



Town of Boone
Sustainability Committee
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, October 14th, 2021
5:30 P.M.

Members Present: Vice-Chairperson John Pickett, Lee Ball, Benjamin Scarboro, Terry Cirone, Jeremy Love, Brian Crutcherfield and Joan Brook (Arrived at 6:25 p.m.)

Members Absent: Luanna Nesbit, Danielle Stockman

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

Council Liaison: Councilperson Jon Dalton George

Others Present: Hugo Hernandez, Korinne Szagola and Colton Rhode

Call to Order:

Vice-Chairperson John Pickett called the October 14th, 2021 meeting of the Sustainability Committee Meeting at 5:40 p.m. via Webex. Terry Cirone lost connection at 5:40 p.m.

Adoption of Agenda:

John Pickett called for a motion to adopt the agenda. Upon the motion of Lee Ball, seconded by Brian Crutcherfield, the agenda for the October 14th, 2021 Sustainability Committee Meeting was adopted.

VOTE: Aye: Pickett, Ball, Scarboro, Love, Crutcherfield

Nay: None

Absent: Cirone, Brook, Nesbit, Stockman

Approval of Minutes

John Pickett called for a motion to approve the previous June 10th, 2021 minutes for the Sustainability Committee. Upon the motion of Benjamin Scarboro, seconded by Lee Ball, the minutes for the June 10th, 2021 Sustainability Committee were approved.

VOTE: Aye: Pickett, Ball, Scarboro, Love, Crutcherfield

Nay: None

Absent: Cirone, Brook, Nesbit, Stockman



Old Business: Website Updates:

George Santucci began by introducing the new Town of Boone's website, mentioning that the website's launch was scheduled for October 12th, 2021 but has been pushed back to November 9th, 2021. Santucci presented to the committee the Sustainability Committee's page on the website, then moved on to the Sustainability in Boone webpages. On the Sustainability in Boone's homepage, Santucci explained the '5 Steps to Zero Carbon' graphic, which is a graphic that details how the town will be reducing their carbon footprint to zero. While summarizing Step #4 of the '5 Steps to Zero Carbon' graphic, which is 'Generate Local', Santucci shared with the Sustainability Committee that 55 acres of solar generates 10 GWh of solar energy. He then updated the committee about a possible solar array installment on the Watauga County Landfill which could in theory generate 2MWh of solar energy. However, Santucci explained, the first action has to be getting the cost per KWh of solar energy lowered. Santucci then continued with the tour of the website, explaining that the website is still a work in progress and that both he and Laney Pilkington would love input and feedback regarding what the committee wants to see on the new webpages. Scarboro asked about what outreach is being done regarding social media, explaining that social media is a great outreach tool and he wants to see more. Pilkington answered that currently, she is promoting Sustainability Committee meetings on social media, and promoting completed projects and ongoing projects, such as the Trash Trout and the future Race to Zero Campaign.

Old Business: Project Updates:

Santucci began by updating the committee about the Trash Trout, located in Winkler Creek beside State Farm Road. He explained that there has been a delay for the budgeted Second Trash Trout, due to flooding in Asheville which damaged the facility where Trash Trout's are made. Santucci continued by updating the committee on the recent purchase of 4-5 hybrid vehicles made by the Boone Police Department, reminding the committee that this is a huge step, especially because when hybrid cars idle, they switch to their electric supply. Next, Santucci updated the committee about the new electric vehicle chargers which will start appearing in Boone next year (2022). He explained that he and Todd Moody, Deputy Director of Public Works, have been researching companies and have been looking into the company ClipperCreek, an EV charging company which has installed chargers at East Tennessee State University. With the current budget the Sustainability Committee has for EV charging infrastructure, 10 chargers can be purchased and installed throughout Boone in areas such as King Street, Queen Street, Boone Jaycee Park and others.

Terry Cirone rejoined the meeting at 6:00 p.m., apologizing for cutting off and explained that she was having issues with her audio.

Santucci continued with an update regarding a possible solar installment on a set of stairs which connect King Street and Queen Street, more commonly known as the Queen Street stairs.



Santucci explained that he has been working with Lane Moody, Downtown Development Coordinator, and the Downtown Boone Development Association, citing that there was a chance that funds for the solar installment could be pulled from the CARES Act funds. Pickett thanked Santucci for the update.

New Business: Race to Zero:

Pickett began the discussion by saying he was curious about the Race to Zero Campaign, and wanted to know more about it. Santucci began his explanation by briefly summarizing what the Race to Zero Campaign is, which is a campaign that is devoted to complete zero carbon emissions by 2050 or sooner. He explained that as of October 14th, 2021, 799 cities had signed on to the Race to Zero Campaign. Santucci continued by explaining the criteria to join had already been met by the establishment of the previous goals set by the Boone Town Council, as well as the work already completed by the committee. The contract for the Race to Zero Campaign had been signed by Mayor Rennie Brantz on October 7th, 2021. This was, Santucci explained, one way for the Town of Boone to get recognition for all that is being done regarding sustainable efforts. Scarboro thanked Santucci for the explanation and then asked to return to the conversation regarding social media. He asked for more outreach on social media regarding sustainability. Santucci explained Pilkington's position and wants the committee to help form a communications plan for social media and outreach. Scarboro suggested that one way to keep the public engaged is by keeping the Sustainability Committee Meetings online. Santucci suggested posting more on social media and moving public comment to the beginning of the meeting. Scarboro asked about the possibility of moving the Trash Trout production to Boone, stating that if the creator is willing to train someone in Boone how to make these products it would be easier to obtain, in which Santucci agreed and said he would reach out to the company. Pickett asked how long it took for the Trash Trout to accumulate the amount of trash seen in Image 1.2. Santucci said two weeks. Pickett continued by suggesting having both public comment at the beginning and end of the meeting.

New Business: Community Climate Action Plan:

Pickett introduced the Community Climate Action Plan under New Business. Santucci explained that for the Community Climate Action Plan, he wanted it to encompass everything that both the committee and town are doing and planning on doing. Ball stated that he believed it should have a focus on transportation and energy efficiency, as well resiliency and outreach components. Santucci commented on using information from other communities but modify the plans to fit Boone's goals. Santucci continued by introducing the Boone Community Climate Action Plan Survey and thanking those who participated. Cirone suggested that the goal should be to leave the questions open ended and suggested not limiting the survey to just people living in Boone, due to the fact that many people come to Boone throughout the day and use their utilities and infrastructure. Santucci agreed. Cirone offered to talk with Santucci outside of the meeting regarding the survey if he needed more guidance.



Joan Brook joined the meeting at 6:25 p.m.

Santucci asked what could be asked to capture that, in which Cirone answered that it could possibly say 'do you utilize the services in Boone?'. Santucci continued through each question asking for feedback. Santucci explained that the Town Council likes to know who lives in Boone when they are taking the survey. Cirone asked how Santucci wanted the data split up, and agreed that the age range on the survey is appropriate. Santucci continued to the question regarding concern about climate change and suggested continual testing. He then moved on to the question regarding local/regional climate impact, in which Cirone suggested adding high energy costs. Pickett agreed. Cirone went on to suggest talking further about transportation issues, in which Ball suggested cycling. Hugo Hernandez adding food problems. Lee clarified safe access to pedestrians and cyclists. Santucci continued by moving onto the following question regarding personal level of concern about climate change. He explained that he sees this survey as a building process and wants to use this as a form of outreach. Brook asks how they can address diversity in the community, in which Cirone responds that it's easy to ask the question about diversity, but it's harder to receive input from other communities if there is no relationship. Pickett asked if there was a way to make questions optional and/or skip a question. Santucci responds by suggesting the addition of optional questions or adding a 'choose not to answer' option, and wants to exploit every means necessary and possible to reach all communities. Scarboro explained that with outreach, the first step is to reach out. He explained that it is necessary to start talking to people and community outreach is a start. Santucci asked if there should be any question added or removed, in which Jeremy Love suggested adding a 'yes or no' question regarding if the individual knew of their impact on the environment, with links to environmental impact calculators added to the survey. Santucci asked if Pilkington could add these calculator links to the new web pages, and Pilkington agreed. Cirone wanted a question added about where individuals are learning about climate change and where they are receiving their information. Councilperson George suggested reaching out to 'Club Hub' on Appalachian State University's campus. Santucci also suggested sending the survey out to the Town of Boone staff, and asked if he could send the survey out to the committee again, which the committee agreed to.

Other Matters by Board Members or Staff:

Pickett introduced the 'Other Matters by Board Members or Staff' and reminded the members of the committee to vote in local elections. Scarboro then reminded the committee of the Cottages' third discharge and said that the Town should force the owners of the Cottages to take action. He also explained that he believed that the community should do something. He admitted to knowing that the town couldn't interfere directly, but believed that the committee at least should support whatever community effort is made. Santucci suggested that the best course of action is to get the state agency involved and inform the committee that work is being done. Ball asked where the water to the Cottages comes from, in which Santucci responded that the Cottages receive their water from a well and have a failing wastewater treatment facility. He



also said that the water supply to the Cottages is inadequate in regards to the amount of individuals they serve. Cirone asked when the Cottages' permit for their wastewater treatment system was up for renewal, and explained that when it is up for renewal it is a key time to provide public comment. Scarboro asked what would be required for the Town to acquire the Cottages, rehabilitate the property and create a Community Land Trust for Affordable Housing. Santucci explained that currently the Town doesn't have the staff to take on such a project, however he did reassure the committee that affordable housing is being talked about among staff. He explained that one idea that is being talked about is donating land owned by the town or purchasing land through the town and then donating it to organizations such as Habitat for Humanity. He went on to explain that to acquire the Cottages, it would require annexation into the Town of Boone limits. Pickett asked why Watauga County wasn't doing anything, and explained that as a resident of Watauga County he had no idea this was going on. Santucci suggest that running water and sewer up to the Cottages was another idea, however, Councilperson George explained, running water lines up the slope to the Cottages would be a huge cost to the Town. Scarboro said that the best way to go to the county is through the Watauga Riverkeeper. Brook explained that because the Watauga River runs through multiple counties, this issue is a federal violation and suggested that they go through the EPA. Cirone countered and explained that their best bet is to go to regulation jurisdiction first. Santucci explained that the Watauga Riverkeeper needs to first prove that the State has usurped its duty, and then he should go to the EPA.

Crutcherfield left the meeting at 7:15 p.m.

Public Comment:

Pickett asked if anyone had any public comment. He continued by thanking Santucci for all the progress which is being made, and that he hoped the new members enjoyed the meeting. Love said that he had enjoyed it. Santucci added that unfortunately, when the committee voted on the adoption of the agenda and the approval of minutes, Crutcherfield had not yet formally been sworn into the committee and so Santucci asked if the committee could revote for the adoption of the agenda and the approval of minutes.

Adjournment:

John Pickett called for a motion to adjourn. Upon the motion of Benjamin Scarboro, seconded by Lee Ball, the October 14th, 2021 was adjourned at 7:27 p.m.

VOTE: Aye: Pickett, Ball, Scarboro, Love, Cirone, Brook

Nay: None

Absent: Crutcherfield, Nesbit, Stockman