

Environmental Sustainability Committee
March 13, 2025
Minutes DRAFT

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

Chair Kepler called meeting to order (3:33PM)

Approval of February Minutes – Dan Fogel made motion, Anne Marie O'Neill seconded motion for approval. Motion carried unanimously.

No agenda changes.

Earth Day – ESC resume discussion on Earth Day and participation in town event through Parks & Recreation with three park clean ups on April 22nd and ESC efforts on Saturday, April 26th.

The committee affirmed its desire to do something on April 26th. Discussion was had about potential location and it was generally agreed to keep it downtown with the first option being the grass at Town Center, followed by Veterans Park. Rosedale Nature Park was also considered but its limited spacing and parking ruled that one out.

Potential activities discussed included a plant-based food truck, tables with demonstrations and educational information, etc. to promote awareness of Earth Day and share information about the town's Environmental Sustainability Committee. Mary Ann Sprung reported that the meteorologist from Discovery Place Kids (DPK) would have an exhibit at one of the tables. Promotion of the event would take place through social media and potentially partnering with DPK on any email lists they maintain.

Anne Marie O'Neill volunteered to write up the event information to promote what's planned in an effort to get such information published by the local paper, The Lake Norman Citizen.

The timing for the event on Saturday, April 26 would be 11 AM to 2 PM.

A rain date for these efforts would be May 10th, which will be the second Growers Market of the 2025 season.

As for the program, several members suggested their need for a table:

- Trisha – need table for plant-based diets and connection to food truck on site as an example
- Mary Ann – need 3-4 tables for various demonstrations and table for DPK meteorologist
- Dan – said he's planning on participating in the Town's April 22nd event. Additionally, will be staffing a table at the Hello Huntersville event in early May.
- Jeremy – said he's out of town

- Dana – looking at park clean up event at North Meck Park that day, though it was referenced that he received an email previously in the day from Assistant Parks & Recreation Director Tracy Houk regarding the greenway project that just began construction and reduction of accessible areas in the park, as well as limitations to town property, which may not include any property outside town parcel lines.

Mary Ann also mentioned speaking to the art class at Lake Norman Charter School for them to design art that highlighted the Town's Environmental Sustainability Committee, with agreement to let the Town review any art produced before any public display.

Related to this and future tabling opportunities, Dan Fogel spoke about the talking points he'd previously shared with the committee. He said he'd heard from 3 people and suggested using what he prepared as a starting point, to be reviewed and revised as needed going forward. He noted that he tried to stay true to the mission they were given as a committee and stated that he is working with the town to get some additional data to include in that statement.

Community Engagement – The committee discussed previous volunteer assignments and suggestion was made to prepare an Event Box that could be used by volunteers at tables at events as a baseline.

Rich Sampson and Dan Fogel volunteered to put together a checklist and box. Others are to bring any specific items specific to their topics as needed/appropriate. Reference was made to slides previously shared by Trisha Knight and shown at the last meeting and these will be shared again with ESC members.

Jeremy Shook mentioned that the committee is likely to engage on different things at different times. Further, he suggested the committee would benefit if there was an owner of the Community Outreach action item, helping to coordinate dates and plans. **Anne Marie O'Neill volunteered to take the lead on that effort.**

A quick review was given of previous small group topics: trees, community outreach, green globes at the new town hall, etc. in addition to previous request from Chair Kepler for members to submit other topics of interest they'd like to see the committee pursue.

It was noted that this would make a good starting point for the next meeting in April as the committee will have three appointments made in March. Trisha Knight suggested the new topics could lead to future subcommittees who could meet in between regular meetings and report back to the whole committee to help with efficiency at meetings. That sentiment was echoed by Shook for smaller teams who can report back.

For April meeting, members are to bring their ideas so the committee can look at the list and pick their next direction(s). Related to purpose of the committee, the consultant for the sustainability plan was to be assigned by the Department of Energy, per the Energy Efficiency Community Block Grant and no update on timing has been provided.

Also for the April meeting, will be further discussion on the Voluntary Agricultural District (VAD) before any recommendation or request for support comes to the town board for consideration. Member Trisha Knight will have a presentation and previously shared some concerns and potential countywide impacts from the VAD.

Related to those concerns, Mayor Pro Tem Hunt noted that there are no CAFOS or concentrated animal feeding operations in Huntersville or the landscape to support them. She mentioned she'd further share some comments from Soil and Water Commissioner Barb Bleweis about their lack of presence in Mecklenburg County and that this came up recently on the Huntersville podcast done through WSIC.

As the meeting wrapped up, Dan Fogel offered a poem of appreciation to outgoing chair Leslie Kepler, who's term expires in March.

Ode to Leslie

With steadfast heart and vision clear,
You led us forth, month to month, Leslie dear.
A fearless voice, both strong and kind,
With purpose sharp and goals aligned.

The earth you guard, its trees, its air,
A champion true, beyond compare.
Your forceful tone, your guiding grace,
Have left a mark time won't erase.

Through every meeting, every fight,
You stood for what we knew was right.
With steady hand and steadfast will,
You forged ahead, inspiring still.

She keeps us fed, through care and cheer,
A steady presence, always near.

Now as you go, we feel the space,
The echo of your tireless pace.
Yet in our hearts, your mission stays,
A torch to light our future days.

So here's to you—our leader bright,
A beacon in the fading light.
We'll miss you, Leslie, but we vow,
To carry on your work somehow.

Dan Fogel motioned to adjourn. Dana Hicks seconded.

Meeting adjourned. (5:03).