



Town of Boone
Sustainability Committee
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, April 14th, 2022
5:30 P.M.

Members Present: Chairperson John Prickett (arrived 5:49pm), Jeremy Love, Terry Cirone, Brian Crutchfield, Lee Ball, Joan Brook, Benjamin Scarboro (arrived at 5:58pm).

Members Absent: Luanna Nesbit, Danielle Stockman, Margie Mansure,

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

Council Liaison: Councilperson Jon Dalton George and Councilperson Becca Nenow

Others Present: Brandon Wise, Anisha Sharma

Call To Order:

Terry Cirone, as acting Chair, called the meeting to order at 5:42pm.

Adoption of Agenda:

Cirone asked for a motion to adopt the agenda. Upon the motion made by Crutchfield, seconded by Ball, the agenda for the April 14th, 2022 Sustainability Committee was approved

Vote:

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

No: None

Absent: Nesbit, Stockman, Mansure

Approval of Minutes:

Cirone asked for a motion to approve the February 14th, 2022 Sustainability Committee Meeting Minutes. Upon the motion made by Ball, seconded by Crutchfield, the minutes for the February 14th, 2022 Sustainability Committee were approved.

Vote:

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

No: None

Absent: Nesbit, Stockman, Mansure

Old Business: Updates on Community Climate Action Plan:

The Town Council approved the distribution of the Community Climate Action survey. Santucci added that Pilkington and he met with ICLEI, who shared a template for Community Climate Action plans, which have been used nationwide. This document is large and is a great starting place, though Santucci is unsure if the Town will need every section of the template. The Town is in negotiations with ICLEI in regards to possible consultation for Community Climate Action planning. Santucci mentioned he may need to amend the budget proposed to the Committee during the February Sustainability Committee meeting.

Prickett joined the meeting at 5:49pm.

Councilperson George asked if Santucci thought about including the highschool and university in the scope of the survey. Santucci agreed and asked Pilkington to look into contacting them.

Old Business: Project Updates:

Santucci began by giving a brief overview of the 2022 Work Plan. The Town has achieved SolSmart Gold designation through the Town's Planning and Inspections Department. Additionally, the Town has installed 4 new electric vehicle chargers, with 2 in front of the Downtown Post Office, 1 behind the Jones House, 1 behind the King Street lot and 1 at Boone Jaycee Park. In total, 7 cars can now charge through the Town's charging infrastructure. Additional areas being explored for installation are the Junaluska Park and North Street Park, though parking at North Street Park is extremely limited. Brook asked about installing a charger at the Watauga Recreation Center. Santucci answered that unfortunately the parking at the Watauga Recreation Center is in the floodway, though he added that the County is interested in installing chargers there if any of those spots are out of the floodway. Crutchfield asked if the Town thought about installing chargers at the ABC Store and Santucci said they would explore that option. Wise asked if Santucci had considered Brookshire Park, though he understood they're owned by the County. Santucci said that if they aren't in the floodway, he would be happy to reach out to the County Manager to negotiate. Crutchfield added another possible location is the parking located on Hunting Hills near the Town's water intake. Brook asked if there was a way to combine federal funds on alternative energy for flood mitigation for the Boone Mall parking lot. Santucci answered that they have an application in for design, though further discussion will need to be had with businesses surrounding the Boone Mall.

Scarboro joined the meeting at 5:59pm.

Santucci updated the Committee in regards to possible placement of another Trash Trout. Some locations proposed are behind the Moose Lodge and the parking lot at the Greenway off of Deerfield Road. He added that production of Trash Trouts had been delayed due to flooding at the production site. Finally, Santucci updated the Committee regarding Earth First Friday, where the Town was able to give away almost 150 trees. Santucci thanked Mansure for her addition to the festivities and how she highlighted local foods found in the High Country. Santucci then introduced Anisha Sharma, a volunteer intern for the Sustainability department, to the Committee and thanked her for work she has done so far, including research regarding sustainable actions small businesses can take. Santucci asked for any additional comments. With no additional comments, Cirone moved onto the next agenda item.

New Business: Single Use Plastic Reduction:

Cirone asked about the previous discussion regarding single use plastics. Santucci began by explaining that Andy Hill, Watauga Riverkeeper, gave a presentation to the Town Council at the beginning of the year, which helped restart the conversation regarding single use plastics. At

the April 13th Town Council Meeting, Santucci presented potential solutions regarding single use plastic use in Boone. Solutions included voluntary actions through individual retailers, a solid waste fee for single use plastics, and a possible ban on single use plastics. The Town Council voted to pursue a more voluntary approach, due to the uncertainty regarding if the Town itself can impose a solid waste fee or single use plastic ban. Santucci added that there are communities in North Carolina looking at these potential actions, however he is hesitant to place Boone on the forefront of this. Crutchfield commented that Comeback Shack uses VIO foam cups, a substitute for styrofoam which bio-degrades 92% within 4 years, and asked if there was a way the Town could look into that further and if there was a way for the Town to help subsidize endeavors similar to this. Prickett expressed interest in learning more about this as well. Cirone added that a vendor at the Watauga County Farmers' Market sold their greens in compostable plastic as well, which could potentially compost in home composting systems. Brook stated that through graduate research, a majority of land waste isn't plastic bags. However, single use plastic bags get caught in recycling machines. She added that the only way to truly reduce the use of single use plastics is behavioral change; people react better to incentivization than punishment. Santucci said that he would prefer to try the incentive approach first. Santucci added that Pilkington brought 50 "Boone Sustainability" bags to the High Country Food Hub and F.A.R.M. Cafe to help further this approach. Councilmember George added that one of the dangers of being the first is that if it is struck down at State level, the Town could potentially have its hands tied. Santucci agreed, and introduced the Committee to the program the Town, the Boone Area Chamber of Commerce and New River Light and Power are working on tentatively entitled "Green Business Program".

New Business: Green Business Program:

Santucci began the conversation by explaining that the "Green Business Program" is similar to other awards and accolades businesses work towards. Brook mentioned that she would be interested to learn more about how much of the waste stream is other forms of single use plastics, excluding plastic bags. She added that she would love to see some data regarding this. Crutchfield mentioned that he too has been a part of the conversation regarding the "Green Business Program", and would love to see it come to fruition, and that he supports the incentivisation approach. Cirone agreed to both, and said that there is research out there and she would be happy to reach out to her connections in regards to viewing this research. Ball commented that there are national experts living in the Boone community, such as Jennifer Maxwell. Santucci continued with sharing a list of local businesses pursuing sustainable practices. With permission from the Town Attorney, the Town can now promote local businesses which follow these sustainable practices. Scarboro agreed with the conversation and conclusions had. Scarboro then suggested a call to action regarding finding resources to reduce the use of single use plastics. Scarboro made the motion that the Committee recommend the Sustainability Officer, namely Santucci, to take input from stakeholders to create a plan of action for reduction of single use plastics. Prickett seconded the motion.

Vote:

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

No: None

Absent: Nesbit, Stockman, Mansure

New Business: Energy Rebates and Resources:

Cirone moved to the next agenda item, and Santucci began to briefly summarize resources through Boone's local energy providers. Blue Ridge Energy has a page dedicated to rebates for

customers who purchase energy efficient appliances. Appalachian State's New River Light and Power has two web pages which highlight tips on how to reduce your energy usage, as well as "100+ Ways to Conserve Resources". Ball, in regards to the previous conversation, added that Appalachian State has been working towards a Green Workplace Certification. Crutchfield added that in regards to tourism, green tourism is beginning to become more prevalent in the community at large. Scarboro asked that in regards to the "Green Business Program", if there was a way to find a way to address communities and parts of the town which aren't a main focus of these green business programs, like rental companies. Santucci added that the Community Climate Action Plan is meant to include all stakeholders within the Town of Boone, which he hopes will help address some of Scarboro's concerns. Ball agreed with Scarboro, that businesses want to be able to connect to these programs. With no further conversation, Cirone moved to the next agenda item.

New Business: Meeting Time and Style:

Santucci began the conversation by asking the Committee their opinion on meeting times and meeting mediums. Cirone expressed approval for meeting in-person, though she would be open to a hybrid fashion. Ball agreed with Cirone, and added that the time the Committee is currently meeting works better for him. Crutchfield agreed, and asked if there could be more presenters at the Committee meetings. Prickett agreed that he would prefer in-person meetings, though he would like to look at other meeting spaces outside of the Downtown Post Office. Brook asked if there was a way to meet at some of the more sustainably-focussed businesses for the Committee meetings. She also expressed her support of the possibility of hybrid meetings. Scarboro agreed with Brook. Santucci added that as of right now, the Town Council is currently doing a hybrid meeting option. Love expressed his support of the hybrid meeting format as well. Prickett asked for Santucci to explore options in regards to a hybrid meeting option, though he would also like to keep the option open for meetings to be held at local businesses. Crutchfield asked that for the next Committee meeting that the Committee could take a tour of the Downtown Electric Vehicle chargers. Scarboro asked who would be in charge of these decisions. He explained that he would love to move back to monthly meetings. Crutchfield brought up Green Drinks, a networking event in Boone where like minded individuals can meet to discuss sustainable efforts. He offered that the Committee stay with the every other month schedule, with the option to go to Green Drinks during the off month. Cirone made the motion that the Committee continue with the even numbered month at 5:30pm schedule, with an addition of a hybrid element. Ball seconded the motion.

Vote:

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

No: None

Absent: Nesbit, Stockman, Mansure

Other Matters:

Cirone asked if there were other matters to be discussed. Prickett thanked Cirone for stepping in as chair for the meeting. Scarboro reminded the Committee of the previous meeting's discussion regarding tenants in Boone. He asked if the Committee could look into supporting a Tenant Union in Boone. He also added that he would like the Committee to work towards learning more about how to improve the efficiency and environmental friendliness of the cars commuters already drive. Cirone asked if Scarboro would be interested in looking into alternative modes of transportation, such as a trolley system in Downtown Boone. He agreed that he would love to look into that further, however he would also want the Town to help

promote efficiency in regards to gasoline powered vehicles. Santucci asked if Scarboro would be interested in helping create a list of best practices for maintaining a vehicle which is non-electric. Scarboro agreed, though he also would like the Committee to find ways to improve non-vehicular travel as well as promote our public transit system. Wise added that the Town now requires all new developments to add new sidewalks. With no further questions, Cirone moved to public comment.

Public Comment:

With no public comment, Cirone asked for a motion for adjournment.

Adjournment:

Upon the motion made by Prickett, seconded by Brook, the Sustainability Committee adjourned at 7:52pm.

Vote:

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

No: None

Absent: Nesbit, Stockman, Mansure