



Town of Boone
Sustainability Committee
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, February 10th, 2022
5:30 P.M.

Members Present: Chairperson John Pickett, Vice Chair-Person Benjamin Scarboro, Lee Ball, Joan Brook, Brian Crutchfield, Margie Mansure

Members Absent: Luanna Nesbit, Terry Cirone, Jeremy Love, Danielle Stockman

Staff Present: George Santucci, Sustainability and Special Projects Manager, Laney Pilkington, Administrative Support Specialist/Communications and Brandon Wise, Environmental Planner

Council Liaison: Councilperson Jon Dalton George

Others Present: Kale Roberts, Dylan Frick, Olive Burress, Julie Lokshin, Hannah, Max, Bekah Nielsen

Call To Order:

Chairperson John Prickett called the meeting to order at 5:33pm.

Adoption of Agenda:

Prickett asked for a motion to adopt the agenda. Upon the motion made by Benjamin Scarboro, seconded by Brian Crutchfield, the agenda for the February 10, 2022 Sustainability Committee meeting was adopted.

Vote:

Yes: Prickett, Scarboro, Ball, Crutchfield, Mansure, Brook

No: None

Absent: Nesbit, Cirone, Love, Stockman

Approval of Minutes:

Prickett asked for a motion to approve the December 9, 2021 Sustainability Committee Meeting Minutes. Upon the motion made by Lee Ball, the minutes for the December 9, 2021 Sustainability Committee were approved.

Vote:

Yes: Prickett, Scarboro, Ball, Crutchfield, Mansure, Brook

No: None

Absent: Nesbit, Cirone, Love, Stockman

New Business: Community Climate Action Plan (CCAP) ICLEI Presentation:

George Santucci introduced Kale Roberts from ICLEI (International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives). Roberts began his presentation regarding Community Climate Action planning. Roberts continued by introducing the ICLEI Five Pathway Approach for Local Government Sustainability; Decarbonization, Circular Economy, Equity, Community Resilience, and Nature & Health. He pointed out that there are three pillars of Climate Neutrality; drastically reduce GHGs, Divest, Repurpose & Reinvest and Offset & Compensate GHGs. Through the 30 plus years of work ICLEI has done, they have created a process in which local governments can follow in order to reach their sustainability goals and create a CCAP. Roberts finished his introduction to the CCAP ICLEI presentation, and began discussing the Integrated Climate Planning Pillars, the first being Mitigation. Mitigation is the first step most municipalities take, such as an inventory of the town's GHGs. Santucci confirmed that the Town has been working on a preliminary GHG inventory. Roberts went on to explain high impact action pathways, which include accelerating (i.e. renewable energy, electrification, and EV transition) and supporting (i.e. waste & methane, nature-based solutions, sustainable food systems, circular economy, and community resilience, health, and equity). By focusing on the "accelerating" pathway, this will help reduce emissions significantly. Roberts pointed out that ignoring the "supporting" pathway is not recommended, in fact the "supporting" pathway is meant to support the "accelerating" pathway. Roberts mentioned "Race to Zero", an international campaign regarding climate neutrality by 2030. Roberts continued by explaining that a main part of creating a CCAP is expanding your reach. Santucci mentioned that a partnership with the university is key to expanding the reach of the CCAP for Boone. He added Appalachian State University had already created a CCAP, in which Boone would be drawing inspiration. Ball agreed, and added that Appalachian State University is revisiting their CCAP and refining their goals into "Version 2.0". Roberts asked if there were groups that the members of the Sustainability Committee felt would be more challenging to reach. Santucci added that reaching low income or marginalized populations needs to be more of a priority in order to make this plan more engaging and equitable to all. Moving forwards, Roberts suggested creating an internal team within staff as a "Climate Team". The second pillar for Integrated Climate Planning is Adaptation. Santucci mentioned that there was a change of staff, so adaptation/resiliency had faltered slightly. Roberts mentioned that ICLEI is able to give a preliminary vulnerability assessment in the next couple of months to help guide the discussion for resiliency in Boone. To conclude his presentation, Roberts discussed communication and community engagement in regards to CCAP. With no further question from the Committee, Prickett asked to move onto the next agenda item.

New Business: 2022 Work Plan:

Santucci began the discussion by explaining the priority projects on the list; Community Climate Action Plan, Stormwater and Stormwater Utility Planning, Green Power Program, SolSmart Certification and Distributed Solar, Bolick Campus Planning, Jimmy Smith WWTP Energy Efficiencies, EV Charging Infrastructure Expansion, and Develop EV Fleet Transition Plan. After a brief description of all priority items for the 2022 Work Plan, Santucci asked for the Committee's thoughts on the proposed work plan. Margie Mansure asked how much the Green Power

Program costs for the Town. Santucci answered that with Blue Ridge Electric's Solar Array, which accounts for 75% of the Town's municipal electricity; only 25% of the Town's municipal electricity is purchased through the Green Power Program. He went on to explain that while he would need to go back and review the numbers for the entire year, for the first six months of 2022 the Boone Town Council reallocated roughly \$60,000 towards both electricity providers. Santucci also mentioned that Appalachian State's New River Light and Power would be announcing a significant rate decrease because of their switch from purchasing energy from Duke Energy to Carolina Power Partners. Prickett added his support to the expansion of the EV infrastructure in Boone. Prickett then asked for an update regarding 'Other Project' found on the 2022 Work Plan, specifically the possibility of a solar array on the Watauga County Landfill. Santucci answered saying that there has been multiple discussions regarding this project, with the main challenge being the land on which the landfill is on. Building anything on top of the landfill increases the cost dramatically, due to the conditions of the landfill. Santucci added that the stakeholders for this project are in negotiation with a company who is interested in the project, however they do not have the necessary funding. Prickett thanked Santucci for the update and asked to move to the next item on the agenda. Before moving forward, Joan Brook asked why biodiesel as a heatsource and wind energy had not been discussed. Brook added that her main source of heat in her residence is kerosene, and she wants to know if switching to biofuel is possible in Boone. Santucci answered that regarding electricity in Boone, the two electricity companies in Boone are NRLP and BREMCO. Currently neither company offers wind energy as an alternative electricity source. Brook added that Appalachian State has been researching biofuel. Santucci asked for Ball's input. Ball said there is a chance that Brook's current system could not be converted to biofuel, which has been a main challenge regarding biofuel, which is why it is such a small portion of renewable energy production. Scarboro asked Ball if biodiesel could be used in a fuel heating system. Ball agreed that it is possible. Continuing on, Brook asked why the conversation regarding single-use plastics has come to a halt. Santucci answered that the conversation is continuing, with staff exploring what the Town can do legally. He added that the Town might have the authority to enforce a solid waste fee to businesses using single-use plastics; however, that is still being explored. Additionally, staff is researching alternate ways to reduce the use of single-use plastics within the local business community, including reusable to-go containers and promoting the use of reusable bags. Scarboro asked if there was a way to encourage private individuals and businesses regarding their reduction of single-use plastics, with the Town supporting these actions, due to the fact the Town currently cannot legally ban all single-use plastics. Councilmember George encouraged the Committee to read Duke's Environmental Law and Policy write-up on municipalities' scope of power regarding single-use plastics. Brook thanked Councilmember George for the resource. Santucci asked for a motion to be made for the Sustainability Committee to encourage the Town and Town Attorney to review documentation Councilmember George referenced and revisit what the Town within its authority to address a single-use plastic ban. Upon the motion made by Scarboro, seconded by Brook, the motion referenced above was passed unanimously.

Vote:

Yes: Prickett, Scarboro, Ball, Crutchfield, Mansure, Brook

No: None

Absent: Nesbit, Cirone, Love, Stockman

Old Business: 2021 Year in Review:

Santucci introduced the next item with an overview of what was achieved in 2021 regarding sustainable activities in the Town of Boone. Santucci explained that a preliminary GHG inventory

regarding Boone's municipal emissions had been completed, all electricity consumed by Boone's municipal operations had been converted to renewable energy sources, 70% of Boone's street lights have been converted to LED lights, and approval has been given to modify language in Boone's Unified Development Ordinance to support solar and EV charging permitting. Additionally, the Town's Police Department has purchased 3 Toyota Rav4 hybrid vehicles, the Fire Department has ordered 2 Ford F150 hybrids, the installation of 10 Level 2 ClipperCreek chargers on municipally-owned property has been planned, 2000 linear feet of restoration on the South Fork of the New River on the Bolick Property has been completed along with 174 trees being planted on the Bolick Property, an in-depth review of Winkler, Boone and Hodges Creek has been completed. Finally, the Trash Trout on Winkler Creek has been installed and the Town has purchased reusable bags to distribute free of charge to citizens and visitors of Boone. Santucci asked if there were any questions. With no further questions, Santucci moved to the next agenda item.

Old Business: 2022 Budget Items:

Santucci began by introducing the 2022 proposed budget for Sustainability, and asked for the Committee's opinion on the 2022 proposed budget for Sustainability. Brandon Wise, Environmental Planner for the Town of Boone, let the committee know that the Boone's Planning and Inspections Department has additional funds to purchase additional trees, shrubbery, or other items to give away as well as funding for flood education. Prickett asked for any comments or questions regarding the proposed budget. With no further discussion, Santucci asked for a motion of support for this proposed budget so that it may be taken to Administration and the Town Council. Upon the motion made by Ball, seconded by Crutchfield, the motion referenced above was passed unanimously.

Vote:

Yes: Prickett, Scarboro, Ball, Crutchfield, Mansure, Brook

No: None

Absent: Nesbit, Cirone, Love, Stockman

Other Matters:

Prickett began the conversation by mentioning that he is in the process of trying to connect with individuals associated with the completed solar panel project at the North Depot parking lot in order to give the solar panels to the Town of Boone one and a half years earlier than previously planned. He added that he hopes to have that completed within the next couple of months. Prickett asked if any other committee members had any additional comments. With no comments given, Prickett moved on to public comment.

Public Comment:

Prickett asked if anyone would like to provide public comment. Bekah Nielsen asked the Committee if there were any plans on weatherizing homes. Santucci answered that currently both electric utilities serving the Town of Boone and its residents offer home audits in regards to energy consumption. Santucci added that additional resources could be found on the Town of Boone's website regarding sustainable living habits, such as energy efficiencies and weatherization of homes. Santucci added that the WAMY Community Action, a non-profit that collaborates with the Town of Boone, offers a weatherization program to low income

households. Mansure added that the Watauga County Cooperative Extension used to have resources regarding weatherization of homes, but currently they are not offering these resources. Nielsen added that it does not just affect low-income housing, it affects student housing as well. Prickett asked if anyone else would like to provide public comment. Hannah asked if there was any data regarding EV charging stations and how that benefits the citizens of Boone. Santucci answered that all municipally owned EV charging stations in Boone are free in regards to charging, which he hopes will help encourage citizens in Boone to purchase an EV if they are able to. Prickett added that there are many choices available, including hybrids, plug-in hybrids, and fully electric vehicles. Scarboro asked if it would be a good idea for the Committee to encourage more frequent maintenance of gas-powered cars, in order to help those vehicles run more efficiently. Additionally, he added that the Committee may recommend the Town support and offer material aid to a tenant's union and that the current housing market in Boone is opposed to sustainable and just housing. Prickett thanked Scarboro for his comments, and added that he believed a big sticking point for car buyers in regards to EVs is the lack of education in regards to cost savings. Councilmember George added that in the Town Code, there are portions regarding elements of weatherproofing such as heating standards. Wise agreed that it is a part of the Minimum Housing Code in the Town of Boone. With no further discussion, the Committee moved to adjournment. Crutchfield asked if Santucci could see if WAMY Community Action Agency would come speak at a Sustainability Committee meeting, Blue Ridge Electric to come talk about their energy assistance program and the Northwest Housing Authority to discuss their programs. With no further discussion, the Prickett asked for a motion to adjourn.

Adjournment:

Prickett called for a motion to adjourn. Upon the motion made by Scarboro, seconded by Ball, the February 10th, 2022 Sustainability Committee was adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

Vote:

Yes: Prickett, Scarboro, Ball, Crutchfield, Mansure, Brook

No: None

Absent: Nesbit, Cirone, Love, Stockman