

# Carolina Sustainability Council

Meeting Minutes      February 25, 2021      Via Zoom

Council members in attendance were: Mike Piehler (chair), MC Gray, Elizabeth Havice, Nathaniel Maniatis, Asia Mieczkowska, Jeff Mittelstadt, Jonas Monast, Natalie Murdock, Erin Riggs, and Aaron Salzberg.

Guests in attendance were: Professor Amy Cooke, UNC Environment, Ecology, and Energy Program. UNC staff in attendance were Emily Williams and Steve Wall.

Chair Mike Piehler began the meeting at 1:00 and welcomed members of the Council. Council members approved minutes from the December 2020 meeting. Piehler provided a brief overview of the agenda.

## Director's Report

Piehler began his remarks noting the progress that had been made on the UNC Climate Action Plan. He stated that he would like a draft to be publicly available on the website by Earth Day 2021. Piehler thanked Adam Long for his significant contributions as the primary drafter of the plan, who recently left the university. Similar action plans for water and waste would be developed in the future. The Sustainable Carolina document that outlines the vision for the new initiative is still a work in progress.

Piehler briefed the Council about ongoing discussions related to the Green Source Advantage program, including meetings with Duke Energy and the North Carolina Sustainable Energy Association. Piehler outlined additional outreach meetings related to sustainability, including with the Town of Chapel Hill. In addition, he reported on multiple meetings across campus, including student environmental groups and university development. Piehler asked for Council members to provide feedback to him about the potential for Earth Day activities or announcements.

## Climate Action Plan

Piehler referenced the version of the UNC Climate Action Plan that had been distributed to members. He stated that the plan was for this document to live on the web so that it could be adaptive as circumstances change. Piehler provided a short summary of the plan emphasizing that it focused on the operations of the university and not individual actions. He added that many of the actions would need to be operationalized.

Council members engaged in a wide-ranging discussion on different components of the plan. Jeff Mittelstadt noted the potential of the Green Revolving Fund. Aaron Salzberg raised issues related to the challenges those funds can present. Erin Riggs offered to have the Environmental Finance Center advise on the type of funds that have been successful.

Riggs suggested that post-pandemic commuting, and transit use would increase as workers and students come back to campus. Jonas Monast commented that it was important to separate out what was beyond the university's direct control. Elizabeth Havice referenced the substantial emissions contribution from air travel. Asia Mieczkowska suggested that innovative technologies could reduce the

need for air travel in the future. Salzberg cited the Water Institute's conference as an example of changing dynamics and the need for conferences to be a hybrid of in-person and virtual.

Havice inquired about the timeline for public feedback. Piehler responded that he was in the process of developing a plan to solicit public comments following the release of the draft plan on April 22.

Mieczkowska recommended that the plan be evaluated from various perspectives. Monast noted that the plan was tied to the current Executive Order 80 goals and that the plan should be framed to outlast goals that may be modified or rescinded.

#### Carolina Dining Services/Real Food Challenge

Elizabeth Havice presented to the Council on the Carolina Dining Services involvement with the Real Food Challenge. Havice provided background on the Real Food Challenge (RFC), which focuses on sustainable metrics for institutional food purchases. UNC signed a contract with RFC in 2016 to purchase 20% real food.

Havice stated that in 2017 concerns about RFC were raised by students and that RFC changed standards that led to tensions with UNC. UNC representatives wanted to take another look at RFC and initiated stakeholder discussions and conducted surveys. As part of this review, other standards were evaluated, and the RFC standards were determined to be the most robust.

Havice concluded that UNC remains committed to RFC at present. Student surveys indicated a lack of knowledge about the RFC program. Amy Cooke discussed her prior and ongoing work with CDS to analyze data related to the RFC. Cooke and Havice both expressed the positive leadership of CDS throughout this process. Havice commented that the lack of a required meal plan for students at UNC adds a layer of complexity to the discussions.

#### Kenan-Flagler Building Project

Jeff Mittelstadt presented to the Council on the construction plans for a new building at the UNC Kenan-Flagler Business School. Mittelstadt began with an overview of the Invest for the Future Initiative. He described various aspects of the construction planning and design. Mittelstadt stated that one of the potential outcomes was that this building would set a new standard for sustainable construction at Carolina. Specifically, the building project could be utilized to see the increase of renewable energy progress across campus.

Mittelstadt asked for feedback from Council members. Monast questioned whether decisions about the project factored in long-term savings for higher up-front costs. Mittelstadt responded that during the planning stages the discussion focused mostly on how the project could assist in meeting UNC's Three Zero goals.

#### Open Council Discussion

Piehler stated that the university's decisions related to sustainability had broader impacts than on campus. The Council engaged in a discussion about the importance of communications and working across campus on these issues. Riggs referenced the value of the previous UNC Environmental Summit and how that forum could be used to share solutions.

Piehler adjourned the meeting at 2:45

The full meeting is available for viewing at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PSoELUP1KeM>