

# **Chatham County Environmental Review Board Meeting June 18, 2009**

## **Meeting Minutes**

Meeting called to order at 6:35 p.m.

ERB members present: Martha Girolami, Catherine Bollinger, Steve Wing, Allison Weakley, Lin Andrew, Hal House, Sonny Keisler and Elaine Chiosso (Chair), Jim Willis (ex-officio).

Staff present: Fred Royal, Environmental Resources Director, Wendy Paschal, Administrative Assistant

### Approval of Meeting Minutes

Allison Weakley moved to approve minutes from the May 21, 2009 meeting; seconded by Martha Girolami; vote unanimous.

### Introductions

Lin Andrew was introduced as the newest member to the ERB.

Cynthia Van Der Wiele was introduced as the new Sustainable Communities Director.

### Staff Report

Fred Royal reported that the County had approved the hiring of Cole Jenest & Stone to do the Northwest Park. He will be working closely with Parks and Recreation as well as the ERB on this project.

Staff report also included introduction to Quick Bird, climate newsletter and reviewed recommendations for Camp Maranatha EA amendments concerning trails.

### Briar Chapel 404 Permit Modification

Brad Mumford of Newland Communities spoke to the ERB about the violation received from USACE, Wilmington District at Briar Chapel and the measures taken to correct the situation. The violations included failure to record conservation easements, failure to pay fines and failure to maintain erosion control devices. Mr. Mumford stated that in the future, contractors will make sure they understand permit conditions. He apologized for the permit violations and stated that they are instituting a voluntary compliance system and the check list will be submitted to Environmental Resources Division on a quarterly basis.

Allison Weakley moved to have the BoC strongly encourage Briar Chapel and the DOT to use bottomless culverts and bridges and instead of traditional culverts on Andrews Store Rd. because 3 culverts are proposed in a short distance of stream reach. Motion seconded by Sonny Keisler. Vote unanimous.

#### Proposed Chatham County Landfill

John McSween, Chair of the Solid Waste Advisory Board, addressed the ERB regarding the possibility of putting a landfill somewhere in Chatham County and asked for input from the ERB. ERB members raised issues of how to increase the volume of recycling, including “pay as you throw” options, methane recovery, preventing toxic and pharmaceuticals from entering landfill and other ways to reduce the harmful effects of landfills. Steve noted that wealthy communities create more solid waste than low income communities, and that it would not be fair to locate a landfill in a low income community. John McSween pointed out that current rules prohibit siting a landfill in the Jordan Lake watershed which includes much of higher income NE Chatham County.

#### Stormwater Ordinance Modification

The ordinance is being changed so that an engineer is not necessary for minor subdivisions as part of the permitting process unless a structure is actually built on the property.

#### Climate Change

The board discussed more effects of global warming/climate change and suggested that the discussion at the next ERB meeting should take action toward a more structured process, with goals articulated. Elaine presented some basic principals that can be used in decision making to take into account consequences of climate change. Also suggested need for a public forum on the issue.

#### Announcements/Updates

Jordan Lake Rules –the Senate has passed a compromise bill that retains important elements of the “Existing Development” rule. Concern that the DOT is working to try to weaken their portion of the rules.which could happen as an amendment on a bill not yet passed by legislature. Once General Assembly adjourns, the Jordan Lake rules become law. Chatham County Commissioners were instrumental in pushing back against the upstream governments for stronger language, and getting it approved.

Jordan Lake – Durham boundary dispute – The State approved the developer survey (with no actual criteria on how surveys of normal pool elevation on backwaters of reservoirs are done Durham BoC ruled that there was improper procedure in the process and denied the developer’s request to change the maps of protected areas based on their survey until it goes through proper planning process and hearings. Meanwhile, the Haw

River Assembly commissioned a more strenuous survey of the disputed point that contradicts the developers survey. The developer is suing the Durham BoC.

Rocky River WWTP – The Friends of the Rocky River are disputing DWQ’s approval of the NPDES permit for Siler City’s WTTP in a contested case heard by the Office of Administrative Hearings. Sonny distributed a copy of a resolution to increase public funding of designed ecosystems waste water treatment systems that would mean less direct discharge of effluents to streams and rivers. The idea behind the resolution is to be in line if/when federal funds are available. The resolution is being edited and will be voted on at the next meeting.

Sludge – Steve talked to the Chatham Board of Health about WWTP’s spraying sludge mainly on farmlands. The ERB recommended to BoC that they ask companies spraying sludge to notify people in the immediate area before sludge is applied.

Meeting with Parks and Rec. – The board talked about a possible meeting with Parks and Rec. to discuss the County policy on purchasing land for parks vs. other purposes. ERB members brought up concerns that this may be a decision to be decided by BOC, not ERB

### Adjournment

Catherine Bollinger moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:35 p.m. seconded by Sonny Keisler. The vote was unanimous.

Next meeting is scheduled for July 16, 2009 at 6:30 p.m. at the Dunlap Building classroom.

Notes from the ERB teleconference with Dr. William Schlesinger, 4/16/09  
(Submitted by Elaine Chiosso)

**Some remarks he made during the Power Point presentation:**

- Model showed 2 degree C rise in temp in NC by 2030
- 1' rise in sea level would mean the loss of most of the Outer Banks (showed slide of NC coastline with varying projected sea level rise)
- Piedmont weather by end of this century similar to Orlando, Florida
- Dominant forest in Eastern US based on 2-4 degree C temperature change would move towards more hardwood,, less pine (but that does not include effects of change in moisture, rainfall)

**Answers to questions we submitted:**

1. *(from Elaine) Located as we are in the Piedmont of North Carolina, what do you think are the most important issues for Chatham County to be thinking about, in order to be proactive on the impacts of climate change? What can we do to :*
- a. reduce our carbon footprint locally?*
  - b. prepare for a changed climate?*

He prefaced his remarks by saying that the US needs to show global leadership on this issue and that each region needs to set goals to reduce carbon – in the SE this may focus on coal fired power plants. We need to connect the local to the global – so that people aren't overwhelmed by the magnitude of this problem.

Locally, he said that in a warming climate, all issues concerning water should be a key focus: drier soils , more drought, less groundwater recharge as dry years will be drier. Conserving, protecting water. Also the impacts on the coastal part of state will effect those inland –recreational (beach) resources, the economy, resettlement issues.

2. *(From Steve) What policies could the county adopt to lessen the vulnerability of low income and rural people to impacts of climate change?*

Carbon taxes should not be used for revenue enhancement but to find solutions, including ways to help low income people– shift tax burden off productivity and onto consumption. Cap and trade

3. *(From Sonny) Dr. James Hansen in his recent letter to Pres. Obama states that we must rapidly return to a carbon dioxide level of 350ppm (and not let temperatures rise by 2C - 4C) or we will face climate catastrophe this century in which sea levels can be expected to rise tens of meters along with other consequences highlighted by Dr. Watson. Dr. Hansen says "We have already overshot the safe level of greenhouse gases. Things are beginning to crumble – Arctic ice is melting, methane is bubbling from permafrost, mountain glaciers are disappearing. We must move onto a different course within the next few (i.e. 4) years to avoid committing the planet to accelerating climate changes out*

*of our control. The time has passed for 'goals', half-measures, greenwashing, and compromises with special interests. Geophysical limits are crystal clear: coal emissions must be phased out and emissions from unconventional fossil fuels (tar shale, tar sands, e.g.) must be prohibited."*

**He began by stating that Dr. Hansen's credentials are "impeccable".** He did not disagree with Hansen as to urgency, but sees it more as a linear progression than a threshold. "Every molecule we add from fossil sources will keep adding to warming" He believes all energy sources must be looked at thoroughly;

- How about nuclear? – doubts it is competitive with wind if you look at all the costs being subsidized including safety and storage.
- Windpower is competitive with coal, put R&D money into solar
- Current biofuels that rely on nitrogen fertilizers to grow crops are contributing to greenhouse gases through N<sub>2</sub>O
- Southeast US might find efficient enzyme process for biofuel that would not contribute to warming
- Coal sequestration very problematic