



TOWN OF CARRBORO

Environmental Advisory Board

301 West Main Street, Carrboro, North Carolina 27510

RECOMMENDATION

May 7, 2020

Motion to approve made by Kaufman, seconded by O'Connor, that the EAB recommends the following:

The Environmental Advisory Board (EAB) has provided advice and helped to prepare guiding documents and proposed regulations to the town for many years. In 2018, the town created a Stormwater Advisory Commission (SAC) to address specific problems of stormwater management. However, since the SAC does not typically participate in the Joint Review process, the EAB's oversight function for stormwater did not change. In 2019, EAB was asked to address the town's response to climate change. Since then, the EAB has been working on climate change issues in addition to its traditional duties.

Those traditional duties had already been keeping the EAB quite busy, often requiring late-night sessions and then special meetings to get the work done. We found that, in order to make progress on the Climate questions, additional special meetings were often needed. In addition, it became clear that many of the members on the newly constituted EAB had stronger interest in either the traditional functions of the EAB or in the more recent climate charter.

There was consensus among the EAB members that the climate issue is sufficiently important to merit its own advisory board. The EAB drafted a series of recommendations for climate action at the municipal and town levels. Among these was the proposal that the town create a dedicated staff position to address climate change. We also drafted a memo calling for the creation of a new Climate Action and Sustainability Commission (CASC).

To correct some narratives that we have heard repeated, it was not the intent of the EAB to simply "morph" into the Climate Board. It was emphatically never our intention that the existing EAB should be dismantled.

The current structure of the EAB provides a focused panel of engaged citizens, most of whom have subject-matter expertise from a variety of disciplines. The proposed reorganization will eliminate the EAB, dividing its functions among other boards, effectively silencing the focused discussion on environmental issues that concern the town, and dismantling the expertise that the EAB represents.

Ironically, the nature of EAB meetings has shifted over the past couple of years, to the point where we routinely have at least six visitors from the general public attending all of our sessions, with some guests contributing their own research into the topics under discussion. EAB has grown into a model of what an advisory board should be, with a talented and informed membership that invites active participation from the general public.

Some examples of EAB contributions in the past year include:

- Raising issues about the FLX Zoning site, including the Meadow Flats wetlands, proximity to a climate research station, and the existence of a sensitive ecosystem as exhibited by the presence of a species of special concern in North Carolina
- Recommending that the developer adhere to the existing Town regulations regarding lighting within the Lloyd Farm development.

- The EAB has proposed a revision to the LUO that would require EV charging stations and/or infrastructure in parking lots. So far, all developers have agreed to the EAB's recommendations for EV charging stations in accordance with our proposed draft wording for changes to the LUO.
- Revisions to the Land Use Ordinance regarding tree protection and canopy cover, as well as creating a list of recommended native tree species for developments

The first two items in the list are a direct result of input from the knowledgeable and interested members of the public who regularly attended EAB meetings and contributed research. It is hard to see how these accomplishments could have happened under the proposed Advisory Board reorganization.

In our view, the question before us is not a simple administrative matter, but really comes down to whether the people of Carrboro will continue to have a voice in the town government, especially as far as environmental and climate issues are concerned.

We unanimously recommend, in the strongest possible terms, that the Town Council approve the formation of a new Climate Action and Sustainability Commission (CASC), while leaving the existing EAB charter unaltered. The work will not be completed in an acceptable manner if there are not two Advisory Boards. The functions of development review and climate action are both important and each deserves its own Advisory Board.

VOTE:

AYES: (3) Kaufman, Turner, O'Connor

ABSENT/EXCUSED: (0)

NOES: (0)

ABSTENTIONS: (0)



For Chair Tim Turner

5-7-20
(Date)