

APEX ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY BOARD

MEETING MINUTES

Meeting Date:
October 21st, 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
Greg Reger
Mike Rusher
Marilee Szczerbala

Call to Order & Roll Call

The remote Environmental Advisory Board (EAB) meeting was called to order by Chair Katie Schaaf at 6:01p.m. Members present were Chair Schaaf, Vice Chair Suzanne Mason, and Board members Patrick Adams, John Garrison, Kim Pierson, Greg Reger, Mike Rusher, and Marilee Szczerbala. Board member Bill Jensen briefly joined and then exited the meeting, and was considered absent.

Councilmember Brett Gantt was not in attendance. Town staff members present were Current Planning Manager Amanda Bunce, Environmental Engineering Manager Jessica Bolin, Sustainability Specialist 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 September 16, 2021. Hearing none, Vice Chair Mason made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Board member Garrison and the motion passed unanimously.

Announcements

Staff member Pendell prompted the introduction of Greg Reger, the newest member of the Board. Board member Reger introduced himself: He has lived in Apex for 2.5 years and works as the Sr. Strategic Planning and Performance Analyst for the City of Raleigh. Board member Reger is a LEED AP and installed solar on his house last year.

Committee Updates

The Bee City Committee last met on October 20th. The Committee is finalizing the Neighborhood Recognition Program. The Sustainability Team will introduce the Living Wall Pilot Project to the Committee at their next meeting in December.

The Tree Citizens Advisory Panel (CAP) cancelled their October meeting and the next meeting is scheduled for November 4th.

The Apex Community Coalition is currently working on a community curbside compost survey.

Pre-Application Meeting: Veridea Rezoning

Staff member Pendell admitted two representatives for the rezoning project, Veridea Rezoning, into the remote meeting access. The project representatives for Veridea Rezoning were Jessica Hardesty, Laura

Hollaman, and Scott Lay. Due to a miscommunication, project representative Lay joined the meeting during the discussion period and after the presentation was given by project representative Hardesty.

Project representative Hardesty explained that the purpose of the rezoning is to add 9 parcels to an existing Sustainable Development (SD) District. The Veridea development is located between Highway 1, Highway 55, and spans across NC Highway 540. The representatives provided a presentation on the rezoning proposal, further explaining Veridea as a proposed sustainable, mixed-use urban community on 1,100 acres within the Town of Apex. The Veridea SD Plan was approved May 2011, and has a 136-page zoning document with guiding principles for the sustainable development. Entitlements for the overall community include 8,000 residential units, 12 million square feet of office/industrial space, 3.5 million square feet of retail, and unrestricted hospitality, healthcare and community uses. The SD Zoning District was added to the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) at the same time Veridea was approved, and specified that any parcel within 2,000 feet of the Veridea zoning could be brought into the SD Plan if approved by Town Council. The 9 parcels total approximately 100 acres, and there is no specific use plan as it will be added to the larger SD project.

Items and questions discussed with the Board include:

- Tree Preservation/Replacement. The project team will follow UDO requirements on tree preservation and replacement. Anything beyond what's required will follow what is set forth in the existing SD plan. Whether the 9 parcels will be mass-graded ultimately depends on the overall plan.
- Riparian Buffers. The normal 50-ft and 100-ft riparian buffer rules would apply and would be a part of the resource conservation area (RCA) and open space plan.
- Stream/Pond Impact. The Board highlighted that there are 17 stream crossings on the larger Veridea site plan, but representatives cannot commit to saving the stream crossings since they are beyond the 9 parcels being proposed in the rezoning. Any ponds in these parcels will likely be drained and removed if determined non-jurisdictional. Further, the representatives mentioned that the team plans to invest in a permit process for environmental mitigation for the stream impacts associated with road crossings.
- Stormwater Controls. The project will follow established criteria for stormwater and is investigating the use of regional stormwater facilities.
- Increased Biodiversity. The Board requested that the project team plant pollinator-friendly flora and/or native flora. The representatives stated that they could consider this for the nine parcels but could not subject the rest of the property to that, though they plan to use drought tolerance and native plants for the larger property.
- RCA. The Board asked if the committed RCA-acreage is more than what is regulatory required. Representative Lay stated that the tree survey was just finished and will be submitted with the site plan. The Zoning requires a minimum of 100 acres of RCA and 160 acres of open space; the property currently has 116 acres of RCA and 250-300 acres of open space, therefore exceeding the minimum required. The Board requested that signage be added to mark the boundaries at lots that are adjacent to RCA to inform that the RCA should not be disturbed.
- Lighting. The Board requested Dark Sky Compliant Standards, including shielded outdoor lighting, minimal emission of blue light, and a color temperature of 3000K or less.
- SD District. The project is not considered a PUD because there were enough unique things about this property. Zoning district allowed specifically for this development because it includes single family to industrial to everything in between. Board member Mason stated that it seems that transportation aspect supersedes sustainability. Staff noted that the road network proposed is required by the state and Town.

Summary of Recommendations:

- Pursue renewably sourced energy supplies and maximize energy efficiency.

- Reduce pollutants to protect surface water bodies.
- Eliminate flooding within the Development and downstream.
- Enhancing safety and aesthetics for the public.
- Creating wildlife habitats and educational opportunities.
- Integrate a network of thoroughfares, sidewalks, and paths linked to public transportation to establish a connected circulation plan that reduces vehicular trips and overall emissions.
- Facilitate a mix of housing types, sizes and tenure options that allow all members of society to remain part of the community throughout the human life cycle.
- Establish a full-service pedestrian-friendly transit-oriented community that respects and encourages wellness and safety.
- Set aside Open Space and Civic Space throughout the community.
- Reduce, re-use and recycle construction and demolition materials whenever practicable.
- Produce a minimum of 25% of the expected electrical energy usage on site via solar photovoltaics (PV).
- Design rooftops to maximize their usage for solar PV systems and prewire all buildings for solar PV per town specifications.
- Where practical, meet the pre/post requirements for the 25-year and potentially the 100-year storm when designing the required Stormwater Control Measures (SCMs).
- Add a permit condition which does not allow for tree clearing, SCMs, or infrastructure in any zone of the riparian buffer.
- Increase biodiversity.
 - Plant pollinator-friendly flora.
 - Plant native flora (Refer to the Apex Design & Development Manual for approved native species).
- Add informational signage or other marking at the boundary of lots when they are adjacent to a wooded or natural condition RCA indicating that the area beyond the sign is RCA and is not to be disturbed.
- Include International Dark Sky Association compliance standards.
 - Outdoor lighting shall be shielded in a way that focuses lighting to the ground.
 - Lighting that minimizes the emission of blue light to reduce glare shall be used.
 - Lighting with a color temperature of 3000K or less shall be used for outside installations.
- Increase pervious surface.
 - Modify curb and gutters to provide stormwater infiltration and evaporation, such as swale-only, reverse curbs, Silva cells, or curb cuts with rain gardens.
 - Utilize green street design.

Board member Adams made a motion to approve the rezoning recommendations, seconded by Board member Szczerbala. Chair Schaaf, Board members Garrison, Szczerbala, Pierson, and Reger voted to approve. Vice Chair Mason and Board member Adams abstained and Board member Rusher voted against. The motion passed.

Potential UDO Amendments

Chair Schaaf explained that if there are certain recommendations that the Board finds critically important, and that a vast majority of developers agree to, the Board should start identifying those and propose them as UDO amendments. This would circumvent going over the same recommendations at each rezoning, because it would be a standing requirement of all developers and all projects anyway.

Chair Schaaf suggested that one of the first amendments could be related to lighting; the Dark Sky workgroup is currently updating the entire section of the UDO related to lighting. Staff member Bunce reminded the Board that the UDO regulates what happens on private property, but does not regulate streetlights.

Board member Szczerbala suggested amending the UDO by changing the number of native plants required when replanting and repairing vegetation in a riparian buffer from 2 types of native species to 3-4 types.

Staff member Pendell and Chair Schaaf suggested forming a workgroup focused on UDO amendments, which Staff member Bunce agreed to participate in. Staff member Bunce reminded the Board that any amendments need to be objective and clear cut with no room for interpretation. Further, state legislation is constantly changing and may occasionally hamper their ability to change the UDO. Chair Schaaf asked the Board to send any UDO amendment ideas to Staff member Pendell.

Tree CAP and Bee City Committee Liaison Proposal

At the Special Committee meeting in August, Chair Schaaf asked both committees to help with language on specific zoning conditions that relate to their focus areas. Chair Schaaf asked if anyone on the Board would volunteer in attending the Committee meetings to follow up on these recommendations and help tighten the language in the Suggested Environmental Zoning Conditions list. Board member Szczerbala volunteered to attend the Bee City Committee meetings, and Vice Chair Mason volunteered to attend the Tree CAP meetings.

Open Discussion

Board member Adams asked if there were specific planting materials that the Board would be asking developers to install when they recommend pollinator gardens. Staff member Bunce will follow up with Planning Staff and provide more information on this at the next Board 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 7:25p.m.



Megan Pendell, non-voting staff secretary

ATTEST:



Katie Schaaf, Chair