

Environmental Sustainability Committee

June 13, 2024 Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Leslie Kepler (Chair), Rich Sampson (Co-Chair), Dan Fogel, Dana Hicks, Mary Ann Sprung, Trisha Knight, Jeremy Shook

Members Absent: Diana Truman, Kerem Saral

Commissioners: Mayor Pro Tem Jennifer Hunt (board liaison)

Staff: Tracy Houk, Assistant Director – Parks and Recreation (staff liaison)

Chair, Leslie Kepler called the meeting to order (3:35 pm).

Approval of May Minutes – Approved unanimous vote

Public comments, presentations, or requests.

- Scott Higgins and Susan Johnson – Cornelius Town Board members: interested in how the towns can work together on sustainability initiatives, possibly applying for grants as a team.

Business items:

- **Wine on The Vine recap**
 - J Shook – good first outing, good conversations, great first step and would like to do more.
 - M Sprung – Not sure if everyone she spoke with had a concept in mind of what sustainability is. If we as a committee don't have a concept of what we are talking about, it is hard for us to survey other people. An enjoyable evening and a great way to introduce ourselves to people who were there.
 - L Kepler – the definition of sustainability is a broad subject to discuss. Might want to consider to come up with terms of how we are conceptualizing it. How do we want to sell sustainability to the community
 - D Fogel – Talked to a few people
 - Commissioner Hunt – Great opportunity for us to get out and let people know we exist. Many people talked about recycling. We need to get more of these types of things on the calendar so that we can get out and talk to more people in the community.
 - No upcoming events are planned at the moment. Staff will pass along a list of Parks and Recreation events.
 - Scott Higgins – Cornelius is just starting, main concern is tree canopy. Many trees have been cut down due to road projects. Enjoyed the Wine on The Vine event, this was a great event to get people thinking about sustainability on a greenway.
 - Possibly create a sub-group to come up with a "pitch" about the committee and what sustainability means
- **Survey Results / Sustainability Plan for The Town of Huntersville**
 - Exhibit A – see attached

- Do we want to post/push out through town socials/website?
- L Kepler - What are we asking? Are they correct topics that will be useful to us as an advisory board and what do we want to communicate to our town board? More conversation on the survey and who it is going to.
- D Fogel – What is the process issue? How do we send out information? More clarification on how we communicate outside of a meeting.
- L Kepler – status on repository, agenda and minutes, where are those found?
 - Bobby is looking into a repository
 - Agendas and Minutes are found on the website
 - Emails should not be sent to the whole committee unless everyone is BBC'd – concerned about the Public Meeting Law
 - If a discussion is needed for a topic, it should be placed on the agenda
 - How to place an item on the agenda:
 - Members can email Leslie with topics
 - Leslie will pass along to Rich and Town Staff to discuss best topics for the agenda.
 - Agenda Items due: Wednesday of the week before meeting week.
- Members should refer to the [Huntersville 2040 Plan](#), there is a lot of good information in the document that we can use.
 - We don't need to slow down, a lot of time has passed
- L Kepler – Circling back around to pushing out the survey, what is our decision?
 - Review Dan's email about surveys and consider some other things prior to pushing out the survey again.
 - Trisha – Rich's point on the 2040 plan was great. There are some things in terms of the environment and sustainability we need to do and public opinion about it, we need to find out if they want to find out more about x,y,z – there are things already discussed in the Plan that we can use to help inform everyone. We should start moving on something that is already in the 2040 plan – developing our sustainability definition and sharing it on the website. Work on other things from the 2040 plan while we create a better survey.
- L Kepler - What would a "To-Do" item be for each of the members based on discussion today prior to next meeting? Dan's email, 2040 Plan, Survey in general...As a group each of us have an assignment so we come prepared to the next meeting.
- S Higgins – what commonality things do we have on our list we can look at working together?
- Commissioner Hunt – There is a section about the environment and open space. We shouldn't get too caught in the weeds focusing on the survey that we actually aren't really doing anything.
 - D Fogel – what is most useful to you, what would you like to happen?
 - Commissioner Hunt – Have something we can push out in the community. What we learned from Wine on The Vine is their baseline is pretty low. This gives us data to take to town board to start a small sustainable initiatives that the community wants.

- J Shook - What is the Board looking for us to do? I don't feel like we have a clear understanding of what we should be doing.
 - Commissioner Hunt – we may be getting a sustainability consultant to help us out with creating the plan. It is also important to get out in the community to do education and talk to the residents about sustainability. Sharing small things they can implement in their everyday lives.
 - 60% engaging with the community and advising the town board / 40% working on the plan
 - “Quick Hit”: composting? Looking into grants for a pilot composting program.
 - L Kepler – when I think of a “Plan”, I think of what the Town of Davidson came up with. Involves the big picture and a lot of steps down the road to get there, when I think about a plan for the Town of Huntersville, it's not about whether people are composting it is about what are policies, how can the town board influence development and traffic? I love that people want to recycle, but I would like the committee to spend their time on what the town board can influence and the big picture.
 - J Shook – Review of the plan he put together
 - Exhibit B – see attached
 - Defining the scope is the most important part of the plan, this will be done by engaging with the community and finding out what does sustainability mean to the Huntersville residents.
 - Trying to get a plan on paper will help guide this group in the right direction.
 - M Shook – Are only communities that have plan able to apply for the IRA for Inflation Reduction Act?
 - Developing a plan would help us get money for those things we want to do in the future.
 - L Kepler - Back to the focus for July? Is it about the survey? Is it about the plan? Is it a combination?
 - R Sampson – Least interested in the survey and most interested in the bench marking for the other towns. Looking at the 2040 plan. I don't believe surveys are worth it, they are really complicated if you want to do them right. I worry about not reaching the under representative groups.
 - D Fogle - I agree with Jen's thought about getting us out in the community and looking for opportunities. Looking at the 2040 plan, more than 90% of those surveyed want to use other means of transportation.
 - L Kepler – Consultants will look at the survey and go “okay, that is a nice start”, but may recommend other work will need to be done. What I always did on projects was my due diligence.
 - Back to July focus: look at the 2040 Plan and become familiar with it. What else?

- Cornelius Representatives – Everything sounds great, the 3 towns need to get on the same page and work together. It doesn't make sense to all work within our bubbles. Davidson has a comprehensive plan, Huntersville is just starting, and Cornelius has nothing.
 - L Kepler – Maybe we should look at the Davidson and see what we would want in our plan. Instead of us starting from scratch, let's see what matches up with what the community wants and relay that to the consultant.
 - Wrap-up: Look at the 2040 Plan, review the Davidson Plan, and if we are leaning towards benchmarking, suggest some other towns to look at. One thing to learn is what they went through to create the plan. We will get a list from Bobby.
 - Commissioner Hunt – We spoke to Davidson about how they started out and what mistakes they made. They said hire a consultant early in the process.
 - **Community Outreach – Seasonal Plantings/Pollinator Garden**
 - Commissioner Hunt – The town has a good relationship with Huntersville Presbyterian Church which has a plot of land used for a community garden.
 - Time Line: Late summer prep & outreach/fall planting
 - M Sprung disagrees with a community pollinator garden, we should not be using our time thinking about gardens. We are an advisory committee to the Town about environmental sustainability in the Town of Huntersville. I am focused on the reduction of carbon emissions.
 - D Fogel - This could also give people who would be critical of us anyway to say, "Hey, you know what they are working on? They are planting flowers"
 - L Kepler – I love gardens, but I would agree about how our time is spent as committee members. This comes back to looking at the big picture vs. the smaller picture.
 - L Kepler – Jen, where does this leave you?
 - Commissioner Hunt – It is up to the group, if there is no interest in doing a garden, then we don't have to do one. It is an opportunity to get into the community. We are looking at different ways to get into the community and share ideas of what people can do at home.
 - L Kepler – What is the first step?
 - Commissioner Hunt – I wanted to see if there was interest in the project first, then reach out to the church.
- **Table this item for next meeting for more discussion**

Updates & Comments

- Future Meetings? In-person or virtual? Can we do hybrid meetings?
 - Staff will look into this option
- Can we record the meetings for people who miss them to watch at a later date?
 - Staff will look into this as well

Meeting adjourned – 5:03 pm

Exhibit A

ESC_May2024

Edit

Project Engagement

VIEWS

54

PARTICIPANTS

16

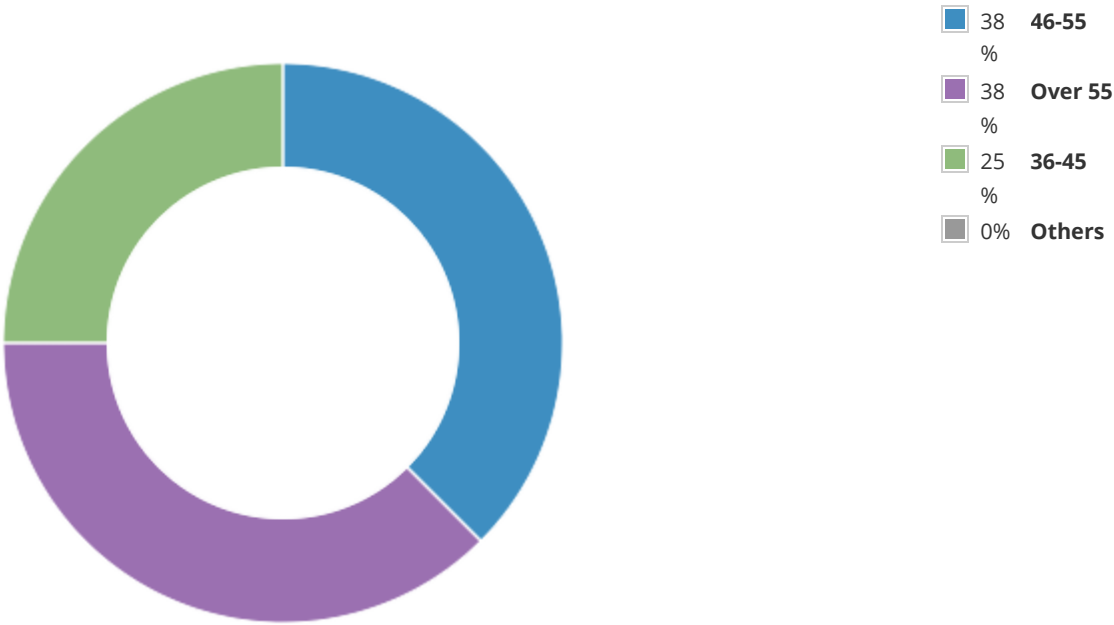
RESPONSES

326

COMMENTS

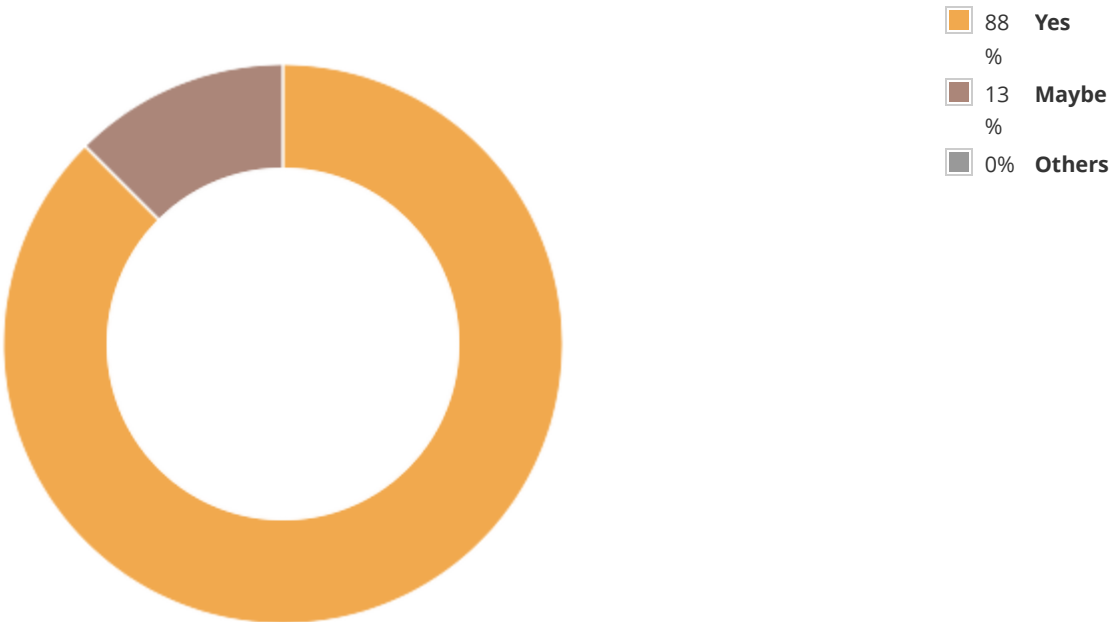
21

How old are you?



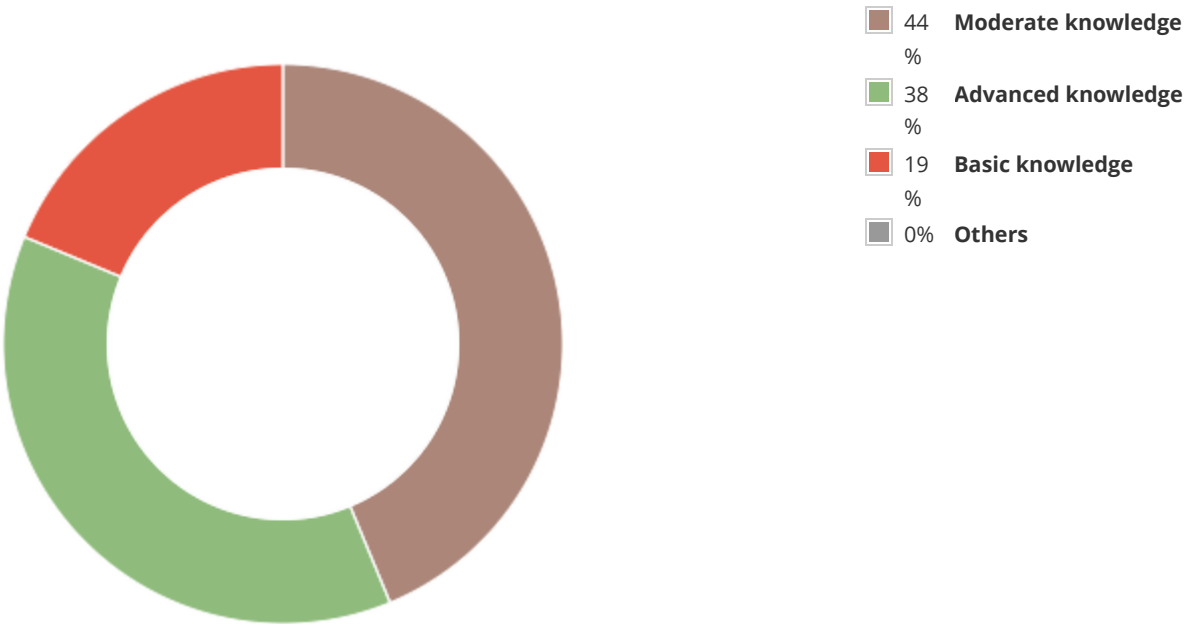
16 respondents

Are you interested in Huntersville becoming more sustainable?



16 respondents

How would you rate your knowledge about environmental issues?



16 respondents

What sustainability practices are you aware of?

100%	Recycling	16 ✓
94%	Reducing water usage	15 ✓
88%	Conserving energy	14 ✓
81%	Using renewable energy	13 ✓
81%	Planting trees	13 ✓
69%	Composting	11 ✓
63%	Supporting local businesses	10 ✓
63%	Reducing food waste	10 ✓

16 Respondents

What sustainability initiatives do you/have you personally participate(d) in?

Recycling, supporting local, electric vehicles

one month ago

Recycling, supporting local businesses

one month ago

All of the above

one month ago

Recycling

one month ago

Recycling. Energy conservation

one month ago

Recycling, conserving energy, supporting local businesses

one month ago

Recycling, composting, renewable energy

one month ago

Recycling

one month ago

Recycling

one month ago

Which sustainable transportation options do you use regularly?

67%	Walking	10 ✓
33%	Bicycling	5 ✓
27%	Carpooling	4 ✓
27%	Electric vehicle	4 ✓
20%	Public transportation	3 ✓
0%	I don't use sustainable transportation	0 ✓

15 Respondents

Which sustainable packaging options do you prefer?

87%	Recyclable	13 ✓
80%	Biodegradable	12 ✓
67%	Reusable	10 ✓
60%	Plastic-free	9 ✓
47%	Compostable	7 ✓
7%	I have no preference	1 ✓

15 Respondents

What sustainable practices or initiatives would you like to see in your community?

EV charging (not necessarily for me)

one month ago

Not sure

one month ago

Not sure

one month ago

Don't allow construction companies to clear cut. Use Wynfield as an example. Most trees were prioritized & building and was designed to complement them.

one month ago

More recycling locations/options in public spaces, especially for plastic bottles

one month ago

More recycling pickups, more recycling cans in public areas

one month ago

Which of the following sustainable lifestyle choices do you prioritize?

93%	Reducing waste through recycling and composting	14 ✓
67%	Conserving energy at home	10 ✓
53%	Using eco-friendly household products	8 ✓
47%	Supporting ethical and fair-trade brands	7 ✓
40%	Eating a plant-based diet	6 ✓
27%	Minimizing water usage	4 ✓
20%	Participating in community clean-up and conservation initiatives	3 ✓
7%	Other	1 ✓

15 Respondents

What barriers or obstacles do you face in adopting a more sustainable lifestyle?

Everything comes in plastic!

one month ago

Lack of dedicated bike lanes makes it difficult to use biking as a primary mode of transportation to local businesses, etc.

one month ago

Electric cars and bikes are greatly overpriced and the charging infrastructure isn't sufficient

one month ago

No accessible public transport and walkways near my home

one month ago

Lack of knowledge and enthusiasm in the community

one month ago

Which of the following food-related sustainable practices do you follow?

80%	Reducing food waste	12 ✓
73%	Eating seasonal and local produce	11 ✓
67%	Planting a vegetable garden	10 ✓
40%	Supporting organic farming	6 ✓
33%	Choosing sustainably sourced seafood	5 ✓
7%	Not following any food-related sustainable practices	1 ✓

15 Respondents

Proposed Plan to Develop Huntersville Sustainability Strategy

Exhibit B

TASK	DESCRIPTION	DUE	PRESENT TO TOWN BOARD
Initial Public Engagement	Obtain input from the town citizens on what they would like to see the town do around sustainability	8/31/24	
Perform Research and Benchmarking	Perform research on other towns and <u>municipalities</u>	9/30/24	
Define Scope of the Strategy	Based on input from the town citizens and the research	10/31/24	X
Develop 1 st Draft	Develop 1 st draft of Huntersville Sustainability Strategy	2/28/24	
Perform Public Engagement	Engage with the public to get feedback on <u>a the</u> draft Strategy through a variety of means: website, email, workshops, social events	4/30/24	
Develop 2 nd Draft	Develop 2 nd draft of Huntersville Sustainability Strategy for submittal to the Town Board for review and comment	5/31/24	X
Issue Final	Develop final version of the Huntersville Sustainability Strategy and issue publicly	6/30/24	