

APEX ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY BOARD

MEETING MINUTES

Meeting Date:
June 17, 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
Bill Jensen

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 6:04p.m. Members present were Chair Schaaf, Vice Chair Suzanne Mason, and Board members John Garrison, Bill Jensen, Kim Pierson, Mike Rusher and Marilee Szczerbala. Board member Patrick Adams joined the meeting at 6:15p.m, and Board member Pranathi Sana was absent.

Councilmember Brett Gantt was in attendance and Town staff members present were Planner II Shelly Mayo, 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 amended meeting minutes from May 20, 2021. A motion was made by Board member Garrison to approve the minutes, seconded by Board member Szczerbala, and the motion passed unanimously.

Announcements

Staff member Pendell announced a policy change wherein Board members now must sign an Oath of Office. The signatures must take place in person and notarized, which opened a discussion on whether the July EAB meeting would be in person. Board member Szczerbala asked about vaccination guidelines and staff member Pendell replied that all Town meetings adhere to current CDC guidelines. Chair Schaaf added that she would favor a call-option. An in-person July meeting may affect attendance, to which it is possible that Vice Chair Mason would step up to chair that meeting.

Committee Updates

The next Bee City Committee meeting is next week during National Pollinator Week. The Committee will discuss plans for PeakFest and has coordinated to partner with the Halle Cultural Arts Center event booth.

The last Tree Citizens Advisory Panel (CAP) meeting was on June 3rd. The committee has two open seats for new member appointment and there are two prospective members who have submitted applications. The Sustainability Team coordinated with Tree CAP and the committee will join the Sustainability Program event booth for Peakfest. The Tree Planting Program was approved and will

begin in October. One revision was made to the Program, whereas the Town will coordinate with the contractor to manage plantings for this program.

Sustainability Program Updates

The Apex Community Coalition was inspired by the Sustainability Team and formed as a 100% community-run committee comprised of Apex stakeholders that wish to engage with environmental and sustainability initiatives on the community level. The Coalition had their second meeting on June 9th where members established six Subcommittees: Education, Energy, Preservation, Schools, Sustainable Transit, and Waste Management.

Town Council approved the Sustainability Specialist position as a permanent full-time staff member of the Sustainability Team, and staff member Val will continue serving in the position. Council also approved the Sustainability Program budget, which includes funding for an Earth Week event, energy management software, Town building energy assessments, a Zero Waste Operations goal, pilot living wall project, pilot Town community garden project, and green revolving fund. Additionally, the Board was approved for a total funding of \$5,000, which includes educational booth, supplies and brochures.

New Member Introduction

Bill Jensen introduced himself as the newest member of the Board. He has lived in Apex since 1996, and ran for Town Council in 1999 out of concern for how the Town was growing. Councilmember Gantt added that it was a pleasure serving together on Council for two years and is excited to see his great contributions to the Board, especially after the work he has devoted for Town solar in years past.

Presentation: Triangle Land Conservancy

The presentation for the Triangle Land Conservancy (TLC) was given by Leigh Ann Hammerbacher, Director of Land Protection and Stewardship East. She presented the TLC mission, initiatives, and action plan for conserving 25,000 acres by 2025 across the Triangle. Aspects of their missions include protecting natural habitats by planting native species and restoring native plant communities, connecting people with nature through the creation of trails, preserves, and partner organizations and properties, supporting local farms and foods through the preservation of farmlands, and protecting clean drinking water across the region. The Upper Neuse Clean Water Initiative Impact, which TLC would like to replicate for Jordan Lake, is a long-term project that focuses on protecting water sources and conveyances, uplands, and vulnerable areas, while promoting infiltration and retention. The preservation goal was set in collaboration with various stakeholders in order to create a realistic goal. TLC acquires property for protection through donations, as well purchased properties in the form of conservation easements and land assists and transfers.

Vice Chair Mason asked if a map shown during the presentation was parcel by parcel or if it was identifying a general reservoir. Hammerbacher shared that TLC developed a raster-based model, which can be zoned out or looked at in individual parcels. Parcel-based maps tend not to be front and center, partly because TLC only works with voluntary landowners and some landowners request for privacy so their land is not highlighted on a map. Vice Chair Mason followed up and asked if this raster-based model could be shared as a map service, to which Hammerbacher said that it is not available as map-service, but that she could share that data and information with the Board. Vice Chair Mason asked how often the model is updated, and Hammerbacher replied that this plan was completed 3 years ago. The model is based on National Landcover Data which is updated every 5 years, and the TLC model is updated annually.

Board member Adams stated he has worked with TLC in the past, which opened a discussion on TLC staff. There are 22 staff members and the main TLC office is in downtown Durham with a satellite office at Williamson Farm Property.

Board member Garrison asked what the EAB could do to help the TLC mission. Hammerbacher stated that advocating for high priority areas and conservation funding would be helpful, and stated that it is critical to look at tracts for habitat value and water supply protection. Once a tract is on the market or sold, TLC is very limited in what it can do. As the Board reviews plans in pre-application meetings with developers, it would be helpful if Board members focused on natural features and priorities, and give recommendations on setting aside open space or incorporating natural features into developmental design. Lastly, the Board could advocate for the Town to allocate resources and funding for open space protection.

Staff member Mayo asked if TLC has a GIS file of the location of easements. Hammerbacher stated that the information is not shared publicly due to location sensitivity, but that she would be happy to share with staff for the purpose of aiding internal Town processes.

Dark Sky Workgroup: Updates

The Dark Sky Workgroup is comprised of Board members Adams, Garrison, Pierson, and Staff members Mayo and Pendell. Board member Pierson was identified as Lead and reported that the Workgroup hosted their second meeting on June 4th where they invited Tony Ferguson, Duke Energy Business Development Sales Manager, Rodney Smith, Apex Electric Technical Services Manager, and Jared Harris, Apex Electric Engineering Technician. Board members shared the purpose and goals of the Workgroup, including Dark Sky requirements the Board is interested in implementing as an amendment to the UDO and addition to the EAB Environmental Zoning Conditions list. Ferguson offered to share a spreadsheet with the Duke lighting product line. Smith shared that over 97% of Town light fixtures are owned and operated by Apex. The meeting continued and covered technical details, lighting design, and public preferences. Councilmember Gantt announced that Town Council passed a UDO amendment creating new baseline of 3500 kW as the external lighting requirement.

Peakfest Education Initiatives

Staff member Pendell provided population demographic estimates for Peakfest, informing the Board that about 15,000 people have attended in past years. The key topics the Board will educate on at PeakFest are Dark Sky, Pollinators, and Recycling. Staff member Pendell also shared that Tree CAP will be sharing the Sustainability Program booth and giving away trees. Potential activities and materials for the EAB tent was discussed, and included numerous options for swag giveaways, literature, and interactive games. A photobooth, blackboard, and recycling game were favored by the Board, and Chair Schaaf ultimately made a motion to empower Staff members Pendell and Mera to make the decisions on EAB swag for Peakfest, seconded by Board member Rusher. Final ideas and cost estimates will be presented at the July meeting.

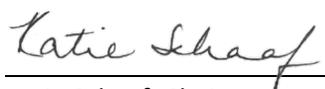
Adjourn

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



Megan Pendell, non-voting staff secretary

ATTEST:



Katie Schaaf, Chair