica Bolin, Sustainability Analyst Valeria Mera, and non-voting staff secretary Sustainability Coordinator Megan Pendell. Members of the public had access to the meeting through the Town of Apex YouTube livestream page.

Approval of Minutes

Chair Schaaf asked the Board if there were any comments on the meeting minutes from April 15, 2021. Vice Chair Mason asked that a comment made by Board member Adams from that meeting be added. The comment reflected a suggestion of U-channel posts as an alternative to affixing RCA boundary marker signs to trees. A motion was made by Board member Szczerbala to approve the minutes, seconded by Board member Garrison, and the motion passed unanimously.

Announcements

Staff member Pendell announced Board member Ted Williams' resignation. Staff member Mayo updated the Board on which rezonings have been submitted to go before Town Council.

Committee Updates

The Tree Citizens Advisory Panel (CAP) convened at Clairmont Park on National Arbor Day, April 30th, for an official tree planting ceremony. The Tree Planting Grant Program was approved by Town Council at the May 11th Council meeting.

The Bee City Committee hosted a Pollinator Garden Planting Day on April 24th that was open to the public as a volunteer opportunity. The Committee last met on May 18th and discussed the Pollinator Garden, potential Sustainable Neighborhoods Program, Pollinator Week (June 21-27), and PeakFest participation. The Committee meeting will be followed by speaker events going forward, and the first event featured the presentation Foodscaping with Natives.

Presentation: EV Parking Requirements

Staff member Shouse presented on Proposed Amendments to the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) regarding new electric vehicle (EV) parking requirements. Planning Department staff last updated parking standards in the UDO in 2018. A memo was shared with the Board ahead of the meeting, which has been reviewed by Town Staff and Planning Board, shared with the Apex development community and stakeholders, and is scheduled for presentation to Town Council at the June 8th Council meeting.

Proposed amendments to the UDO include Sec. 8.3 *Off-Street Parking and Loading*, Sec 8.4.3 *Community Amenities*, and Sec. 12.2 *Terms Defined*. The goal is to prepare for the increased use of EVs, avoid unnecessary parking, and support the Town's sustainability initiatives.

Staff member Shouse shared EV charging Data and Charging Station Types with the Board. With the proposed amendment, the minimum required would be a Level 2 Charger and DC Fast Charging would be optional. Based on feedback from the Apex development community and stakeholders, an exception for affordable multi-family and apartment was added, where no more than 10 spaces are required. The 10 space maximum requirement applies to all sites and is not limited to affordable housing. The original proposal also includes a requirement to add accessible charging space requirements and consider a broader plan for expansion of EV requirements.

Chair Schaaf asked if DC fast chargers were of significantly greater value. Staff member Shouse stated that they were faster and more efficient, but also more expensive; the Board could certainly encourage developers to adopt DC fast chargers.

Board member Adams emphasized the point that retrofitting for EV charging is where it gets more expensive and asked whether it was realistic for EV parking spots to count towards a minimum of traditional parking. Staff member Shouse mentioned that EV parking spots counting towards the minimum is a common practice and beneficial for the Town and developers.

Board member Adams asked when Planning staff anticipate adding residential-based requirements and Vice Chair Mason asked about amenity centers. Planning staff explained that when it comes to residential parking requirements, amenity centers have a certain parking ratio based on units in the development and rarely exceed 50 parking spaces. If a residential developer included 2-3 EV units, it is recommended that the units are centralized at an amenity center. Staff member Mayo added that developers will sometimes offer to add solar panels on amenity centers instead of residential buildings. Vice Chair Mason asked if developers offer EV chargers as an upgrade on single family homes, and it was answered by staff and Board member Adams that it is unlikely.

Board member Garrison asked if these amendments would apply to single family homes or townhomes. Staff member Shouse clarified that staff looked into this by contacting the Director of Inspection, and learned that the because the National Electric Code does not require developers to install a 240-volt plug into garages that hooked up into the buildings circuit breaker, staff could not enforce it.

Councilmember Gantt explained that with his own experience owning a hybrid vehicle, he has learned that most drivers do not commute more than 25 miles one way to work. He asked if it would be beneficial for the number of EV spaces required to be decreased, and include EV-ready parking spots instead. Vice Chair Mason underscored that asking for EV-ready spots in residential parking areas, which would require the installation of a 240-volt plug, would be a cost-effective way to futureproof. Board member Adams suggested creating a list of the cost range of different EV options so that developers could be more informed before meeting with the Board. Staff reiterated their recommendation that if the Board wants to see EV-ready spots for residential developments, to ask developers to add on a condition to provide those spots. If the Board made the recommendation and a developer committed

to it then it could potentially be enforceable, though staff will ask the Building Inspections Director for confirmation.

Chair Schaaf made a motion to support the UDO amendments for EV parking requirements, seconded by Board member Szczerbala, and the motion passed unanimously.

Board member Adams asked what the effective date for the amendment is and how it will be communicated to developers. Staff member Shouse stated that once the amendment is officially adopted, it will become effective immediately. She noted that it would not apply retroactively to prevent any negative impacts on development site plans and budgets.

Dark Sky Workgroup: Updates

The Dark Sky Workgroup met for the first time on May 14th and is comprised of Board members Garrison, Pierson, Adams, and Staff members Pendell and Mayo. The original goal of the Workgroup was to establish a new proposed zoning condition to be added to the EAB Suggested Environmental Zoning Conditions list for acorn and dark sky lighting fixtures. The Workgroup extended goals to add fully shielded lighting fixtures as a proposed condition, as well. Furthermore, the Workgroup plans to propose an amendment for the language under UDO section 8.6 to clarify on purpose and intent for dark sky lighting. The next Workgroup meeting will take place on June 4th, during which they will bring on representatives from the Apex Electric Department and Duke Electric to discuss the potential UDO amendment and address concerns and comments.

Community Education Initiatives Discussion

Staff member Pendell shared a comprehensive list of community education initiatives conceptualized by the Board thus far, including:

1. Definition of "Education Initiatives"
2. Community Environmental Initiatives & Service Awards
3. Provide a map that illustrates how Apex gets its water and where it goes
4. Active education channels: Events, mailings to residents, HOA coordination, social media, local school collaboration

The Town Code was briefly reviewed by Staff member Pendell to start the discussion on defining "Education Initiatives."

Board member Rusher expressed his interest in seeking out additional ways to engage with the community on issues that are in Board members' wheelhouse. He proposed initiating a process for the Board to reach out to the community with awards and nominations for neighborhoods, with the goal of strengthening relationships in our community while highlighting initiatives of the Board. Board member Garrison agreed, stating that if the Board can spread the word about community-led sustainability efforts that are currently in progress, the initiatives could have a wider reach. He asked for ideas from the Board on how to obtain the information on current initiatives so the Board can promote them. Staff member Pendell explained that the Town initiated an Environmental Stewardship Award (ESA) for this purpose, which could serve as a vehicle for the Board to grant awards in the community. Councilmember Gantt suggested that when the Board does learn how to best pinpoint community sustainability efforts, they could assist the Town Council through identification and nomination for the ESA. Board member Rusher asked if the Board could assist with the ESA process. Staff member Pendell replied that a specific process has not yet been determined and no nominations or awards have been given since the inception of the program. Board member Pierson proposed a more informal way to recognize EAB-approved community initiatives, whereas the nominations are straightforward and frequent.

Next, Staff member Pendell shared a calendar of recognized Town events and global environmental movements that the Board could choose to participate in. Additionally, she suggested creating a goal for PeakFest and with a potential for Workgroups to help plan specific education initiatives in depth. Chair Schaaf asked if a summer or fall/winter event should be planned in addition to PeakFest in September. Board member Adams suggested the Board's participation in Trick or Treat on Salem and Apex Night Out, and Board member Garrison suggested National Parks and Recreation month, which is in July. Staff member Pendell stated that all three of the events suggested are well attended by the community and will seek out previous annual participation data.

Chair Schaaf initiated a conversation on the type of literature and swag to offer at the EAB PeakFest booth. Staff member Pendell clarified that their budget is currently undergoing administrative review. Board member Pierson suggested that the Board include a display illustrating the range of color temperature in light fixtures with information on the benefits of dark sky friendly fixtures. She also suggested that the Board should engage with the public during International Dark Sky Week next April, and that the International Dark Sky Association offers free materials the Board could utilize for literature. Chair Schaaf agreed and suggested that the Dark Sky Workgroup could focus on finalizing dark sky educational materials for PeakFest.

In addition to Dark Sky, pollinators and recycling are two more educational and outreach topics the Board decided to focus on for PeakFest. Staff member Mayo suggested resources and publications on native plants, and commented that the Tree CAP and Bee City Committee may also be distributing similar information. Board member Garrison suggested that the Board also focus on recycling and waste reduction.

The Board discussed the types of handouts they could distribute at the PeakFest booth, as to be intentional about giving useful materials that will not be discarded as waste. Staff member Mayo suggested using seed paper, and the Board also agreed on the option of using magnets.

Open Discussion

Board member Adams asked staff if there could be changes made to the list of plants suggested for stormwater ponds and whether pollinator plants could be added to the list. Staff member Bolin explained that potentially any plantings outside of the aquatic shelf could be pollinator-friendly plants as long as the State Stormwater Design Manual requirements are still met.

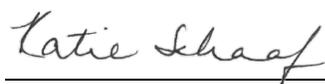
Adjourn

Board member Szczerbala made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Board member Garrison. The motion was approved unanimously and the meeting adjourned at 7:38p.m.



Megan Pendell, non-voting staff secretary

ATTEST:



Katie Schaaf, Chair