



BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Madeline Almodovar - Chair
Shana Carson
Michael Gilbrook
Ed Johnson
Kenneth Peach
Resham Shirsat
Laura Betts
Christianah Oyenuga

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

Susy Torriente – Vice Chair

STAFF ATTENDANCE:

Jeff Benavides - Sustainability & Resilience
Lori Forsman – Sustainability & Resilience
David Jones – EPD
Jane Gregory – EPD
Jacques Werleigh – EPD
Lee Perry – District 1 Comm. Office
Alan Marshall – PEDS
Ted Kozak - Zoning
Josh Humphreys – GIS
Maria Cahill – Planning
Alicia Baxter – Parks & Rec
Renee Parker – EPD
Wanda Parker - EPD
Beth Jackson – EPD

Call to Order

At 12:04, Chair Almodovar called the meeting to order. Noting a quorum in the room, roll call was taken.

Public Comment

The Chair asked for public comment. There were no members of the public attending virtually. Staff confirmed there was no written public comment submitted.

At 12:06, Ed Johnson joined the meeting.

Approval of Minutes

Upon a motion by Ken Peach, seconded by Resham Shirsat and carried by ALL present members and virtual members voting AYE by voice vote, Suzy Torriente being absent; the Sustainability Advisory Board (SAB) approved the April 22, 2021 meeting minutes.

Upon a motion by Shana Carson, seconded by Laura Betts and carried by ALL present members and virtual members voting AYE by voice vote, Suzy Torriente being absent; the Sustainability Advisory Board (SAB) approved the May 27, 2021 meeting minutes.

New Business & Discussion

Items for Review/Approval/Community Discussion Topic:

Jeff Benavides, Chief Sustainability & Resilience Officer and Jane Gregory, Environmental Protection Division (EPD) presented the work in progress related to evaluating the effectiveness of the current tree protection code, the review of current residential tree initiatives, and the analysis of the updated tree canopy assessment.

Jeff mentioned the programs of the municipalities within the County to order a tree and have it delivered. UF/IFAS does tree giveaways several times a year as drive-to events, however this brings about transportation equity challenges. Within Orange County Government, three different departments have tree planting programs; Parks & Recreation, EPD, and Public Works. Operational changes need to be considered to bring about more trees throughout the community with a focus on better serving residents.

The SAB members were asked to provide feedback on enhancing residential tree initiatives.

Jane proceeded with a high-level presentation about current tree initiatives. The County recently completed a tree inventory analysis showing 48.15% coverage countywide, and 48.56% coverage in the incorporated area of the County. The analysis will continue with inventorying the trees on our County-owned properties. The presentation also included a review of current County code, the development review process specific to trees, and the value of trees. Challenges were presented such as uplands considerations, tax issues, local regulation pre-emptions, and diversifying the canopy. Opportunities were presented to include funded land preservation, an urban forest management plan, and a true inventory of species, size, and numbers.

The SAB members discussed how Orange County's canopy measures against other counties, what types of protections exist for historic, ancient trees, how trees fit in with Low Impact Development techniques, the need to have a density value for trees, an equity-related goal for tree canopy enhancement, and updates in the tree ordinance with respect to directed growth areas.

Green Minute

Items briefly discussed: How can green thinking be enhanced by taking the opt out approach to situations? Can this concept be applied to trees and their value and preservation? How can carbon credit offsets be factored into tree protection given their sequestration potentials? Could we create a local carbon mitigation bank to help achieve CO2 emissions goals throughout the County? How could this fit into our Green PLACE program?

Old Business

SAB members approved a letter of recommendation to the BCC to encourage the creation of a Residential Backyard Composting Program.

At 1:15 Ed Johnson left the meeting.

Monthly SORAP Staff Report

Jeff Benavides, Chief Sustainability & Resilience Officer gave an overview of legislative Items affecting the SORAP. Several legislative actions will affect the setting and achieving of energy and climate action goals. The presentation addressed current climate action planning and greenhouse gas emissions reduction, an overview of current energy efficiency programs, and a potential residential energy efficiency program with Lake Apopka Natural Gas District.

It was noted that natural gas will not be removed from the County's energy mix in the near future because the current utility plans, out to 2050, reduce coal but increase natural gas. Natural gas remains at least 30% or more of the fuel mix in the next 10 years and potentially beyond.

State legislature has now defined renewable gas to include renewable natural gas – this is not consistent with the definition of clean, renewable energy by external climate organizations, affecting the climate commitments being considered. Recent legislation also pre-empts us from restricting design and construction guidelines to limit the use of natural gas.

Energy efficiency programs for residents are currently focused on electricity. About 16,000 customers are served by Lake Apopka Natural Gas District in Orange County. Can we improve energy efficiency for those that are energy burdened and have natural gas? About 1000 low-income residential customers could be targeted in 2021 and 2022 with more efficient gas appliances to reduce usage, costs, and emissions.

The SAB recognized that this could be a win-win for customers and the County overall when it comes to reduced burden and emissions. The County should do analysis of the costs to implement versus the benefit of emissions reduction for the program. It was recognized that this is also an equity issue with respect to offering opportunities for energy reduction to all residents. It was noted to address the potential optics of investing in natural gas as the program is developed.

At 1:39 p.m., Chair Almodovar adjourned the meeting.

Materials for this meeting can be found at:

<https://ocfl.box.com/s/q6pa3l3zxc0okm4immeey48hsjjwprg8>

Sustainability Advisory Board Chair

Date

Prepared by Lori Forsman

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