

Environmental Sustainability Committee May 8, 2025 Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Dan Fogel, Rich Sampson, Dana Hicks, Anne Marie O'Neill, Tim Sanborn, Jeremy Shook, Diane McLaine, Priya Jayaram, Trisha Knight

Members Absent: none

Commissioners: Mayor Pro Tem Jennifer Hunt (board liaison)

Staff: Bobby Williams, Assistant Town Manager (staff liaison)

Chair Jeremy Shook called meeting to order (3:34).

Approval of May 2025 Minutes – Dan Fogel made motion to approve, seconded by Anne Marie O'Neill. Motion carried unanimously.

Shook reviewed the agenda and it was noted that going forward “New Business” would just be shown as “Business” on future agendas.

No Agenda Changes

Public Comments were given by two speakers.

First, Augustin Hinojosa expressed concerns about utilities being flagged and not collected in a timely manner or at all. As he spoke, he showed ESC members a yellow plastic flag around a metal rod and asked who was responsible for picking them and other litter up, identifying that as a growing problem. He wondered what businesses were doing to play their part in helping clean up their areas and what the town was doing to work with businesses in particular areas to address it.

Second, Ahmid Kargbo spoke to share frustration across Mecklenburg County where areas feel like single family is the only option for housing, something he said is less sustainable, and earns less revenue in taxes so trails and other things are less likely to be built. He stated it felt like its an unaffordable housing racist framework, forcing people out by design.

Chair Shook spoke to comments and shared the purview of the ESC, which is limited as it relates to concerns about planning and zoning and sustainable housing stock.

Continuing with the agenda, Shook presented his spreadsheet for tracking each subcommittee's goals and initiated updates on the status of each goal area.

For Community Engagement, Dan Fogel suggested better uses of time for committee members to get out would be at the Growers Market and working with Town Communications to provide a table and table cloth for events, then coordinate getting info to Communications for monthly newsletter (4-5 sentences and everyone on committee can take turns writing them). Getting more information on the website to help residents also continues to be a goal.

Chair Shook summarized the last meeting ESC members had with Communications. Coming out of that meeting is the “Sustainability Spotlight” for the monthly town newsletter that typically

comes out the last week of each month. The first spotlight will be in the July newsletter. Tim Sanborn also noted the announcements section of the board's agenda offers another chance to update the board and residents. Shook affirmed that he'd plan to give quarterly updates to the town board as part of an effort that includes the newsletter, website, events and presence at the growers market.

Chair Shook asked the committee their thoughts on the ESC doing dedicated events (like Earth Day). Feedback from members suggested the need to build awareness before doing events and that some of the other goal items like starting the treasure tree program and others might be good opportunities to start drawing people in, as well as continuing a presence at the Growers Market and Wine on the Vine.

Trisha Knight shared that she's reached out to NC WRC about getting tips on wildlife safety into the drivers handbook to inform new drivers, especially. Conversations are continuing with a goal to have this information available in various forms of media. She also confirmed to the committee that wildlife corridors will be a recommendation for the town to look at. Dana Hicks added that the National Wildlife Federation could also be an option.

For Goals under Energy, Water and Waste, Diane McLaine shared she's got a follow up meeting with Davidson to better understand the details of their treasure tree program. Tim added that there's likely to be a public nomination process. Anne Marie shared that she's researching for more sustainable demolition and deconstruction processes.

After reviewing the goal status, Chair Shook shared that he would look at moving the spreadsheet to Google Docs so everyone can add their updates before each meeting.

Action Items captured through this point in the meeting (Shook clarified the purpose for action items as other items for the group to be working on):

1. Communications Dept meeting
2. Website
3. Priya offered to right-size goal EWW-1
4. Dan will update Comm-1 based on meeting with Ethan (Communications).

Diane suggested adding future ideas based on today's ESC discussion, such as litter cleanup, which may not happen today but don't want to lose it.

Dana Hicks made his presentation on goal EWW-2 for the committee to vote on since he missed last meeting. His goal is to plan and organize a creek cleanup day around a greenway or park, noting that he gravitated towards creeks because they are most impacted by large rainfall, but could be done in other areas too. Goal for first cleanup is fall, by September. This also brings opportunities for coordination with Mecklenburg County stormwater.

Mayor Pro Tem Hunt asked if the lake in Huntington Green could also be considered as an area to cleanup. Hicks replied this goal provides opportunities to work with and involve partners. He proposed to complete second cleanup by the end of the year, and third by the end of March.

Once the process is set, it could be more than quarterly.

Hicks also urged committee members to mark August 4th on their calendars as he's got a tour of Lee S Dukes water treatment plant lined up and can take as many as 30 people. He is the point of contact as he must submit the list of attendees the day before.

Priya asked how is disposal of trash handled. Hicks replied that is something to look at with the arrangements and needs at each clean up. Tim Sanborn said he had some ideas but said he'd connect offline.

Motion to approve Goal EWW-2 was made by Dan Fogel, seconded by Trisha Knight. Motion carried unanimously.

Election of Vice Chair. Chair Shook called for nominations for the open vice chair seat. After discussion and consideration, Priya nominated Trisha Knight, who politely declined the nomination. Dan Fogel nominated Priya Jayaram. Priya nominated Diane McLaine. Tim Sanborn seconded her nomination. Votes were taken on both candidates with a 3-3 split between each candidate with Hicks, Shook and Fogel voting for Jayaram and O'Neill, Sanborn and Knight voting for McLaine. Priya removed herself from the nominations and motion was made by Dan Fogel to make Diane McLaine vice chair. That was seconded by Trisha Knight and passed unanimously.

Post meeting social – Suggestion for committee to go out to socialize and get to know each other better after July 10 meeting. The 3 steps social to “know, like, trust” each other to help the committee do its work.

Wrapping up, information on Solarize NC effort coming to Mecklenburg County was introduced to be shared following the meeting.

A few minutes were left for open discussion. One question came up about solar panels on large warehouses and noted this does come up with some of the previous conditional rezonings for such spaces but the town cannot mandate them.

Adjournment - Anne Marie O'Neill motioned to adjourn, seconded by Diane McLaine. Motion carried unanimously. Meeting adjourned.