

**TOWN OF BOONE
SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2020
5:30 P.M.**

Members Present:	Chairperson-Brooke Kornegay, Vice-Chairperson-Benjamin Scarboro, John Prickett, Lee Ball, Ballard Reynolds, Nikai Speight, Margie Mansure, Joan Brook and Sustainability Scholar-Ella Jennings
Town Council Liaisons Present:	Nancy LaPlaca and Dustin Hicks
Staff Members Present:	Jane Shook-Director of Planning & Inspections, Mike James-Senior Planner, and Marlene Crosby-Board Secretary
Others Present:	Cole Kiziah-Watauga County Recycling Coordinator and Jennifer Maxwell-Sustainability Program Manager at Appalachian State University

Call to Order

Chairperson Brooke Kornegay called the Boone Sustainability Committee, virtual meeting via WebEx, a video conferencing software, to order on October 8, 2020 at 5:34 p.m.

Ms. Jane Shook, Director of Planning and Inspections welcomed new Member Nikai Speight to the Sustainability Committee. She asked him to introduce himself to the committee. He said that he is a senior and a Sustainable Technology major at Appalachian State University and from Charlotte, North Carolina.

Ms. Shook welcomed new Sustainability Scholar Member Ella Jennings from Two Rivers School to the Sustainability Committee meeting.

Adoption of Agenda

Vice-Chairperson Scarboro made a motion, seconded by Member Reynolds to adopt the agenda as written.

Vote:

Aye – All

Nay- None

The motion passed.

Approval of Minutes

Chairperson Kornegay made a motion, seconded by Vice-Chairperson Scarboro to approve the September 10, 2020 meeting minutes as written.

Vote:

Aye – All

Nay – None
The motion passed.

Member Ball joined the meeting at approximately at 5:45 p.m.

Composting Discussion

Chairperson Kornegay introduced Mr. Cole Kiziah the Recycling Coordinator for Watauga County as the speaker on this topic. She explained that the Sustainability Committee at their last meeting had agreed to invite Mr. Cole to speak on composting because of his experience with recycling in both the private and public sectors. She explained that this is an informational session and the Sustainability Committee is not to take action on it at this meeting.

Mr. Kiziah said he is also the creator of the “Dinner2Dirt” but he would be speaking at this meeting from his recycling coordinator position with Watauga County. He said he wanted to make it clear that he is will not be speaking from his position with “Dinner2Dirt”.

Mr. Kiziah said in February of 2020, his department presented a proposal to the Watauga County Commissioners for a Type 3 Composting Facility for the county. He said the Watauga County Commissioners were in favor of the facility; but they felt there was not enough nitrogenous waste to support it. He said that Watauga County hired composting professionals who made some studies and learned that there is a surplus of nitrogenous waste, if it can be captured.

Mr. Kiziah said that Watauga County pulls in about 4,000 tons annually of yard debris and wood waste. He said with this amount of yard debris a concern was raised that maybe there might not be enough nitrogenous waste for this amount of tonnage.

Mr. Kiziah said from a recent study he learned that the Town of Boone not including Appalachian State University has a minimum of 1,039 tons of nitrogenous food waste that could be captured through commercial food waste. He said the maximum that could be captured through commercial food waste is 6,152 tons of nitrogenous food waste.

Mr. Kiziah said that Watauga County has eliminated accepting any type of treated wood, pallets or non-natural wood at the county yard-waste debris area. He said that last year the county purchased a tub grinder for their recycling area.

Mr. Kiziah said that last week the final report was presented to the Watauga County manager. He said the engineers need to do some bore samples which are located outside of LTID which is a construction demolition landfill. He said the bore samples have to be sent to the State of North Carolina to be tested and once they are approved, the county should be able to move forward. He said it might be the beginning of 2021 before they might be able to get started with the composting facility. He said he felt that the county could be doing large-scale composting by eight months.

Mr. Kiziah explained that there are a lot of types of composting. He said currently the county is doing a Type 1 composting. He said that Type 1 is strictly carbon based for yard debris. He said they are working on making the Type 1 a Type 3 composting facility. He said once the facility is a Type 3 composting facility that will bring in pre and post-consumer food waste which is their main objective. He said they would be able to compost animal mortality.

Mr. Kiziah explained there are a few different methods to composting but he is more familiar with the Windrows composting process. He explained that the Windrows composting process is an area about eight-feet wide by eight feet tall and 100 feet long. He said you could have a 2:1 carbon to nitrogen ratio. He said this would be taken and mixed with food waste. He said the composting materials have to be turned five times within 15 days and the temperature has to stay between 131 degrees and 165 degrees. He said this amount of heat is enough to kill off all of the pathogens, bacteria and diseases that can potentially come through it. He added that if it gets above 165 degrees which is difficult to do, it will start to kill off the beneficial microbes. Council Liaison LaPlaca asked Mr. Kiziah if heat has to be added to it or is the process as such that it creates its own heat. He said it creates its own heat. He said that if the county approves moving forward with it, there will be an aerated static pile which is what Appalachian State University is using. He said with the aerated static system, the piles do not have to be flipped physically because every two and one-half minutes blowers would pump oxygen through the pipe which is less time consuming and the most efficient way.

Mr. Kiziah explained that with the Windrows process you have to physically turn the compost which adds oxygen to it which helps create the environment they need. He said by law, you have to turn the pile five times within fifteen days and keep it at a temperature between 125 degrees and 165 degrees.

Member Mansure asked if Watauga County citizens are able to use the composting. Mr. Kiziah yes it is available for them. He said that the local citizens and the local farmers would benefit from the composting for a minimal fee.

Ms. Shook asked about the process for collecting composting materials in the county and the Town. He explained that the best way is to use 64 gallon totes that will need to be maintained by using organic waste haulers. He said the county would probably end up contracting with a company to make these pick-ups. He said five-gallon buckets could be used in residential areas. He said a process is in place at the Food Hub for composting. He said it is up to the Municipality to have a drop off area or a pick up system.

Mr. Kiziah said he feels that the top priority would be to get the compost to the local farmers because they are growing the food that goes to our local restaurants. He further explained that the restaurant food waste is then processed and sent back to the local farmers which closes the loop and keeps the composting process here in our area.

Mr. Kiziah said if the county facility is running at full capacity with the ASP system that they are proposing, they would be able to produce 3,075 tons of compost annually. He noted that last year 4,100 tons of carbon rich waste was produced.

Member Mansure asked if having this type of composting facility will be a savings for the county or would it cost the county more money. Mr. Kiziah said it would turn a profit within the first nine months of being open.

Ms. Shook asked for clarification on the potential eight-month time period to having the composting facility. Mr. Kiziah said that is an optimistic time frame that he hopes it could be in place. He said once the bore samples are complete, they will present the proposal to the county commissioners for their review. Ms. Shook asked because she wasn't sure when the town's contract ends for the company that currently services the Town.

Council Liaison LaPlaca asked Mr. Kiziah what is the next step that would involve the Town of Boone whether it be residential or commercial. Ms. Jennifer Maxwell from the Sustainability Department at Appalachian State University explained that the University and the County and the Town have started conversations on ways for it to work on a High Country wide basis. Mr. Kiziah agreed that it is time for discussion to begin with the county, Town and University on this topic.

Energy Efficiency Discussion

Council Liaison LaPlaca began discussion by saying that utilities are killing net metering all over the country because the utility companies do not want to lose their small amount of sales. She said the whole country is using about three percent solar and seven percent wind. She said that North Carolina does not have that much clean energy. She said the reason is because utility companies do not want solar being to be used because it chips away at their profits.

Council Liaison LaPlaca reviewed slides from a PowerPoint presentation (permanently on file). She noted that we need to be doing what Germany is doing to obtain clean energy. She said they allow anyone to buy and sell electricity, and connect to the grid. She talked about Climate and Clean Energy and noted that North Carolina imports all coal and natural gas. She talked about the cost of pipelines transporting coal. She said the health and environmental damages are huge and not counted for.

Council Liaison LaPlaca said the cost of the fossil fuel plants is high, it hurts the utility companies. She said an important fact about fossil fuel plants is that they lose two-thirds of their energy as heat and pollution. She said only two percent of your energy gets to your outlet because a lot of it is lost in mining, exporting and cleaning coal. She also noted that the United States has the most expensive coal plants in the country. She said according to Bloomberg New Energy Finance, our coal plants are uneconomic. She said there was a study on the coal plants and the Utility Commission is going to hold a hearing on the coal plants to see what the real cost it to run them. Council Liaison LaPlaca talked about old coal costing twice as much as new solar. She said this is common knowledge for the professionals working with it but it is news to most people.

Council Liaison LaPlaca talking about net metering and she explained why it is critical. She said that net metering is a policy that affects retail electricity for our homes and businesses. She said that net metering is based on two things how much we are paid, when we feed solar into the grid and the fees that are being added. She explained that there are two markets one is wholesale where the utility company sells to the utility for example Blue Ridge Electric Membership Company who sells to New River Light and Power Company and Duke Power Company sells to BREMCO and these are wholesale transactions between the companies. She explained that retail customers are residential homeowners and retail business owners.

Council Liaison LaPlaca referred to a website called www.ratesofsolar.com that was put online by Southern Environmental Law Center. She said that this website can tell you how much it will cost to put solar on a rooftop in the six southeastern states. She talked about three utility companies and did a comparison between them to show what they are doing with net metering. She noted that Duke Energy is utilizing the best net metering rules in the country and they were put into place around 2007. She said the North Carolina Clean Tech Center in Raleigh wrote the rules.

Council Liaison LaPlaca said that Duke Power does not charge their customers additional monthly fees for solar. She said that not charging for solar is why we do not have more of it. She pointed out that what happens when energy is fed into the Grid or what happens to the energy your rooftop solar system produces. She said the maximum rate your utility credits you for excess energy from your system is the same as the average rate your utility charges customers for energy they use per kwh.

Council Liaison LaPlaca talked about putting rooftop solar on a home in the BREMCO territory. She said it would cost the homeowner approximately \$10,545.00 which is an average cost of a solar system in North Carolina. She said over the span of 30 years a homeowner will pay \$10,378.80 which is an average amount of solar fees paid to utility company for the solar system. She said in the Duke Power territory, it will take about seven years to pay off the solar system. She said if you are in the BREMCO territory, it will take at least 20 years to pay off the solar system.

Council Liaison LaPlaca talked about the Surry Yadkin Co-Op noting that she would suggest using the way that they charge utility fees. She explained that they charge a flat monthly fee of \$3.75. She further explained that the utility company has to figure out the bills including the net metering cost. She talked about what happens to the energy your rooftop solar system produces from a retail standpoint. She talked about how much is homeowner or business owner is paid, when they buy solar. She said in Surry Yadkin, it is a retail rate. She explained the cost to go solar in this area. She said \$10,545.00 is the average cost of a solar system in North Carolina and only \$1,350.00 is paid in fees as an average amount of solar fees paid to the utility over the 30-year lifespan of a solar system because of the \$3.75 monthly flat fee paid to the utility company.

Council Liaison LaPlaca talked about how New River Light and Power can do a flat monthly fee. She explained that NRLP is owned by Appalachian State University which means they are owner

by the State of North Carolina and they are able to implement any kind of plan that they want to. She said in our area, we do not have any energy efficiency, winterization, no home energy audits, or rebates for high efficiency heat pumps or anything for the hundreds of things that could be done. She also stated that we do not have net-metering in the Town or Watauga County. She said this is the reason that we have almost zero solar in our area. She said in the State of North Carolina approximately \$13 billion dollars' worth of solar is installed.

Council Liaison LaPlaca said the state of North Carolina as a whole is moving very quickly towards natural gas. She said that she has a four-page analysis on natural gas ready for review by anyone who is interested. She said that NTE is 100 percent natural gas and it is twice as bad for the climate as coal per the Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change, 2014 Fifth Assessment. She said by moving more towards natural gas, we are contributing to the climate issue. She said by not providing net metering we are not helping the climate issue.

Council Liaison LaPlaca talked about business owner Landon Pennington having a striving solar business at one time. She mentioned inviting him to speak at a future Sustainability Committee meeting to talk about his solar business experience. She said his business is now a hobby for him due to the lack of solar installations.

Chairperson Kornegay asked Council Liaison LaPlaca about the next step to move towards net metering. Council Liaison LaPlaca said we need to convince Appalachian State University to get involved. She further state that Mr. Ed Miller at ASU needs to file a rate schedule which goes through the North Carolina Utilities Commission. She asked that the Sustainability Committee recommend a resolution to the Council to support net metering and ask Mr. Ed Miller to attend a future Sustainability Committee meeting and Council Meeting. She said she would like for Mr. Miller to explain why New River Light and Power is not doing net metering. She also suggested educating the public so they can support the proposed resolution for net metering and ask for feedback on it. She said that Mr. Pennington is installing solar at 2.8 cents per kilowatt hour. She said that this amount per kilowatt hour is unbelievably low. She said the utility scale projects that Duke Energy signed contracts on two years ago were 3.5 cents on the utility scale which is much cheaper because of the volume being used.

Vice-Chairperson Scarboro inquired about the Sustainability Committee's goal for net metering. He said it is really clear from the presentation that NRLP has no incentive to work towards building a clean energy infrastructure because it reduces their business or their profits. He said if NRLP does not have an interest in doing what we are asking them to do and they are owned by the University, he said the Sustainability Committee would be going up against NRLP and the University. He said if we are setting our sights that high, he suggested saying that we do not have a for profit generation at all. Council Liaison LaPlaca said the utility company would stay the same and solar businesses would get business again, if net metering was being used. She said out of the 8,000 meters what percentage can NRLP help with each year. She said that net metering has been around for 15 years. She noted that to help stop climate change the net metering needs to be addressed.

Member Ball said that 100 percent of the profits from NRLP go to fund scholarships at the University. He said that the revenue that is made from the utility goes toward taking care of the NRLP expenses. He said that he agreed with Council Liaison LaPlaca that there is a lot of opportunity for NRLP to help with energy efficiencies.

Member Ball explained that NTE has changed their name to Carolina Power Partners, he said they are exclusively a natural gas company at this time. He said that Carolina Power Partners knows that the Town of Boone is desiring solar for their community.

Member Ball noted that he has been in communication with Mr. Ed Miller from NRLP several times today regarding solar in our community. Member Ball said that Mr. Miller does support the adding of solar. Member Ball agreed that the Sustainability Committee should invite Mr. Miller to attend a future Sustainability Committee meeting to answer any questions that the committee might have on said topics. Member Ball also suggested that Mr. Miller attend a Council meeting to answer questions of the Council, if it is appropriate to do so.

Member Ball said that he agreed with Council Liaison LaPlaca to recommend to Council that the Council make it very obvious and clear that the Town of Boone wants NRLP to be able to offer more incentive for solar and other energy efficiency programs. Member Ball said that he also had some other ideas one of which includes getting together another group that would include third party people that we trust to talk through some solutions. Member Ball explained that Mr. Miller is concerned for any additional costs to the utility and is concerned that the public, Staff and the utility commission is not going to allow him to make his other customers that do not want solar have to pay for it. Member Ball noted that he understands Mr. Miller's concern and he said he wanted to try to figure out another creative solution to pay for solar. Member Ball wanted to make a motion to recommend to Council for a resolution. Council Member LaPlaca said that the additional cost is mostly a benefit and she would like the opportunity to explain it more.

Ms. Shook explained that the Sustainability Committee per Council's request at their last meeting had proposed three topics to Council for the Sustainability Committee to work on which are energy efficiencies, Sustainable Transportation and County-Town wide composting. Ms. Shook explained that the Planning Staff had sent an action request on the three recommendations to Council for their review and it will be discussed at the October 15, 2020 Council meeting. Ms. Shook said that she had spoken to Chairperson Kornegay regarding some of the Sustainability Committee members attending the Council meeting to answer any questions of the Council. Ms. Shook noted that this meeting is an informational meeting and preferred that the Sustainability Committee did not make recommendations regarding a resolution at this time. Council Member LaPlaca said since this is an information meeting, she has a list of questions that she would like to give to Mr. Miller. Council Member LaPlaca noted that she has not had a good experience in getting Mr. Miller to communicate with her regarding energy efficiency topics. Member Ball pointed out that he thought a list of questions would not need to go through the Sustainability Committee but that Council Liaison LaPlaca has every right to send a list of questions to the Council.

Vice-Chairperson Scarboro asked what the Town can do to put pressure on the utility companies. Council Liaison LaPlaca suggested embarrassing the utility companies. She pointed out that the utility companies are not doing the most basic things to support energy efficiencies which includes net metering. She said if all of our electricity is from fossil fuels, we are failing to support energy efficiency. Chairperson Kornegay agreed with Council Liaison LaPlaca on this topic.

Member Brook asked Council Liaison LaPlaca for her suggestions for the Sustainable Committee on regarding net metering. Council Liaison LaPlaca said based on the expertise of the Committee and other knowledgeable sources the Committee could make a recommendation to Council to express support for net metering. Chairperson Kornegay said she thought the next step would be to get the information on net metering from NRLP.

Ms. Shook explained that the next step for the Planning Staff is to attend the October 15, 2020 Council meeting to get further direction from Council on how the Sustainability Committee should move forward with their work. Council Liaison LaPlaca explained that she felt like the Sustainability Committee needed to take action on climate change and support working on all three action items at the same time. Chairperson Kornegay agreed with Council Liaison LaPlaca.

Chairperson Kornegay asked Ms. Shook to explain to the Sustainability Committee the process that would be followed when an action request is sent to Council by the Sustainability Committee. Ms. Shook explained that the Chairperson would attend the Council meeting to support the information in the action request. Ms. Shook said in the action request, she tied the three topics in the recommendation to the STARS rating system which is a document that has already been introduced to Council through the Sustainability Toolkit. Ms. Shook encouraged other Sustainability Committee members to attend said Council meeting. Ms. Shook said that a motion and vote is needed by the Sustainability Committee for a committee member to attend the Council meeting. Council Liaison LaPlaca suggested encouraging everyone to email the Council members through the Town website to show their support of the three topics listed in the Sustainability Committee recommendations. Ms. Shook encouraged the Sustainability Chairperson and another committee member to attend the Council meeting to answer questions. Council Liaison LaPlaca encouraged younger people to attend the Council meetings to give their feedback on said topics. Ms. Ella Jennings, Sustainable Scholar member said that if someone would help her with her questions, she would attend the public comment session of the Council meeting. Council Liaison LaPlaca said she would help Ms. Jennings with her questions.

Ms. Shook explained the Council meeting process and the public comment session that is held at the beginning of the meeting. Ms. Shook said at the Council meeting, she will introduce the Sustainability Committee members that are present to speak on behalf of the Sustainability Committee. Ms. Shook said at the Council meeting, she would present the information in the action request and the Sustainability Committee would need to approve someone to speak at the Council meeting prior to the Council meeting.

Motion and Vote:

Member Mansure made a motion, seconded by Member Brook to approve Chairperson Kornegay to represent the Sustainability Committee at the October 15, 2020 Council meeting regarding the three recommendations made by the Sustainability Committee which are energy efficiencies, sustainable transportation and Town and county wide composting.

Vote:

Aye – All

Nay – None

The motion passed.

Motion and Vote:

Member Ballard made a motion, seconded by Member Ball to approve Vice-Chairperson Benjamin Scarboro, Member Ballard Reynolds and Sustainable Scholar Member Ella Jennings to represent the Sustainability Committee at the October 14, 2020 Council meeting on the three recommendations made by the Sustainable Committee which are energy efficiencies, Sustainable Transportation and Town and county wide composting.

Vote:

Aye – All

Nay – None

The motion passed.

Discussion ensued on electronic communication. Chairperson Kornegay said that if anyone on the Sustainability Committee wants to talk about any ideas on topics from this meeting, they can email her. Ms. Shook reminded everyone of the open meeting law and to be cognizant of any chain emails that might suggest the conducting of Town business. She also noted that three committee members are alright to email each other within the committee. Chairperson Kornegay confirmed that the committee members cannot be a part of any break out working groups.

Informal Discussion/Other Matters

Member Brook talked about the inconsistency of the where and when masks are required as a result of the Covid-19 mandate. She asked if this topic is in the purview of the Sustainability Committee purview. Ms. Shook said it is not in the committee purview and that Member Brook should first contact Mr. John Ward, Town Manager with her concerns on said topic or Mr. Jimmy Isaacs, Fire Chief and the Incident Command System Manager. Council Liaison LaPlaca encouraged Member Brook to voice her concerns on this topic in the public comment session of any Council meetings.

Member Prickett noted that he has received a 25-page discovery report from the American Chemical Society that talks about batteries for solar panels and automobiles. He said the conclusion that comes from the report is within possibly two or three years that the United States will be making an electric car which is in every way competitive with any other vehicle in terms of initial cost and maintenance. He said the improvements made to said batteries have been

improved in just the last year and the results are very impressive. Council Liaison LaPlaca requested that Member Prickett send her a link to said information.

Public Comment

No individual requested the opportunity to speak during public comment.

Adjournment

Chairperson Kornegay made a motion, seconded by Member Ballard to adjourn the meeting at 7:18 p.m.

Vote:

Aye – All

Nay – None

The motion passed.

Brooke Kornegay, Chairperson

Marlene Crosby, Committee Secretary