

Carolina Sustainability Council

Meeting Minutes

December 1, 2022

Via Zoom

Council members in attendance were: Mike Piehler (chair), Ella Feathers, Ileana Fenwick, Elizabeth Havice, Ideliya Khismatova, Jeff Mittelstadt, Jonas Monast, Aaron Salzberg, and Julie Jacobson Vann.

Guest presenters in attendance were: Trey Murphy, FORVIS.

UNC staff in attendance were: Abigail Brewer, Melanie Elliott, Cindy Shea, Langley Smith, Steve Wall and Emily Williams.

Guests in attendance: Jimmy Dogerl

Chair Mike Piehler began the meeting at 2:00 pm and welcomed members of the Council. Piehler asked new members of the Council to introduce themselves.

- Ella Feathers introduced herself as a member of UNC student government. Feathers is an Environmental Studies and Economics major.
- Julie Jacobson Vann introduced herself as a teacher at the UNC Nursing School and is committed to the greening of health care.
- Langley Smith introduced herself as the newest member of the Sustainable Carolina team.
- Ideliya Khismatova introduced herself as a co-chair of the Renewable Energy Special Projects Committee. She is majoring in Environmental Sciences and Statistics and Analytics.

Chair's Report

Piehler began his report by announcing an Energy Transition town hall on campus in January. The town hall will be a partnership between Sustainable Carolina and undergraduate and graduate student government. Piehler provided an update on the Champion Revolving Green Fund and a recent meeting with leadership of Hanes Brands.

Piehler reported back on his presentation and Q and A session with the Chapel Hill Town Council. Piehler stated that there is a need for continued education with town officials. Piehler referenced the ongoing work of Cindy Shea related to Green Labs.

Piehler discussed the current planning process for Earth Day activities and welcomed ideas from Council members.

ESG at the University Level

Trey Murphy, a recent UNC-Chapel Hill doctoral graduate in the Geography Department and now a consultant at FORVIS, provided an overview of ESG background and activity at universities. Murphy explained what ESG is (Environment, Social, Governance). He explained how ESG metrics do not appear on a companies' balance sheet. Murphy then outlined a history of ESG and sustainable

investments noting that the 1960's and 1970's marked a new interest in focusing on socially responsible investing and prioritizing values over monetary investments.

Murphy stated that in 2004 ESG emerged as a more recognized term and became mainstream within the investment community. He presented on the six types of consumers of ESG data, which include regulators, clients, employees, the public, banks, and investment managers. Reporting of ESG data is both voluntary and non-voluntary.

Murphy then transitioned to discussing some of the criticisms of ESG, including that it is the same as socially responsible investing. Murphy responded that while ESG has lower long-term risks, it does not encourage divestment. Julie Jacobson Vann inquired about the distinction between divesting and longer-term sustainability strategies.

Murphy focused on ESG at the university level and stated that there is growing interest from students, faculty, and the public to factor ESG into investment decisions. Murphy examined 18 peer universities. Ella Feathers inquired about why west coast universities were not considered as peer institutions. Murphy said his findings show that 44% of the peer institutions he reviewed incorporate ESG or sustainable investment policy. Murphy concluded his presentation stating that the Chapel Hill Investment Fund does not have an ESG policy, but the university has a history of socially responsible investment decisions.

Jimmy Dogerl stated that students were working on an ESG campaign at UNC and also inquired about how to get this information in front of decision-makers. Murphy responded that the biggest changes come from donor involvement.

Update on UNC Greenhouse Gas Inventory

Melanie Elliott began her presentation by showing emission trends. She stated that recent reductions are a result of both intentional actions and the pandemic, specifically noting how air travel and commuting declined. Elliott informed the Council that combustion services are primarily steam (85%), and electricity is produced with waste heat. Elliott stated that coal use is down 54% from the baseline year of 2007. She then provided an overview of emission sources that make up the full inventory and concluded by noting that overall emissions are down 40% from 2007. Elizabeth Havice asked about when Elliott would get the data for travel emissions for 2022.

Update on Strategic Framework

Abigail Brewer presented on Sustainable Carolina's strategic framework, including initiatives and strategic opportunities. The initiatives include:

- Lead Sustainability Innovation at Carolina
- Facilitate Transformative Action
- Nurture Educational Efforts

Brewer emphasized that the framework is aligned with the university's Carolina Next plan. Dogerl asked how progress is measured.

Board Discussion

Vann made announcements about activities going on in the health and medical side of campus. Salzberg mentioned the annual Environmental Health Collaborative in January focused on water infrastructure in communities. Feathers announced a planned Climate Action Day in April being led by student government. Mittelstadt discussed programs available for students at the Ackerman Center for Excellence in Sustainability. Elliott announced a cash prize for the undergraduate research symposium for sustainability related research.

Piehler thanked the Council members for their participation and adjourned the meeting.

The full meeting can be viewed at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kxm4fzkZrv8>