

## Environmental Stakeholders Meeting

**Chatham County Comprehensive Plan**

**2/18/2016**

**Location: Dunlap Classroom**

Attendees:

Dave Mattison, Environmental Review Advisory Committee  
Vic D'Amato, Environmental Review Advisory Committee  
Sonny Keisler, Climate Change Advisory Committee  
Laura Lauffer, Climate Change Advisory Committee  
Ron Dameron, Climate Change Advisory Committee  
Brooke Massa, Wildlife Resources Commission  
Brian Burkhart, Chatham County Environmental Quality Director

Staff:

Hillary Pace, Chatham County Planning Department

Jake Petrosky, LandDesign

Jason Sullivan, Chatham County Planning Director

- Brooke Massa- Conservation biologist
- Sonny Keisler- Climate change must be a priority
- Laura Lauffer- former sustainability coordinator for CCCC. NC A& T local food and farms coordinator. Interested in sustainable ag, housing and climate change. Emission reduction goals current work of the Climate Change Committee.
- Ron Dameron- farmer focus
- Vic D'Amato- waste water engineer by education. Natural resources focus at Tetra Tech. Serves on Environmental Review Advisory Committee. Main issues: Protecting the good stuff left. Conservation plan mentioning north Lake Jordan as a wildlife coordinator. Quality of life and preservation, Infrastructure- concerns. Looking at utilities: balance of centralizing decentralizing utilities.
- Dave Mattison- NC DEQ sewer section employee. On ERAC since 2012. Civil Engineer for DEQ Superfund site program. Echoes Vic's comments in terms of using existing resources, using conservation plan, do not reinvent the wheel. Infrastructure a major concern.
- Members of the public: Sharon Garbutt, Ginny Ambrose
- Purpose of the meeting
  - Phase 1- shapes work plan for development of plan
  - Phase 2-actual plan that follows work plan developed in Phase 1
- General questions to guide discussion,
  - What keeps you up at night regarding the environment
  - What progress have you made as a county (all sectors)
  - What's left to do

- Emerging issues to tackle
    - What will this plan to do to achieve identified priorities?
      - What is the determining at the end of the plan
    - 12-14 months process, focus on the environment and natural resources among other topics.
- Vic- Updating plan, what's the starting point and familiarity with existing plan
  - Jake- contains goals and policies. Text document
  - Contains lofty goals and progressive language regarding the environment
  - Goal is to update the plan and incorporate other docs into plan
- Laura- What topic areas included in comprehensive plan
  - Jake- outlined different elements
  - Broad plan. Goal is to reference relevant plans and identify points in other plans
  - Identifies vision of the county
  - 5 or 6 strategic initiatives- end of the plan
- Dave- Has there been a plan review
  - Jake- Yes, underway, but focus group will identify how you feel about the existing policies and if any need to be strengthened or changed

#### What keeps you up at night?

- Main concern growth coming to the county. Condense growth around existing infrastructure.
  - Cape Fear shiner is in deep, haw and rocky river drainages
  - Address stormwater discharge and sedimentation
  - Ensure landscape connectivity for wildlife
- Climate change biggest problem.
  - Concerned about the science behind climate change. Plan should address that as well as emissions. "being intellectually honest"
  - Identifying the importance of carbon sinks (current and future) is important
- Chatham County and smart growth in coordination with Chatham Park. Consolidating industry, business, etc. Transportation for emissions reduction.
  - Jake- setting up metrics for assessing success of plan.
  - Laura- wants a baseline emissions assessment.
  - Green building committee made some progress on policies 2008-2011, then committee was disbanded
  - Concerns about economic development with agriculture. Focus on where food is coming from.
  - Lakes and rivers and beauty of county needs to be preserved.
  - Consolidation of where industry and development and businesses go.
  - Transportation impacts will results from decisions.
  - Eat your view... need to support local ag operations.
- Farming community under attack. Ag and industry is key to vitality of county.
  - Concerned about more regulations and impacts
  - More forest cover now than ever before.
  - Mentioned Gov. Club (used to only have 4 people living on the land).
  - Mentioned science as it relates to climate change. Climate runs in cycles.
  - Wants to grow like businesses like Orange County. Mentioned Chatham lacks industry.
- Feeling that there is not a firm plan in place. Need to protect the good stuff that is left.
  - Things happening such as coal ash. Can the plan address issues like this?

- Concerns about Chatham Park and not having a plan in place.
- Natural resource and infrastructure planning is related. Decentralized utilities has implications. Centralized has benefits that need to be considered.
- Farming is part of the solution. Carbon sequestration has benefits. Looking for win-win scenarios and breaking down silos is important.
- Lets have a vision. Not just do the same thing that we have.
- Jake- we [Chatham County] don't have very many peers in NC. We also have to look outside NC for best practices.
- Concerns about implementation of plan. Metrics important, looking for real steps to use. Looking for a useable document.
  - Conservation plan should steer us along. No need to reinvent the wheel. Some revisions needed.
  - Infrastructure issue is critical.
  - Plan needs to be implementable. Don't need more/same policies that have no teeth. And just a variance is used to sidestep.
- Being prepared for the growth that is coming and preservation of natural resources.
  - Preservation of natural character of the county. Accommodate growth as it comes and coordinate infrastructure to guide growth.
  - Road map for developers. this is where this should go, this is where it shouldn't.
  - Rural/natural resources are attracting growth.
- Beautiful county and must find a balance for incoming growth.
- How much are we growing Ag-wise. Hobby vs. occupation farmers
- Concerns about the types of farming and planning for the different types. Need more detailed recommendations. Policy docs are hard to interpret at smaller scales.
- Let's be careful about making assumptions and using trend lines. We may be "Heading off the cliff" environmentally. Species extinction, etc.
  - Assumptions will be made during the plan which will influence the land use planning portion.
  - Online shopping, electric cars impact socioeconomic development
  - Need an adaptive plan. Be clear on assumptions and have a reality check.
  - Jake- Some assumptions will be necessary. For instance 25% growth within the next 5 years is a very likely thing.
- Growth plan needs to protect quality of living. Balance economic development (i.e. megasites) with other interests and limit impacts.

What are the accomplishments within the past 3 years? What's left? How can the plan address

- Laura- **Emissions study** and narrative in 2009. Another emissions assessment needed and plan development. More incentives and policies for green building and sustainable energy.
  - Smart Growth principles for land use, housing and transportation
  - Net zero building requirement / support for energy star program, incentivize developers
  - More proactive transportation policies (i.e. require county vehicles be electric or natural gas)
  - Would like to see LEED silver/gold standard reinstated for county buildings.
- Vic- Green growth has cascading effects.
- Sonny- Western USA will dry up. What happens when Ag collapses in California?

- Ron- Wishes industrial parks would flourish. Chatham farms are diverse. Concerns about electric cars and the waste generated. Too many restrictions and regulations for farmers. Concentration of growth, avoiding sprawl and concern for extension of utilities.
- Vic- a lot of progress within county. Political change an issue- can comp plan mitigate policy changes due to political change. **Good ERAC membership, functioning board.** More firm policies needed. Great volunteer resources. Comp plan can define roles and make committees more efficient.
- Dave- Problem of all development becomes political and deferred to committees. A plan not subject to political whims. Metrics will help justify and show that the plan is valid and working. Should be across the board.
- Jake- Mentioned performance based zoning approach.
- Dan- **All buildings are constructed to LEED standards**, but not certified. **Preservation of stream buffers (more stringent than the state), low density watershed requirements, erosion control standards**, even with political change over.
  - Plan should acknowledge existing regulations that help the natural environment.
- Brooke- **Chatham Conservation Partnership worked with Pittsboro to develop a conservation district within the ETJ.** Will be incorporated into working documents.