



## Environmental and Energy Stewardship Subcommittee

200 College Street, Room 310

May 19, 2023

### Meeting Minutes

#### Subcommittee Members Present

Chairman Newman, Commissioner Wells, Councilperson Ullman, Commissioner Sloan, Chris Link, Meg Jamison

#### Staff Members Present

Sybil Tate, Jeremiah LeRoy, Jennifer Harrison, Max Taintor, Ashley Featherstone, Jackie Hamstead, Angelica Tyler, Michael Frue, Samantha Bowers, Amy Broughton

Commissioner Sloan called the meeting to order at 10:02 am.

Motion to approve May minutes and July agenda made by Councilperson Ullman. Approved unanimously.

#### Public Comment:

No public comment.

#### Buncombe County Clean Water Fund Criteria

- Funding range
  - Staff preference is to increase minimum for proposals. Limited capacity to manage more than 3 projects well.
  - Concern raised that if there is only 1 project, does that limit the ability of a pilot to demonstrate success
    - Support for allowing proposals up to \$100K to see what we get
    - Add disclaimer that preference will be given to 2-3 medium projects
  - Available funding should align with requirements (construction drawings are expensive)
- Being a pilot program with limited funds, requiring WAP-approved projects will vet the projects, ensure a level of shovel-readiness, and limit applicant pool
  - Preapproved WAPs include: Smith Mill Creek, Cane Creek, DT sections of French Broad
- Discussion around accepting in-kind as matching funds
  - What are the equity implications? Would disqualifying in-kind funds create exclusivity?
  - Not accepting in-kind may limit applicant pool to more experienced partners during pilot
  - Suggestion to allow for flexibility- the more match you bring, the more points you get
- Timeline discussion-
  - Currently funds are not in a roll-over funding meaning projects need to be done by June
  - Completing in FY24 would allow subcommittee to see results before funding in FY25
  - Ideally, in the future, this program gets on the same timeline as Strategic Partnerships Grants
  - Support from subcommittee to move to a carry-over fund and extend the proposed deadlines
    - The permitting process can take several months



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- Trout moratoriums and other restrictions can cause project delays
- Proposed new 18-month timeline
  - Reasonable release date: 1 month
  - Advertise for 1 month, 2 weeks at a minimum
  - 1 month to rally review committee
- Staff will review and do the scoring and bring to the subcommittee for final decision
  - Subcommittee members value the notes from staff in addition to the scores
- Some support for more flexible use of funds. Instead of requiring construction drawings, maybe let that be an acceptable use of funds
- Clarify that criteria disallowing studies/ testing is for water quality, not engineering. Intent is to invest in implementation, not planning or pre-planning.

### Greenbank Pilot Update

- NC Green Bank is applying for federal funds- it could be up to a year before they see any funds that they are awarded
- Next step is to initiate contract with Clean Energy Fund for the loan loss reserve
- Identifying portal for contractor registration
  - Smart-e may or may not still be an option- they are looking to only do larger, state-wide programming which increases cost
- Clean Energy Fund staff have met with capital partners (CDFIs, BOA) in Asheville
- County Staff are working to queue contractors and clients
  - Currently negotiating contract with Solar Crowd Source
  - Modify solarize model to other technologies like heat pumps
  - Tapping contractor networks- Duke Trade Allies are already trained on leveraging rebates/ incentives
- Both City and County ARPA funds have been dedicated to HVAC replacements through GBA. May be an opportunity to fully subsidize a handful of these projects.
- Contractors have expressed need for better financing options
- Won't see cost reduction from volume because there are so many different heat pumps- more of mass marketing, facilitation of federal/ utility rebates, and a financing product
- Fully anticipate stubbing our toe- be realistic about what our expectations
  - Still deciding what success looks like: 50 projects? 100 projects?- How many will want financing? How do we leverage the fund?
  - Success is innovation
  - People don't pursue this product when everything is functional, they wait until it breaks
  - Provide safety net for the market to develop
- Timeline-
  - Can we roll it out this winter?
  - EPA electrification messaging is also focusing on summer AC
- Make sure State CPR (climate pollution reduction) plan includes electrification so there is future grant funding available- EAQ to facilitate this
- Solar Crowd Source received funding previously allocated to Green Built Alliance
  - Same amount of funding available for BHP



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- Shifting some funding away weatherization
- Heat pump hot waters wouldn't be good candidate tech for financing
- GBA has built capacity through ARPA
- Shifting our priorities to meet new unprecedented opportunities
- GBA will be able to modify their ARPA funds
- Buncombe County was first to commit funds to Clean Energy Fund= top priority

### Response to Wildfire Impacts to Air Quality

- Several code orange days and forecasted code orange days
- Predicting that fires will burn all summer and we will continue to have the air quality issues
- Air Quality has been meeting with Emergency Services, CAPE, DHHS
- County staff support EPA messaging- using their outreach materials
- CAPE prepared a toolkit to distribute air quality messaging (i.e. no burning)
- No reports from local hospitals about impacts to human health
- Working with local professor using low cost air sensors to monitor local conditions- study on redlined areas= more data than 2016
- Recommendations for folks who cant stay inside: look out for symptoms, take frequent breaks, check with doctor about using respirator
  - When we get to reds and purples- what will that mean for County/ City work crews?
- County is not allowed to distribute KN95 masks, supposed to be respiratory fit tested for N95
- Air Now fire and smoke map is the recommended resource

### Announcements:

- Recap of the Plastic bag ban discussion
  - Decision was to go into close session
  - City is pursuing with eagerness and calculated risk
  - Risk of state coming at us when being innovative with law
  - Do County Governments have legal authority to implement proposed ban? Groups have committed to sue
  - Staff is working on alternative pivots to focus on projects within County authority
  - Closed session is just to hear about legal authority- other discussion (merits) will happen in open meetings

Motion to amend the agenda to include closed session passed unanimously.

Pursuant with GS 143-381.11A3. motion to go into closed session passed unanimously.

### Adjournment

Motion made by Commissioner Sloan at 11:59 am.