

Environmental Sustainability Committee February 13, 2025 Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Leslie Kepler (Chair), Rich Sampson (Vice Chair), Dan Fogel, Dana Hicks, Trisha Knight, Anne Marie O'Neill and Mary Ann Sprung

Members Absent: Jeremy Shook

Commissioners Present: Mayor Pro Tem Jennifer Hunt (board liaison)

Staff Present: Bobby Williams, Assistant Town Manager (staff liaison), Lindsay Small, Recreation Superintendent

Chair Kepler called meeting to order at 3:30.

Discussion of minutes – no further changes proposed. Dan Fogel made motion to approve, which was seconded by Chair Kepler. Motion carried unanimously.

Related to last meeting, Trisha Knight questioned whether the committee should vote in the future on items upon the first time hearing them and with any respective presenters in the room. For instance, she continues to have reservations about the VAD and thought it might be better for the committee to have time for reflection. Mary Ann Sprung states she liked the idea of taking more time before any votes.

Agenda Changes – Trisha Knight asked to add Voluntary Agricultural Districts (VAD) to old business after previous small group topics. Dan Fogel seconded. It was noted that if the committee did not get to that part of the agenda, that Knight was requested to email her concerns to the rest of the committee.

Earth Day Event – The committee resumed its previous conversation about participation in local Earth Day events in Huntersville and Recreation Superintendent Lindsay Small was in attendance to give an update on the Town's plans for the day:

A slide was shared that showed Earth Day plans for clean up / beautification events at three locations around Huntersville, with plans being finalized now. The intended audience is residents, moms and kids, folks on their lunch breaks, homeschool families, etc.

Date: Tuesday, April 22, 2025

Time: 11am to 1pm

Locations:

1. Downtown: Greenway Trail Head, Town Center Plaza & Veterans Park (work will consist of location clean up, planting flowers and updating mulch)
2. Rosedale Nature Park (work will consist of park clean up, kids activity scavenger hunt with a take home bulb to plant)
3. Huntersville Athletic Park (work will consist of park clean up, planting and mulching)

Parks and Recreation will have registration set up through Civic Rec for people to select the location they wish to volunteer at. A park staff will be stationed at each location to lead the volunteers in the different tasks. The idea is people can come volunteer for however long they want to share from their lunch break (15 minutes, 30 minutes, an hour, the whole time, whatever works for their schedule)

Registration will be available online and information will be posted on the town's website and on social media. Information will also be made available in the bi-weekly park e-newsletter, fliers at the Rec Center and posted in the recreation guide. Information should be distributed and made available by March once details are confirmed with various parks staff who will be involved in making it a success.

Member Dan Fogel asked if Parks and Rec would be open to business partnerships. Small answered, yes, they'd be open to donations, but would want to check what they need and who they might already be working with to respect those connections. *Small offered to prepare an email to the ESC to share more of the types of items that might be needed to avoid any double asks from existing partners.*

Other ideas of roles or volunteer opportunities at each site include a refreshment cart/station to provide water for volunteers and any giveaways that may be available. The Environmental Sustainability Committee asked if they could be listed as a partner as well as this being an opportunity for tabling at each.

Chair Kepler asked if the committee wanted to pursue other potential earth day plans. Rich Sampson shared that he still was interested in the idea of home energy audits. This brought up potential of making various brochures available at such a table.

If the ESC is to do its own thing in addition to participating in park and rec's three locations, what day would they focus on, actual Earth Day or the following Saturday. Mary Ann Sprung suggested a weekend day to try and get more people. She mentioned Discovery Place Kids would be willing to help out as they had no formal plan yet. She also suggested looking at what the Town of Davidson was doing and that their event was on the 27th (though it was observed in the meeting they may not have updated their webpage for 2025 yet.) It was also noted that would be a goal for the Town to strive for as Davidson's event has been going on for a long time and to gather more than 20 booths and exhibits like them would take time for Huntersville to do.

Anne Marie O'Neill shared that a number of the ideas look to be going on the 22nd. Sprung asked what else could the committee do?

Dana Hicks offered to reach out to the Catawba Riverkeeper to see about a potential event on April 26th for something related to cleaning up our area creeks. It was also noted some of our creeks and trails saw severe damage to trees during Helene and would need help beyond any beautification project. *Dana will report back at the March Meeting if such an event for Earth Day will work.*

Related to our creeks and associated greenway trails, Hicks shared recent observations of signposts with QR codes that let you report on if our creeks look okay or not.

Trisha Knight asked about food trucks on town property and tabling on plant-based foods and education (possible coordination with DPK). Fogel asked about other ideas that members may have

put on their tracking sheets that Chair Kepler came up with. Sprung shared her appreciation for her doing so.

It was also offered that the Growers Market season kicks off Saturday, May 3rd and Hello Huntersville is May 4th, both of which offer tabling opportunities. The Growers Market would be much smaller opportunity than Hello Huntersville, the town's art festival that will bring out more than 1,000 people.

Tables and chairs were requested for the tabling opportunities on Earth Day and future opportunities as they become available. It was noted that there is no wi-fi in our parks, in case any ideas were dependent on technology.

Chair Kepler called on all members to bring their finalized ideas to the March meeting for final consideration/inclusion in Earth Day plans.

Related to Tabling, the committee revisited slides previously prepared by member Trisha Knight. Potential items for future consideration around tabling include: content/context, swag, surveys, partners, and an elevator speech for the committee, among other things.

A desire to see greater awareness of the committee was expressed by several members and Dan Fogel offered to together a first set of talking points with a goal of having a draft out to everyone before the next meeting. It was also suggested such a list include what the committee has done so far, in addition to why it was created.

Lindsay Small shared the importance of children's activities in getting attention and interest at various parks and recreation events (Sprung noted her own experience using pinwheels to show the power of water as part of displays at other educational events).

As discussion on this topic wrapped, several committee members volunteered to table at upcoming events:

- 3/15 – Rich Sampson (Parking Deck Car Show)
- 5/3 – Trisha Knight (Growers Market)
- 5/4 – Dan Fogel (Hello Huntersville)

Previous Small Group Topics

Chair Kepler asked based on previous topics where members wanted to look at next. Brief updates/outcomes were given on those previous topics:

- Green building and infrastructure – action taken in pursuit of green globes certification for new town hall
- Emissions reduction – action taken was pursuit of town board consideration and ESC endorsement of the Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act. While that action didn't move forward, it was suggested we can look for other ways to focus on this goal.
- Trees – action taken was recommendation to town board and subsequent board action to pursue text amendment(s) to do more to protect trees from development.

Where does the committee want to go next? Some discussion was had, with ideas ranging from encouraging more green buildings and the town's role in that; preservation versus loss of open

lands to protect natural resources (with reference to 40,000 additional residents expected by 2040), etc.

Chair Kepler asked everyone to think about this question for next time and bring other topic areas they'd like to see the committee focus on. Vice Chair Sampson noted that big problems are often solved by many small solutions. The committee also expressed curiosity about any line items in the budget related to sustainability and how they might be able to impact them.

Dan Fogel suggested each member make a pitch at the next meeting. As an example, Knight shared the example of wildlife crossings as something she might present. Hicks made the suggestion that the committee focus and decide on 2 to 3 initiatives to do well.

As the meeting began to wrap up, members were directed to send all ideas for (1) Earth Day – ESC Actions; and (2) Ideas/Passions for future ESC Actions and Priorities; to Staff Liaison Bobby Williams by March 7th so they could be shared with committee members so they'd have time to prepare and discuss at the next ESC meeting on March 13, 2025.

Chair Kepler made motion to adjourn, seconded by Fogel. Meeting adjourned at 5:03pm.