

Meeting Minutes

Chatham County Environmental Review Advisory Committee (ERAC)

June 9, 2022 - 6:30 p.m.

Remote Meeting via Teams

Attendance

Staff: Rachael Thorn, Jason Sullivan, and Hollie Squires the Recording Secretary to the Environmental Review Advisory Committee

Members Present: Jeannie Ambrose, Elaine Chiosso, Heather Holley, Alicia Koblansky, Mary Beth Koza and Frank Stillo, (Amy Fulford- arrived after meeting started was not included in roll calls)

Guests: Julie Esther and Mike Reitz

Members Absent: Terri Tyson, Stacy Christian, Andrew Clark, Jeanette Ragland

1. Call to Order @6:30 pm

2. Virtual Meeting Guidelines

- Please keep microphones muted.
- Use the Chat Function if microphones fail or for connectivity issues.

3. Approval of meeting minutes – May 2022 minutes, was not approved. Fixed a few minor changes and added more to the update summary of Jennifer Pavao's property from the April meeting.

4. Recess Environmental Review Advisory Committee

Motioned by Jeannie Ambrose and was seconded by Mary Beth Koza
Approval unanimously passed via roll call.

5. Reconvene as Watershed Review Board

A. A legislative public hearing for a request by the Chatham County Manager to amend Attachment A, Permitted Uses, of the Watershed Protection Ordinance to add the following use – Wireless Telecommunication Towers.

- Jason Sullivan acting on behalf of the County Manager to request an amendment to Attachment A of the Watershed Protection Ordinance to allow for emergency service telecommunication towers to be built in a critical area. The amendment

was approved in the Planning Board meeting on Tuesday the 7th. Mr. Sullivan is hoping for the amendment to be in the Board of Commissioners July meeting.

- Frank Stillo - Height of the tower? - 400 feet tall (Mike Reitz)
- Elaine Chiosso – Where will the tower go? – Behind the baseball field (Jason Sullivan)
- Alicia Koblansky- What kind of access is needed for the tower? Is it a site-by-site bases or can we have a standardized access? – Yes, the access will need to be site to site, and the fire marshals will need to survey the road to make sure it is safe. There will also be an eight-foot fence with barbed wire and a camera to protect and monitor the tower. (Jason Sullivan)
- Jeannie Ambrose – What is the Chatham County height limit for cell towers? 400 feet? - No, it is 300 feet but there is an exception in the ordinance for local government owned and operated towers. Since we provide services no one else can or might be willing to provide. There is a max limit of 400 feet for the exception towers. (Jason Sullivan)
- There are no guidewires on the tower. It is a self-supporting tower. In the unlikely event in a failure this tower has a 0-fall zone setback. It will fold and collapse in on itself. (Jason Sullivan)
- Jeannie Ambrose – Does the FCC have any information on the migratory bird impact? Will there need to be any bird prevention on the tower to stop migratory birds from nesting during matting season? – No, The FAA and the FCC have cleared this tower. If a bird happens to nest on the tower the antenna will not be impacted. Either way, it is more of a safety issue for fire safety and EMS to have the tower. The reason this tower will be so tall is to prevent having to add more towers in the area, have better coverage, and to save money. The tower will also be able to help connect emergency services to the people on the lake. (Mike Reitz)
- Elaine Chisso – Environmental review board is not in the planning process for these towers? - Correct. The site is small enough to not need a land survey. (Jason Sullivan)
- Jason Sullivan – We can make it so only public service telecommunication towers are allowed in attachment A. No private carriers would even be allowed to get a permit for a tower.

- Mike Reitz – This tower can also withstand private providers so there wouldn't be a need for another tower in the area.

6. Proposal to amend the Watershed Protection Ordinance Attachment A to add wireless communication towers constructed and owned by public safety service providers.

Mary Beth Koza motioned Jeannie Ambrose seconded the motion

Roll call vote passed unanimously

7. Motion to adorn as Watershed review and Reconvene as Environmental Review Advisory Committee

Motioned by Frank Stillo and Seconded by Heather Holley

Voted via roll call unanimously passed.

8. Announcements and Updates:

- **Jeannie liaison for Planning Board Committee** – Four major subdivisions coming in the fall. July 21st Chatham Conservation Partnership will involve community planning in Chatham County, Siler City, and Pittsboro.
- **Alicia liaison for Climate Change Committee** – Climate Change meeting on May 26th Duke Energy discussion about their carbon plant update. House bill was drafted that said electrical companies must reduce their CO2 emissions by 70% by 2030. Duke Energy said they supported this bill and with try to have carbon neutrality by 2050. They want to retire all coal plants by 2023. Diverse mix carbon free and other resources by arguing they are going to use wind solar, and mini nuclear power plants. There are no firm time lines or goals in their plans. The committee has drafted a letter that they hope the commissioners will support where they are asking the North Carolina Utilities commission to demand the production of a reliable and responsible draft plan of a carbon plan from Duke Energy and to make necessary changes to have some sort of follow through. We are waiting to see what other agencies are doing like Clean Air North Carolina to see their response. The idea is to draft something to go before the board of commissioners in the July meeting. The second thing about Duke Net Metering Letter. Duke Energy has submitted a rate filing increase to the North Carolina Utilities Commission that will add a \$10 monthly charge for residential owners of rooftop solar panels and will reduce payment to them by 25 to 30 percent thereby reducing the benefit of present and future owners of rooftop solar panels. Duke is arguing that this is based on a general sutural law 62-126.4 which states that the rate increase is there to make sure that solar owners pay their share of costs

attributed to their service needs and are not subsidized by non-solar customers. Part of this law is that there needs to be an investigation of the cost benefits of the customers sited in the generation of solar power which Duke Energy has never done. The Commission said they do not have a right to file for this change until they have done the study of the cost benefit of rooftop solar and looked at what is in North Carolina.

- **Elaine** – Tree Protection Working Group is set to meet on June 15. The group set to meet on Wednesday. The Working Group is comprised of 8 people from Planning Board, ERAC, Climate Change and Grand Trees.
- **This was Terri Tyson's last meeting, Elaine thanked her for all she has done during her time on the committee.**

9. Adjournment @7:30 Motioned by Mary Beth Koza and seconded by Alicia Koblansky

Roll call unanimously passed.