

Sustainability Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: Tuesday, September 10, 2024

Time: 6:00 PM

Location: Clemson City Hall Council Chambers

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM by Tony Tidwell, Director of Urban & Park Land management. The session was streamed Live on YouTube and recorded. This was the inaugural meeting of the Sustainability Committee.

2. Introductions

Committee members introduced themselves:

- Nancy Spitler
- Cindy Dienemann
- Robert Fennell
- Mary Jones
- Tony Tidwell
- Elaine Richardson
- Reeta Singh
- Andrew Evans
- Chris White

Eunice Lehmacher (Ms. Sustainability) was absent.

3. Election of Committee Positions

Nominations and votes were conducted for the following positions:

- **Chair:** Cindy nominated Reeta Singh, and Mary Jones seconded. Reeta Singh was unanimously elected as Chair.
- **Vice Chair:** Cindy nominated Andrew Evans, but during discussion, Andrew nominated Elaine Richardson. Mary Jones seconded Elaine's nomination, and Elaine Richardson was elected as Vice Chair.
- **Secretary:** Andrew nominated Mary Jones, and Reeta Singh seconded. Mary Jones was elected as Secretary, with Nancy volunteering as a backup if needed.

4. Chair's Remarks

Chair Reeta Singh expressed gratitude for the committee's support and shared her commitment to balancing urban development with environmental stewardship. She emphasized the importance of considering the impact of development on natural resources and the local ecosystem.

5. Public Comments

John Beckerle, a longtime Clemson resident and friend of Eunice Lehmacher, addressed the committee with the following inquiries:

1. He questioned the future of electric buses in light of recent problems reported in the Seneca Journal, including the bankruptcy of the bus manufacturer.
2. He asked about the status of CES as a flagship environmental building and urged the inclusion of other buildings to follow suit.
3. He highlighted a shortage of electric car chargers in student housing and recommended encouraging their inclusion in new developments for student housing.

Chair Singh acknowledged the need for increased visibility of sustainable power options, like solar panels and electric car charging stations. Tony Tidwell clarified that CAT buses would switch to natural gas and no longer use electric buses. Tony agreed to follow up with John on these matters.

6. Discussion Items

- **Smart Goals:** Andrew proposed goals including increasing tree coverage, establishing green corridors, protecting old-growth trees, and enhancing community engagement in sustainability with biodiversity and food abundant green spaces.
- **Composting:** Nancy emphasized focusing on city-wide composting initiatives.
- **Car Chargers and Wildlife Habitat:** Cindy suggested encouraging more car chargers and preserving wildlife habitats.
- **Urban Park and Land Management:** Robert proposed working with the Urban Park and Land Management department to increase community awareness and support, and expressed interest in composting.
- **University Liaison:** Tony will inquire about a liaison between the committee and Clemson University's sustainability efforts. Elaine suggested that Mary Jones or Andrew Evans could serve in this role moving forward.

7. Tree Ordinances

Elaine discussed the need for more robust tree ordinances for development, noting that current regulations seem insufficient. Cindy highlighted the interconnectedness of tree root systems and suggested increasing fines for developers who clear cut trees. Tony mentioned existing policies and agreed to arrange for someone to speak on tree regulations at a future meeting.

8. Zoning and Regulations

Andrew requested information on zoning regulations related to sustainability and development.

9. Composting and Grants

Tony will provide information on grants available for sustainability projects. The committee discussed using leaf compost and other organic waste management practices.

10. Community Engagement and Subcommittees

- **Official Meetings vs. Subcommittees:** Robert noted that meetings with six or more members are considered official, while meetings with five or fewer can be conducted as subcommittees, which may include community members.
- **Subcommittees:** The committee agreed to form subcommittees to focus on specific goals. Andrew proposed a subcommittee for community engagement to work on sustainability-related articles.
- **Tree Canopy Benefits:** The benefits of maintaining a healthy tree canopy were discussed, including its impact on the water cycle and stormwater management. An article on these benefits was sent to the newsletter.
- **Tree Protection:** It was noted that 80% of the tree canopy is on private property, and some communities have ordinances to protect trees.
- **Wildlife Habitat Certification:** Chris reported that Clemson was signed up as a wildlife habitat community ten years ago. The city is just 100 private residences away from being certified as a wildlife habitat. A subcommittee will be formed to canvas for additional residences to join and make Clemson a certified wildlife habitat.

11. Meeting Schedule

The committee agreed to hold meetings on the second Wednesday of each month starting at 6:30 PM and ending at 8pm. Upcoming meetings are scheduled for October 9th, November 13th, and December 11th.

12. Additional Topics

- **Arbor Day:** Andrew proposed a strong presence for Arbor Day on December 6th, including tree planting events and educational resources on tree care.
- **Tree Planting and Development:** Andrew discussed the need to prepare recommendations for future developments and tree planting initiatives. Tony mentioned challenges with balancing urban development and tree preservation.

13. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:30 PM going over the initial time scheduled by 30 minutes.

Next Meeting: October 9, 2024, at 6:30 PM