



Environmental and Energy Stewardship Subcommittee

200 College Street, Room 310

October 20, 2023

Meeting Minutes

Subcommittee Members Present

Chairman Newman, Commissioner Wells, Commissioner Sloan, Councilwoman Ullman, Chris Link

Staff Members Present

Sybil Tate, Jennifer Harrison, Max Taintor, Ashley Featherstone, Jackie Hamstead, Michael Frue, Jeremiah LeRoy, Kristy Smith, Dane Pederson

Commissioner Sloan called the meeting to order at 10:05 am.

Motion to approve the September meeting minutes and October agenda passed unanimously.

Public Comment

No public comment.

Landfill to Gas REOI Responses

- County is currently under PPA with Duke which expires November 2024
 - Old PPA (pre 2021) had more favorable pricing
 - Under current pricing, revenues just meet expenses
- Solid Waste is delaying investments in wells/ generators until REIO process is complete
 - New wells would increase flow
 - 20-25 years of life of landfill gas production on currently permitted areas
- Landfill Gas to Renewable Natural Gas
 - Typically landfill gas flow rates for renewable natural gas (RNG) ranges from 1100-7700 scfm, Buncombe County currently operates at 500 scfm
 - Nearest connection point for natural gas utility is 7 miles away and would cost an estimated \$14-21 million
- Received 6 REOI responses with different strategies including:
 - Landfill gas to energy
 - Renewable natural gas pipeline
 - Renewable Energy Credits
 - Microgrid
 - eRINs (similar to carbon credits, emerging market that is currently unregulated)
 - Combination of above strategies
- Key Takeaways
 - Responses were not favorable to RNG
 - 50% of responses suggest County waits until 2024 for EPA to issue rules on eRINs
 - Most respondents were developers- their proposals would reduce County's autonomy
 - Revenue share ranged from 10-32%
- Next Steps:
 - Continue operating as we are
 - Engage Duke in PPA renewal starting Nov 2023



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- Hold additional interviews with potential developers
- Await EPA eRIN update in early 2024
- Expand gas wells
- Consider upgrades to existing generator or purchasing new generator

Buncombe County Clean Water Fund Grant Application Update-

- Received 2 applications
 - one proposal didn't meet the WAP criteria
 - the other proposal at AB tech, there is already \$900K set aside that could cover these project costs
- Feedback was the application window was too short- there were several projects that didn't have enough time to complete the application
 - Proposing to reopen application with longer timeline
 - Reopen Nov 1
 - Applications due Jan 29th
 - project contracting Feb-March 2024
 - project implementation April 2024- June 2025
 - feedback is to amend this timeline to make it longer
 - These are largely construction projects that require longer timelines- need more than a 1-year cycle
 - County wants projects to be successful with time to do it in a meaningful way
- Encourage 2 applicants to reapply with amendments/ clarifications

EPA Grant Updates

- Electric School Buses (BIL)
 - Last year BC Schools applied for 2 electric school buses and were not successful
 - don't qualify for low-income priority area
 - This year County schools has application in for 5 buses as part of a bulk application with vendor.
 - Will find out between Nov.- Jan.
 - Eligible for rebate program that typically covers cost difference between electric bus vs traditional.
 - Would require expensive charging infrastructure
 - About 5-8 of County School buses were eligible for replacement this year
 - Can we make a financial case without the rebates/ grants? Need to look at lifecycle cost.
 - State pays \$100K for traditional bus, challenge is coming up with additional funds
 - Leasing? Financing?
 - School system pays for fuel and maintenance
 - We can employ similar logic as solar on schools
- Climate Pollution Reduction Grant
 - \$5 billion of funding available for planning and implementation grants
 - Buncombe County falls under State's planning grant
 - County is participating in stakeholder engagement



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- Sustainability and Air Quality worked together to submit proposal for a home heating upgrade program with priority for low-income programming
 - Implementation grants due April 2024
- Electrify Asheville Buncombe County update
 - Under contract with Bright Spaces, Green Built Alliance, and NCCEF
 - Have engaged with trades groups to get input on project implementation
 - Developed RFI for local contractors, currently open
 - Focus on heat pumps for now but other electrification projects included

Board Appointments

- All initial terms are completed
- No term limit for commissioners
- Lena and Chris run till July 25
 - Lena has not been formally reappointed by full board
- Meg is rolling off
- Do we have an attendance policy? Yes, 75%
- Parker will send email to clerk to advertise Meg's position
- If anyone steps down, then whoever fills it would serve a partial term
- Motion to advertise opening for 30 days made by Commissioner Wells, passed unanimously

Announcements/ Updates

- Floating solar
 - Submitted interconnection application
 - Application invalid because land use agreement wasn't binding legal agreement
 - Jeremiah wrote up proposal for Duke to circulate internally
 - Next application cycle closes June 2024, we can submit early
 - New Duke rep has been responsive
 - Future plan for potential line voltage regulator is barrier for the initial proposed point of interconnection
 - Duke wants us between substation and line voltage regulator
 - Need additional guidance on best location for point of interconnection
 - Will need utility easement from land owner
 - Contracting with McKim and Creed
- Follow up with Tim Love about Economic Development Incentives to include renewable energy
- No meeting in Nov. Combined with December meeting. Dec. 1st

Adjournment: Motion to adjourn passed unanimously at 11:44 am