



Charlotte City Council

Environment Committee

Meeting Summary for January 22, 2014

COMMITTEE AGENDA TOPICS

- I. **Subject: Relocation of Office of Sustainability to Neighborhood & Business Services**
Action: None
- II. **Subject: Update on Mecklenburg Livable Communities Plan**
Action: None
- III. **Next Meeting: Approve 2014 Proposed Meeting Schedule**
- IV. **Next Meeting: February 12, 2014 – Room CH-14, 2:00 p.m.**

COMMITTEE INFORMATION

Present: John Autry, Claire Fallon, Ed Driggs, David Howard and Kenny Smith
Time: 2:05 p.m. to 2:52 p.m.

ATTACHMENTS

- 1. Agenda
- 2. Mecklenburg Livable Communities Plan PowerPoint
- 3. Proposed Meeting Schedule

DISCUSSION HIGHLIGHTS

Chairman Autry called the meeting to order at 2:05 p.m. and asked everyone to introduce themselves. He welcomed everyone and said it looks like a pretty brief agenda for today, just to get folks up to speed and folks introduced to the work of the Committee. I will turn it over to Carol Jennings to tee us up.

Jennings: I want to point out that we have two new Assistant City Managers joining us today. They are going to be attending all of the different committee meetings so that they can come up to speed and determine what the portfolio is that will be decided. The other person I want to introduce is Darcy Everett and Rob if you will talk about Darcy's goal.

Phocas: Darcy Everett is our new Energy Sustainability fellow. Darcy is working with me in a

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two-year position. The position is paid for through a collaboration of the City Manager's Office, Office of Charlotte Center City Partners and several other departments that I do a lot of work with. The goal is to help us have Darcy move forward on the internal and external projects that we are working on. She has been working very closely with me and several of the other departments and also working very closely with Center City Partners as they work to move the SouthEnd toward being the Eco District and to move the Charlotte Program forward. Darcy would like to tell us a little bit about her background?

Everett: I started here about 4 months ago. I just graduated from the University of South Florida and got my Master's Degree down there in Livable Sustainability and worked for an environmental non-profit investment company in Western Kentucky prior to that. I am a recent addition to Charlotte, but I really enjoy the projects I've worked on so far and look forward to continue working with the City.

Jennings: The first item on the agenda talks about the Relocation of Office of Sustainability into Neighborhood and Business Services. I will let Rob and Pat tee that up and talk through.

I. Relocation of Office of Sustainability to Neighborhood and Business Services

Mumford: Darcy and Rob officially joined us a week and a half ago in Neighborhood and Business Services and the premise for that shift from the Manager's office to Neighborhood and Business Services was to allow for a leverage of activity, money, resources, and priorities. We seemed to overlay quite a bit over the last few years. This is a natural byproduct of the work that both Rob and Darcy were doing in our department for the Manager, and Rob spent a lot of time in our office over the past three years anyway, so it seemed like a great fit. A lot of the activity you all discussed in this Committee has been around neighborhood initiatives, economic development initiatives, energy sector strategies, the ability to use federal funds, grant funds to reach out into the community, and a lot of that is the basis for our department's work so it seemed like a natural fit. The City Manager wanted to make sure that he was able to give specific attention to those areas that reported directly to his office and felt this was a way to really streamline and flatten the organization to some degree and put resources where they would have the most benefit directly. It is not as if we don't know Rob, but it is great to have him officially part of the team. He has worked very closely with Brad Richardson, Pam Wideman, Tom Warshauer, Ben Krise and the whole team, so it just an acknowledgement of that previous relationship and the ability to make it even stronger going forward.

Autry: I had some concerns about that move and if it meant any difference in focus or anything, and I think I've been assured that that is not the issue at all and the desire for this move is to help advance such efforts by putting Rob in a place and position where he has his usual collaborators that he has come to rely on over the years. I applaud you, good job onward and upward and glad to know that your staff has increased by 100%. That is certainly going to be a big help to the effort, but having Darcy on board I think is a great sign of the value and the importance that the stakeholders around the community are willing to invest in such efforts as making sure that we are always cognizant of economic development, quality of life and being good stewards of our environment. We're looking forward to having you as part of the team.

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Howard: How do you feel this works now when we come to making sure that sustainability is felt across the organization especially when it comes to all the building that we will be doing over the next two years with the CIP once the voters vote on it? A lot of times, and you've been between construction and some of these other things we are talking about; I guess you could stretch and say it is a part of economic development and small business, but how do you feel about making sure it is still permeating across the organization? How do we do that from a department?

Jennings: We talked about the right place for Rob and felt like we already in-house have dealt in a strong capability of doing what we started under Rob's direction to do that in-house. We felt like we'd get a better bang for the buck by putting him in a position where he is focusing more on community. We've got continuing goals to meet in-house, and we are not losing him at all, and we won't lose his ability as he looks through everything involving the CIP in terms of how they go forward. We felt that was the best effort.

Howard: When you think about it, I get it; probably 95% of everything is running through my brain right now fits in the neighborhood or as part of economic development, but when it comes to our own operations as a City where we are trying to be sustainable there.

Jennings: It makes no difference; he is still very much a part of the Cabinet so we will continue having all of that.

Phocas: Nothing will change on the internal piece as Carol said if you've built up a really good internal structure and collaboration among the departments. Since Darcy has come on board, we have been able to move over the development of our internal environmental operations plan which is going to be the framework to really move us forward with all our internal measures and goals. Hopefully, we will be bringing that to you for an update in the next few meetings. I think we will be able to stay on target there. I think being in a department like Neighborhood and Business Services gives us an opportunity to pilot some more products, for example, Fair Energy Efficiency projects. I see an opportunity to continue what we are doing and improve it.

Howard: That is the vain I come to ask that question. I would really hope with our Office of Sustainability Plan, and I realize we changed it to Livability Community Plan, the direction about where we were going is really trying become a leader and manage sustainable principles across the organization, and I do like the fact that we will maybe be doing it from a neighborhood standpoint, too, but we need to lead by example more than anything else and that means the operations of the City first and foremost.

Jennings: Nothing has changed and we are not going backwards.

Mumford: I would add to that what Rob and Darcy bring is the ability to establish that strategy policy objectives, yet they are not responsible for the day-to-day implementation. When it comes to our buildings and building them in a way that is energy efficient, it is really with my colleague Jeb and his team in Engineering to carry that out. Darcy and Rob's focus will be to continue to bring ideas to this Committee that can leverage those implementation resources within not only organization but out in the community as well.

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Howard: I wanted to make sure we are not spending \$900 million if not more on a bunch of different projects, and then we bring this whole sustainability to the table and the best practices that we can find. I'm really depending on Rob to be a leader on helping us find those best practices and to change the policies where needed. Every police station we build should be the most sustainable it can be; everything we build in the train station ought to be the best that we can do. I guess you get my point so I will stop.

Mumford: Let me add one more point. This wasn't something that is foreign to our department. When I was back in my corporate world I actually headed this kind of activity for a very large corporation, so I respect the subject matter and the complexity of it and the need for us to help you work through that complexity to give clear concise goals and realistic objectives to our organization and the community itself. Rob and I had a long conversation about this just yesterday and will continue to have it.

Fallon: Rob, do you think it is a better place for you to be and can coordinate more and can get more done? You are working now in coordination rather than independently where you could come to the Committee and just discuss certain things. Now, it is a collaborative kind of thing. Will that stop anything?

Phocas: I don't think so, especially on the external piece. We've done a lot of external cooperation as you know already. I think going into NBS allows me to take the next step, especially into neighborhoods and to really reach the grassroots' level. We've had housing, economic development, community and commerce, and I think there are places where what I do and what Darcy does naturally fits to take the sustainability to the next level in the community. We are looking at energy efficiency opportunities and housing, green business opportunities in economic development and working with the energy sector, so I think it is going to be a great partnership.

Howard: It is interesting you say it that way because that is kind of what I was getting at. I thought a lot of what we've done so far, with your help Rob, had to do with internal, and I'm not sure we've dealt with policies on how we would like to deal with neighborhoods. There is really one policy as to the way neighborhoods develop when they come together which is another conversation which I'd love for us to take on. I probably need to bring this inland to the conversation, but, when I was Chair of the Planning Commission, I kept calling and making our ordinances and our buildings were more green, but there are a lot of people that are going after the lead and lead designation which is essentially getting the lead designation for a way a neighborhood is developed. In a lot of ways those requirements could be put into our building ordinances, especially while we are dealing with the zoning ordinance anyway. There is a way to encourage that dense level to the external part of how the city grows, not just how it operates. I would be excited about that being a direction that we could push into Committee for sure.

Autry: Are you up to it, Rob?

Phocas: Yes.

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II. Update on Mecklenburg Livable Communities Plan

Jennings: Heidi will give us an update on the Livable Communities Plan. I think the Committee had last touched on this in the fall and, for the new members, it will be an opportunity to see it fresh for themselves. Thank you, Heidi.

Preuss: Thank you for the opportunity to come before you this afternoon. I am going to show a couple of slides and go back and do a little bit of a refresher. Those of you who have been involved to this point, don't fall asleep, but you might have heard it before, but at the very end I'm going to give you a spin update of where we are today and just know that it is a work in progress. Ms. Preuss used PowerPoint for her presentation to the Committee.

Howard: I kind of wanted to push a little more about what I was saying earlier about the green building ordinance. What about the building policy and I guess that would be under building environment, and I don't see that particularly spelled out there. Does that fit into any of those categories already?

Preuss: What I will say about this listing of the topic areas is this is the listing that we initiated the workgroups on. We are just in the process, when I go over the timeline with you, of having discussion of the division and as soon as we complete that we are going to get into what specifically are the priorities, areas of each one of these workgroups. As the workgroups themselves say, thanks we've looked at all of your plans, but what we really want to talk about is this, and we think this is the priority that resonates with us; that is heard in your existing plan. It might be they just want to talk about rezoning policy and, if that is the case, then that would rise to the surface of some priority area that we need to talk about. This is kind of a guide to describe how we are separating out the information. It is not inclusive, and it is not exclusive to just what you see here.

Howard: Under which one of these groups do you feel comfortable that you have – you always want to have a balance of people who just kind of have an interest and then people who actually do it for a living? Do you feel comfortable that you are getting somewhat of a balance of professionals and ...

Preuss: For the most part, yes that is true. I will say that there are some workgroups who could maybe benefit from a little bit more expertise and what we are going to be doing is supplementing subject matter experts either with staff or with members in our community to come forth and bring subject matter expertise as it is needed because it doesn't reside within the workgroup itself. That would be unfolding in February and March of this year.

Howard: What is the word we might like to use for our plans - aspirational? It is good to have aspirational, but it would be nice to come at us with a framework.

Preuss: This is why the very first task we undertook was to review those more than 150 plans that we already have in place. The consultants have a robust team of experts, and they are actually in another meeting as we speak talking about indicator specifically and indicators they are pulling out of those plans to be sure that we aren't recreating existing wheels but that we are

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also thinking forward beyond where we are today.

Autry: Something that jumps out at me, I think about sustainability and would have never seen it on any list that I would have generated myself and that is Workforce Development. Are you able to elaborate for just a little bit about what that is?

Preuss: Workforce Development is something that economy and jobs category also covers education. We didn't call it education as a separate workgroup, but certainly the way we were originally thinking about education is that the reason we have education is to prepare people for the workforce. If you have CPCC or even UNC-C come forward and talk to you about their relationship with K-12 with CMS is all about workforce development and how we're preparing our community around that primary goal for preparation. Does that help? Let me say this too, as we continue to go forward and identify priorities that rise to the surface as those that either we are addressing today and we need to have a goal for moving forward or may an area in which we don't have an identifiable community plan for that right now, a lot more discussion around definition of terms, around breadth of a topic that we are trying to capture within goals will be coming to the surface.

Preuss: The one group that is not captured here is that livability forum and the livability forum is a forum that doesn't meet on a monthly basis, but meets on a quarterly basis and is also comprised of residents and their primary objective is to take the monthly work from each one of these workgroups and be sure that they are looking across these workgroups to connect the dots, to be sure that we are capturing the essence of what is really going to make us livable when we talk about workforce development, and we talk about building codes or rezoning codes or planning -- do they relate to one another, how do they relate to one another, is there something that we need to take on as an initiative in order to be sure that they are successful together?

Preuss: Continued with her PowerPoint presentation.

Autry: How are we keeping the public aware of this?

Preuss: We have had a number of different public engagement opportunities, and we are going to have even more. We have asked our workgroup members, some of which have taken it upon themselves to go out and take it out to their homeowners' associations. We have been for the most part relying on word of mouth of our residents and within our workgroups, but recognizing that we haven't quite had something to share to ask for specific feedback on that, and that is coming in the next month or two. We fully anticipate that the workgroups are going to finish their work with the vision and have that as a document that folks can really take a look at. That is when we are going to be doing the largest amount of that public outreach.

Driggs: After plan adoption, do you envision like a budget impact; will the plan cause us to have to set aside money or change the way we allocate money? I'm just wondering how this overlay given this to ambitious scope kind of accords with ...

Preuss: So, the way it has been envisioned for Mecklenburg County at least is that as the plan is completed that the goals and the initiatives that are identified, that Mecklenburg County owns,

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are then incorporated into our long-term strategic planning effort. As that impacts the budget or aligns with the current budget remains to be seen, depending on what those initiatives and goals are. Likewise, we are anticipating and hopeful that other lucky bodies, such as yourselves, would consider the same outcomes within this plan when you are considering your strategic plan initiatives as they unfold. We don't anticipate that every single goal and initiative that is identified in the plan will be brand new to some of the great things that we are already doing, but where there is something new -- finding either the owner or the partnership that helps make that happen -- is going to be critical. Our funding partners, the Foundation for the Carolinas, have indicated that they fully intend to take the final product and use it as a guide with philanthropic funding decision-making as they move forward. Certainly, it is the hope that it can be in alignment with what individual bodies will find and integrate into their strategic planning and budget. We do anticipate more than one partner. We are fully anticipating that there is going to need to be a suite of partners to help make the plan come to realization.

Howard: When this conversation started, it was really not around going in totally a different direction than what we are doing already, it was the fact that we were probably doing things that we were not capturing at the end in a real succinct way. The focus plan was really kind of a grab at whatever Council was thinking at the time to measure it and, if we had a plan that stood the test of time and we tweaked occasionally and it was going in a direction, then it was as much about taking credit for the one document and what we were doing already. I think a lot of what we are going to find is that we were doing things already, or we need to tweak some things that maybe get a little bit more bang for the buck and then there will be a conversation after that about policies and plans that we have changed. I think those policies will be around operations of the City and add policy for the community. I don't think all of it is money.

Driggs: I was just using money as sort of a proxy for the type of action that would be expected to follow from...

Howard: That is not what I think, that is not the thing that I supported.

Fallon: That is not what we were adding.

Autry: It was also important to try and identify any overlap of effort between different departments, different entities and different bodies and also identifying any gaps that may exist and try to figure out ways to fill those in. We spent a year and a half getting our heads around this whole thing to get it to the point where we were ready go back to the Council and the County Commission with the effort. I'm encouraged and anxious because it has taken us this long to just start talking about how do we plan, and it is a big effort and the kind of effort that I hope at the end of the day will have profound impact on this community and the surrounding communities and influence the region even in how we build sustainable communities that are concerned with being good environmental stewards, making sure that we are providing opportunities for economic development growth and enhancing and protecting quality of life. How you are sorting it all out and everything is great.

Fallon: Rob, part of the thing was we didn't want the redundancy of the overlap that we knew was coming both from the County and from us, and we said that is a waste of time, we've done it

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already, where do we go now, but let's coordinate and that moves us ahead.

Phocas: Efficiency is a word that came up over and over again. Yes, City and County but also the private sector, the non-profit sector; are we doing the same things and, if so, how do you join forces so that we are doing a lot more efficiency, efficiently and effectively.

Preuss: If I could offer a specific example of that -- the United Way did a strategic planning initiative two years ago. They are a five-county region, and one of the things they found and one of the reasons why they were supporting us moving in this direction was that, in fact, they were funding initiatives in the non-profit that was identical to a program that they were also funding in a City Department or providing support for. So we do expect efficiencies, but that is one example that I will say to you has already come about from an initiative that was very similar to this.

III. Approve 2014 Proposed Meeting Schedule

Jennings: The last thing on agenda is the Proposed Meeting Schedule. The Chair and I talked about this briefly, and it looks like we may have one conflict.

Autry: We have the March 12th meeting, which is our normal schedule for March, but that is when we will be in Washington for the National League of Cities Conference. If there is no objection, I would probably like to move that meeting to the 26th.

Jennings: We will check on the other committees; I don't know of any right now.

Autry: Housing and Neighborhood Development meets at noon that day, but I don't think we are going to have a meeting that day. **We will mark the 26th for our March meeting.**

Jennings: The Council will be at the Council Retreat next week and Focus Areas will be a big component of the Thursday afternoon session, so this will be discussed, the Environment Focus Area, and then it will come back to Committee. At the next Committee meeting, we will be delving into: do we have the right initiatives and goals and do we have the right indicators to measure how we achieve those goals. The Committee will do work on that, finalize that and then it goes to Council for adoption in April.

Autry: I think that is a wonderful discussion to talk about those goals if we identify indicators that we can measure our progress and success. What has always been a challenge for me with the Focus Area Plan is that how do we know we've done what we said we were going to do because there have never been any real indicators identified in the plan.

Howard: Will we take time during the Retreat to discuss each focus group and decide on that part?

Jennings: That is on the second day. The second afternoon is all devoted to the Focus Areas and there will be about 45 minutes on each focus area.

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Howard: You've heard me say it, and it is something I had planned to bring up next week anyway just to kind of work this up into a conversation. I would love us to look at creating a classification and looking at doing a Text Amendment to some of the zoning classifications we have now that would encourage more of a caring approach, not the sticker approach, to green ordinances. I go back to when I was on the Planning Commission, and I remember that I think we used mixed use. I think there are some ways that we try to get at it, but there is nothing that actually encourages it. We actually have to go and try to find ways to make it work when people want to do creative things. I would love for us to make that a little easier, which I think would encourage people to actually look at it as well. Mr. Chair, I'm offering that up because I was going to say at the end of this meeting I would love to bring that up and maybe that is something you would think about bringing up when you give your remarks or we get a chance to. That would be a great thing, and that is why I was asking you, Heidi, should I wait on that until it comes out of what you are doing, but I'm thinking with your schedule and with Debra's schedule for the zoning for this revamp that may be just too long to wait a couple years on that. I would love to start a conversation about that now.

Autry: That is some of the points you addressed last night during the Dinner Briefing about how there were going to be some need for some tweaks here and there before the full effort was going to be completed because that is another effort that could take a couple of years.

Howard: This was a whole effort gone but I would love to start that conversation in this Committee and maybe start with Debra telling us what she thinks it would take.

Autry: Maybe that is something we could talk about at the next Committee Meeting is to get a report or some input from Ms. Campbell or Rob or Pat or whoever would have their hands on such an effort as to what we are going to be talking about, where there might be some opportunities to incentivize that kind of effort.

Howard: Again, we have some roadmaps. This whole ED thing is really started as a pilot, but the goal was to turn it into policy eventually, and I know there are a lot of people that can give some input on it. So we wouldn't be starting from scratch. It is just a thought.

Autry: Mr. Smith.

Smith: I would recommend that we get some of our community private sector stakeholders from the various building industries and commercial real estate industries to participate.

Howard: I would start with residential; if you want to go all the way to commercial...

Smith: Makes sure that everyone has a voice.

Howard: Can we do that on our own?

Jennings: Having a referral? Why don't you talk about that next week at the Retreat talking about the initiatives?

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Howard: If you bring it up at the Retreat, then that will cover having to go to Council for a referral.

Jennings: If that becomes a part of the Focus Area Initiatives.

Howard: Then we could just talk about it whenever we wanted to bring it up because Council would kind of bless it at the Retreat and not have to deal with a referral. That is what I was thinking.

Autry: Sounds good. One thing that maybe we could do in the next month or the month after, last year Council approved a pilot program for LED street lights around the Convention Center. I would like an update, if there are no objections with the Committee, on where that stands, what we might have learned so far in that process and what kind of opportunities we see to leverage that technology in the future. I understand there are a couple things on the agenda for Monday night in the Business Meeting.

Jennings: We have several contracts on the agenda for Monday night -- street lights and pedestrian, and traffic signals.

Autry: Everybody okay? Everyone, thank you so much; it is great to see such a turnout, I'm really encouraged by that. I look forward to having you participate with us as we have a great year.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:52 p.m.