

TOWN OF CARRBORO

PLANNING BOARD

301 West Main Street, Carrboro, North Carolina 27510

Thursday, September 17, 2015

Comments - Community Climate Action Plan

The Community Climate Action Plan is admirably exhaustive, thoughtful and thought provoking. The Planning Board commends the members of the Energy and Climate Action Task Force for the time and expertise they clearly poured into this document. We respectfully submit the following comments and questions.

General comments and questions:

- The Board's overriding concern is the absence of a measurable way to demonstrate progress toward the Plan's goals. Similarly, the Plan is vague about how individual recommendations will be evaluated. The Board recognizes that this is a tall order but believes it is critical to the Plan's success.
- The Plan is written in a dense and occasionally jargon-y way. It often refers to language or concepts that may not be familiar to a lay audience. If presented to the public, it should be trimmed and edited for impact and accessibility.
- The Board suggests clarifying the goal itself. The goal (p. 5) proposes a 50% reduction for "Town operations" and the "business and transportation 'sectors'" (presumably those operated by the Town) within ten years. The 50% reduction is expected to extend "ultimately" to residents and businesses. Are these two separate goals? Will a more precise deadline be set in the future for residents and businesses? It is hard to convey urgency and galvanize change with a fuzzy statement and imprecise timeline.
- Approximately how much will implementation of the Plan cost? Is it possible to estimate a budget?
- Most recommendations come with an introductory section that connects the proposed action with climate change mitigation. It would be helpful if this is done consistently throughout the Plan.
- The Board supports the hiring of a coordinator, either full-time in Carrboro, or shared with another jurisdiction, perhaps Hillsborough or Pittsboro.

- Sustainability should be recognized as a civic virtue. The Plan does a good job of addressing and involving all the local-level participants shown in Table 1 (p.8). It fosters a sense of engagement and “we’re all in this together”-ness that can drive real behavioral change.

Comments about specific recommendations:

Community Integration

- Rec. #2 – The Plan is right to emphasize partnerships with existing organizations. This leads to cost savings, accelerated learning, broader outreach and more. Composting and storm water utility are two areas noted in the report where partnerships seem particularly suited.
- Rec. #6 – singled out for support.

Buildings

- Rec. #3 – The state building code is one of the most stringent in the nation and largely outside the ability of the town to control. Other voluntary forms of certification like LEED already exist. This may not be the most fruitful place to expend effort.

Transportation

- Rec. #3 – The connection between Carrboro and more regional bus routes is poor. Good to see expansion of service identified here and a lot more can be accomplished.
- Rec. #6 – Nice idea. It’s a simple step that can have real impact.

Renewable Energy

- Rec. #1 – Members of the Board voiced support for the idea of Carrboro becoming a utility provider. While there are real legislative, financial and administrative hurdles, the town should at least make the attempt. Also, the town should support, by messaging the state and our state representatives, continuing tax credits for sustainable efforts - solar, solar hot water, geothermal, etc.
- Rec. #2 – Also received support from Board members, who likened bonds to old-fashioned crowd sourcing (i.e., “gives citizens a chance to put their money where their mouths are”).

Ecosystem Protection and Enhancement

- Rec. #1 – The Board liked the idea of a storm water utility. Even if a separate utility is not created, a storm water fee should be set aside from general revenues. It seems better to collect this along with property taxes since a small monthly or quarterly bill would be annoying and expensive to process.
- Rec. #3 – Board members expressed two thoughts here. The first was that the county, not the town, is the most qualified entity to run a composting collection program. The county is already skilled in the collection of material and the maintenance of collection centers, and it manages the end of the flow - the landfills. The second noted the savings to the town through reduced tipping fees as well as a benefit to OWASA thanks to the reduction of compostable material that is currently run through garbage disposals.

Environmental Advisory Board
301 West Main Street, Carrboro, North Carolina 27510

R E C O M M E N D A T I O N

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 1, 2015

Draft Community Climate Action Plan Review

Stormwater Funding Resolution

Motion made by Reddy and seconded by Crook that the EAB pass on the following resolution to the Climate and Energy Task Force, the Board of Aldermen, and staff.

Whereas, Carrboro's Energy and Climate Task Force has recommended that the Town pursue the formation of a stormwater utility, or join Chapel Hill's utility; and

Whereas, benthic monitoring has identified concerns for the health of Bolin Creek for over a decade, and stormwater runoff impacts Morgan Creek and other creeks in Carrboro; and

Whereas, the EAB believes that the Town is responsible not only for surface water protection from new development but also for surface water restoration from many decades of neglect; and

Whereas, the EAB commends the Town for taking steps to exceed minimum State requirements for stormwater volume control and water quality buffers for new development, for past work with the Bolin Creek Watershed Restoration Team to restore the aquatic health of Bolin Creek, and in general for land use planning and policies that have to some extent reduced surface water impacts from new development and exceeded what many other jurisdictions have pursued in recent years; and

Whereas, the Town participated in the development of a Watershed Restoration Plan for Bolin Creek, but has not been able to maintain momentum or pursue implementation with watershed restoration efforts in the absence of prioritization of the plan through dedicated funding and additional Town capacity; and

Whereas, the EAB believes that watershed restoration progress will be severely hindered if not impossible by relying strictly on very limited and occasional grant funding; and

Whereas, the EAB aspires to the Town exceeding its NPDES Phase II stormwater permit requirements rather than minimally complying with the requirements; and

Whereas, the Jordan Lake Existing Development Rules will place a significant multimillion dollar financial burden on the Town in the next decade; and

Whereas, the extent of the current approach to planning for the Jordan Lake Existing Development Rules financial burden is to include identified projects in the Town's Capital Improvement Program; and

Whereas, citizens of the Town regularly experience flooding impacts, however, the Town has not yet been able to holistically or proactively respond to these impacts; and

Whereas, it is predicted that Carrboro will experience more frequent heavy rain events and associated stormwater management challenges in light of climate change; and

Whereas, the EAB concludes that Carrboro needs dedicated, predictable and considerably more funding to improve stormwater management efforts; and

Whereas, Chapel Hill has formed a stormwater utility that has significantly increased Chapel Hill's ability to more proactively manage stormwater and includes a diversity of full time professional staff, including staffing to help citizens understand the causes and consequences of stormwater runoff and the ways in which individuals can limit the polluted runoff leaving their property; and

Whereas, stormwater utilities are an increasingly adopted best practice in North Carolina and elsewhere. According to the UNC Environmental Finance Center; there are currently 55 utilities operating in North Carolina, including many utilities in small towns; and

Whereas, the EAB believes that, by reference, the typical/average stormwater utility fee of \$1/month/1000 sq. ft. of impervious surface for North Carolina stormwater utilities is one which a majority of Carrboro residents would be willing to pay if the revenue is well managed, especially if provisions are included so that the fee structure not be burdensome to lower income residents.

Therefore, the EAB recommends that the Town prioritize efforts to investigate and pursue means for financing stormwater management efforts that create a dedicated, long term, sustainable, and equitable funding stream to better manage stormwater runoff and improve local stream health; and

Furthermore, the EAB endorses the Task Force's recommendation and specifically recommends that, at a minimum, the Town consider either joining Chapel Hill's stormwater utility or creating a new stormwater utility.

VOTE:

AYES: Crook, O'Connor, Patrick, Reddy, Sinclair, Turner

ABSENT/EXCUSED: Cotter

NOES: None

ABSTENTIONS: None

Deer Herd Management Resolution

Motion made by Turner and seconded by Crook that the EAB pass on the following resolution to the Climate and Energy Task Force, the Board of Aldermen, and staff.

Whereas, Carrboro's Energy and Climate Task Force has recommended that the Town pursue a deer herd management program; and

Whereas, studies have shown that excess deer are adversely affecting the health of our forests, which are carbon sinks, by causing a decrease in plant diversity and aiding in the spread of exotic species; and

Whereas, soil studies have shown that the seed stores in areas with deer overpopulation are shifting from native wildflowers and woody plants to invasive plants and grasses; and

Whereas, the current deer herd population is probably on the order of 5-10 times the optimal size for overall ecosystem health; and

Whereas, a reduced/better managed deer population would also improve the overall health of the deer population and decrease the incidence of deer/vehicle collisions; and

Whereas, studies have found that the least expensive and most effective method for deer herd management is through culling programs, often focusing on an urban archery program that can be tailored to a community and also provide food to people in need; and

Whereas, such programs have been safely and successfully implemented in Duke Forest, Chapel Hill, Durham, Raleigh, Pittsboro and many other towns in North Carolina, and

Whereas, while culling can be seen as a safety issue, there have been no documented archery-related accidents in NC for the past 40 years; and

Whereas, the NC Wildlife Resources Commission and others are available to advise the Town about the feasibility of creating a program that is tailored to the needs of Carrboro and addresses all concerns.

Therefore, the EAB endorses the Task Force recommendation that Carrboro reopen the consideration of implementing its own deer herd management program to reduce negative impacts on forest regeneration and ecosystem health and biodiversity and protect our forests from an expanding deer population that is too large now and may grow; and

Furthermore, the EAB specifically recommends that the Town take whatever steps needed towards a goal of submitting a letter of intent to participate in the Urban Archery Season program of the NC Wildlife Resources Commission.

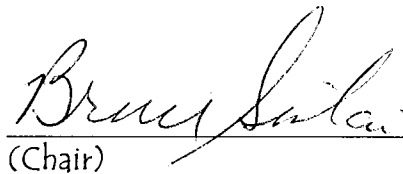
VOTE:

AYES: Crook, O'Connor, Patrick, Reddy, Sinclair, Turner

ABSENT/EXCUSED: Cotter

NOES: None

ABSTENTIONS: None


(Chair)

10/2/15
(Date)

Environmental Advisory Board
301 West Main Street, Carrboro, North Carolina 27510

R E C O M M E N D A T I O N

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 2015

Community Climate Action Plan Review

Motion made by O'Connor and seconded by Patrick that the EAB endorses the recommendations related to ecosystem protection and restoration in the Community Climate Action Plan.

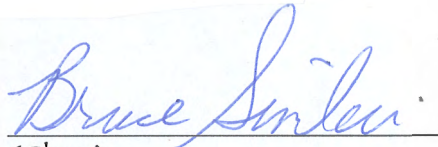
VOTE:

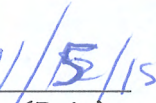
AYES: Cotter, Crook, O'Connor, Patrick, Reddy, Sinclair, Turner

ABSENT/EXCUSED: None

NOES: None

ABSTENTIONS: None


(Chair)


(Date)



TOWN OF CARRBORO

Transportation Advisory Board

301 West Main Street, Carrboro, North Carolina 27510

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 15, 2015

Transportation Advisory Board Comments re: Climate Action Plan

The Transportation Advisory Board discussed the Climate Action Plan. The TAB offers the following comments:

- Preamble

The TAB suggests the Climate Change Task Force move its Transportation Recommendation 1 to the preamble given how difficult a 50-percent reduction in GHG emissions by 2025 will be. It further recommends the preamble's focus be expanded to include wider societal demands that play into a carbon problem, along with possible solutions beyond bicycle/pedestrian infrastructure as well bus ridership, from carbon trading to possible tax breaks. The TAB has some concerns, moreover, with being asked in the Climate Change Task Force Report to take on numerous new tasks.

- Transportation Recommendation 1: 50% Challenge (Reduce GHG emissions by 50% by 2025).

The TAB lauds the Climate Change Task Force's high bar, but believes the goal's "achievability" will be difficult, certainly by the date of 2025. The TAB, therefore, recommends Transportation Recommendation 1 be included instead in the preamble to the task force's report, rather than as a recommendation. Specifically, the goal's "achievability" will be difficult without the wide-scale introduction of electric cars and other changes at a greater societal level.

When considering the reduction of GHG emissions, the Town of Carrboro should investigate a wide array of options, including but not limited to land-use patterns, reevaluation of current bus transit routes, improved bus-transit routes with expanded hours, the need for convenient circulator buses, a Bus Rapid Transit system, and working with business and non-profit partners to encourage employee flex time, remote-work possibilities, on-site daycare, business delivery services, and other offerings such as employee showers for those cycling to work, which have proven successful in the past.

- Transportation Recommendation 2: Improved Bike/Ped Infrastructure

The TAB recommends the Town of Carrboro conduct an updated, comprehensive reassessment of the Bolin Creek bike-path plan in terms of the need, utility, function, appropriateness and viability of completing Phases 3 and 4. Such a reassessment should include sufficient technical information to address all related climate-change impacts from GHG-emission reduction to stream protection, and include an updated alternative-route assessment. The UNC-constructed bridge that crosses Bolin Creek, moreover, has changed the pattern of pedestrian behavior, thereby making the possibility of a paved Bolin Creek greenway at this point, it is noted, somewhat redundant.

All current alignments, meanwhile, present practical difficulties, from topographical concerns to low-lighting in winter to issues of public safety to most likely limited commuter bike-ridership. The TAB, therefore, suggests the Town of Carrboro look at the entire upper Bolin Creek Watershed area, including land under the jurisdiction of its neighbors, Chapel Hill and UNC, with the intention of being complimentary with Chapel Hill's greenway plan.

The TAB suggests the completion and possible paving of the Bolin Creek bike path appears to be overemphasized in the report and does not integrate that well with current and specific planning related to various segments of the Town's bike/pedestrian efforts as discussed and weighed in on by the TAB. The costs, moreover, have yet to be defined. Given the controversy surrounding this matter, the TAB believes it to be beyond its purview to resolve this matter without more substantive background information, and believes a facilitation process may be required once the needed reassessment is completed.

Regarding the other recommendations under 2, the TAB strongly supports the Climate Change Task Force's recommendations, including its recommendation of "creating bicycle boulevards by adding traffic calming features" through its recommendation of "ensuring sufficient bike parking." The TAB has worked continuously on such matters. Suggested as well is that raingardens be used for traffic-calming, beautification and climate-protection measures as a component of the "Green Streets" recommendation, and that the Town of Carrboro seek funding for them.

- Transportation Recommendation 3: Enhanced Transit Service

The TAB suggests the focus be on existing bus lines, thereby increasing land-use efficiency by focusing on intensified land use along existing transit lines as a way to maximize the value of existing bus lines as opposed to creating new underutilized bus lines. The TAB advises an in-depth reevaluation of existing bus services as to frequency, days of service, the expansion of some existing routes and the shortening of others. The TAB believes a bus system with a better

routing system would be more friendly and efficient for citizens. Rogers Road also needs more service. Helpful as well would be the optimization of Carrboro's connection with Bus Rapid Transit.

- Transportation Recommendation 4: Improve Vanpool/Carpool Options

The TAB suggests a clarification be made when speaking of converting existing parking spaces. The way the recommendation is worded suggests new paving could be required where, instead, a good move is to increase *van share* parking spaces where appropriate.

The TAB encourages resources such as "Share the Ride," which attempt to promote carpooling.

- Transportation Recommendation 5: Additional Promotion of Walking, Biking, Transit

The TAB supports promotion, but believes there is a limit to the effectiveness of such promotion.

The TAB feels *lowering the speed limit recommendation* may not suffice as "promotion." Street redesign should be considered in conjunction with any reduction in speed limit. Street redesign also aids in enforcement of speed limits. Therefore, the TAB believes this recommendation should be relocated in the Climate Change Task Force's report. The TAB believes efforts to make the town more multi-use friendly should include not only street redesign and speed-limit reductions but also bike sharing (regional and local), traffic calming devices and the former TAB recommendation of a wider slow-zone downtown to include gateway architecture/art to define this zone.

The TAB supports the "Park and Stroll" recommendation as it promotes walking and vehicular efficiency, but such walking routes need to be shown to be safe.

The TAB suggests a bike-donation program be included in the recommendations. If bike sharing is to be considered, moreover, it should be done on a regional level, including not only across Carrboro but also across Chapel Hill and UNC.

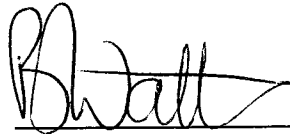
The TAB also suggests a neighborhood-based/community "walking school bus" program as a good promotional idea.

- Transportation Recommendation 6: Idling in School Zones

The TAB believes this recommendation may suffer from enforceability problems. Moreover, it is somewhat over-specific in contrast to other recommendations. Therefore, the TAB suggests it be relocated to another recommendation, possibly number 1.

The TAB believes a concentration on education rather than enforcement will be most helpful. The TAB suggests working with the local school system to discuss opportunities for solutions to its related carbon footprint at its facilities. One possibility is a better drop-off system at schools. Another is ensuring school-bike parking (and enough of it) be available.

The TAB suggests there is value in looking again at the reduction of driving at the local high schools, for instance by adding multiple lunch periods, thus keeping students on campus for lunch. This, however, may be unpopular with constituents.

 For Linda Haac

Transportation Advisory Board Chair

11/6/15
Date