
TOWN OF CARRBORO



STORMWATER ADVISORY COMMISSION - SUMMARY

Remote Meeting on May 6th, 2021, 6:30 pm (Zoom)

Commission Members		Candidates	Staff
John Cox (vice-chair)	Jeanette O'Connor (chair)	Margot Lester (absent)	Randy Dodd
Robert Dickson (absent)	Michael Paul	Satya Kallepalli (absent)	Emily Cochran
Jacquelyn Gist (Council)	Lauren Joca		Heather Holley

Administrative Matters

The SWAC approved the April minutes unanimously.

Comprehensive Plan Goals and Strategies Review

Lauren shared a presentation on the "Vision, Goals and Strategies" for the Comprehensive Plan. The current status of the Plan is near the end of Phase 2, Community Vision Formation, and the overarching theme for the Plan is Race and Equity. The request for advisory boards is to determine which strategies and/or projects that: a) will have the greatest impact in terms of achieving the stated goal/vision; b) are the most feasible to implement; and c) would best achieve cross-cutting impact across other sections of the plan.

SWAC Suggestions to the Comprehensive Plan Task Force:

During the course of the meeting, the SWAC discussed various aspects of the materials provided. The following is a summary of some main points based on the input provided.

- Review and revise the provisions in the Land Use Ordinance as they relate to stormwater and development to provide better protection to streams and riparian areas.
- Increase funding and staff available to achieve stormwater goals
- Develop an incentive-based initiative to require developers to further mitigate stormwater impacts beyond minimum requirements
- Increase Public Works staff education in regard to native plant establishment and maintenance
- Focus on cumulative impacts of new development, especially on existing residents
- Limit disturbance on riparian areas; suggest developing overarching vegetation maintenance materials/guidance/requirements
- Focus on delivering the strategies/projects through partnerships with outside groups such as non-profits and community groups
- Clarify the language provide for a "new restoration project". What, more specifically, is envisioned?
- Focus on benefitting communities of color and low-income communities

Note: Individual members of the SWAC may provide additional comments directly to the Task Force.

What follows is additional documentation of the discussion at the meeting.

Review and revise the Land Use Ordinance

Randy shared a matrix spreadsheet that compiled the vision statements, goals, strategies, and projects that appeared to be most relevant for the SWAC in case it might serve as a useful tool for compiling review comments. Jacquie and Jeanette discussed the need to review and potentially revise Land Use Ordinance. Lauren stated that the Plan is a guiding document rather than a regulatory document that provides a context for other actions, such as revising the LUO. The SWAC agreed that the LUO should be revisited, especially in regard to development requirements.

Funding and staff

Jeanette also expressed that despite initiatives or interest, there are often limitations from the Town regarding funds and staff availability. Jacquie and Lauren agreed that one of the strategies to reach the goal could include increased funds and staff to increase capacity. John agreed that funding is an obstacle for most initiatives.

Low(er) impact development

Jacquie suggested a mechanism that would require developers of new developments to mitigate stormwater impacts; John said it would have to be a fee if a requirement was not met, as in a fee in lieu of compliance. Jacquie stated that her main frustration with the current LUO requirements is that developers don't have to mitigate sufficiently for their impact on stormwater runoff. John offered that there should be a mechanism that would not allow developers to buy their way out of problems they create regarding stormwater runoff. There seemed to be agreement that there must be a minimum bar for developers to meet, and that an incentive-based system would be most legally feasible.

Landscaping, responsibilities of the Town and others

Jeanette asked if continuing education would be required for Public Work staff or others who would be responsible for implementing initiatives, especially in regard to native plant establishment and maintenance. Randy said that because of this question, along with concern for maintenance of Town-owned Stormwater Control Measures (SCMs), the Town has established a contract with a company to inspect and maintain these features. The Town also has an Integrated Pest Management policy that guides the landscaping staff. Additionally, it is a small Public Works crew that is responsible for many landscaping and maintenance duties throughout the Town, so the capacity for an education program may be an obstacle. Private property management is also essential to achieving ecological goals, especially in Carrboro where residential property makes up a high percentage, so the best strategy may not be to rely on the Town solely to manage these issues. Jeanette said that the Town should partner with nonprofits and other parties to ensure that the expertise and capacity exists to address these goals, rather than expecting Town employees alone to achieve them.

Vision vs. mechanisms

Jacquie reiterated that at this time we should focus on the vision rather than the mechanisms. John agreed that the Plan should be "aspirational" but achievable, and that even if the resources don't currently exist to achieve all goals, it provides a directionality for the future. The goal is to establish the vision and add details as we are able.

Existing vs. new development

Randy suggests that there are two main challenges, existing development and new development, which have unique characteristics. He reiterated that the LUO deals with new development, not existing development, so reviewing/revising it will only address new construction and may not solve all current problems. Jeanette asked if there are currently any initiatives that deal with existing development; Randy provided examples such as work being done in the Toms Creek watershed (mitigation projects, the Rain Ready and engineering studies, etc.), as well as work benefitting Bolin Creek restoration, all of which is grant-supported. Additionally the Public Works facility stream restoration and Broad Street culvert replacement are examples of projects focused on improving stormwater issues from pre-existing development. So, a significant portion of the Stormwater Utility staff time and funds are directed towards making improvements related to existing development. Lauren said that it seems a lot of residents are frustrated that, as existing residents, they have to deal with the impacts of new developments, so maybe a focus should be on cumulative impacts on an area and how our development planning review should keep this in mind.

Riparian areas

Jeanette suggested that one recommendation to the Task Force should be to "limit disturbance in riparian areas." Randy mentioned that the suggestion of "Limit disturbance of riparian issues in sanitary sewer corridors" was probably

meant to address vegetation/erosion management of existing sewer corridors rather than planning for new sewer mains. John mentioned another suggestion regarding also avoiding disturbance of riparian areas within greenways near streams. Lauren said that there should be “vegetation maintenance guidance” to establish goals and definitions for vegetation management throughout the Town.

Partnerships with outside groups

John suggested that an approach of including a group with the capacity and expertise on a subject can be beneficial and effective, especially if the goal is well-defined (such as construction of green infrastructure or educational workshops). He suggested that there should be more initiatives that are community-led or at least driven by an outside group besides Town staff. Jeanette provided the example of a citizen group removing invasive plants from public property (Wilson Park), which also has benefitted from Town cooperation, and that further initiatives should include the Town’s promotion of the these initiatives.

Restoration projects

One listed goal is to begin a new significant restoration project; Jeanette said that we should be more specific.

Equity

Lauren said in regard to partnerships with community organizations or private sector partners, we could suggest focusing on benefitting communities of color and low-income communities that may not have the time or resources to volunteer.

The SWAC agreed to let these minutes represent their suggestions to the Comprehensive Plan Task Force.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 7:55 pm.