



**ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS  
BOARD  
MINUTES**

**March 4, 2025**

6:00 – 8:00PM

Committee Room, Durham City Hall

**Voting Members in Attendance:** Tom Campbell (Chair), Taylor Price (Secretary), Corie Hlavaty, Mark Waller (Soil & Water), David Barron, Meech Carter, Jonathan Chan, Astrid Cook-Dial, Lena Tonkin, Zora Lentz (Excused), Mark Radin, Lola Chafatelli, Anna Byers

**Not in Attendance:** Sandra Howell, Carina Barnett-Loro, Chukwuemeka Kanu-Oji, Larry Hall, Sherry Taylor

**Ex Officio Members/Staff:** Annette Smith, Rachel Toker, Tobin Freid, Chris Salter, Reggie Hicks, John Loperfido, Michelle Woolfolk, Council Member Matt Kopac, Council Member Nate Baker,

**1. Call to Order and Roll Call**

- a. 6:02 PM Call to order with roll call

**2. Centering and Good News**

**3. Adjustments to the Agenda**

**4. Announcements (including any Conflicts of Interest)**

- a. Next Meeting: Retreat on March 25th will serve as the April EAB Meeting will take place at the Community Family Life & Recreation Center at Lyon Park
  - i. There was a recent email sent by Corie with the details. Please respond to the survey to confirm your attendance. Dinner will be served and we'll be starting a little earlier at 5:30pm.
- b. Creek Week is upcoming! Keep Durham Beautiful is the volunteer center for all of those events happening as a part of the week which will take place March 12-22. Visit Keep Durham Beautiful for a list of the events and help protect our local waterways.

- c. There is an opening on the EAB Executive Committee as we've had a member step down from their position. If there is any interest in joining the Executive Committee, please reach out to Tom.
- d. **Soil and Water Updates:**
  - i. Eddie Culberson, the Director of Durham's Soil and Water Conservation District is stepping down after 42 years. The search for a new Director will be starting soon. Eddie will be missed!
  - ii. The annual Tree Sale Fundraiser has happened and was again a success.

#### **5. New and Continuing Business** (See below for notes)

- a. Presentation on the Packet of Life Initiative
- b. Status of our reservoirs and Water Supply System
- c. Update on the Brenntag/Burton Park Pollution
- d. Request for the EAB to make a recommendation on the Cheek Road Zoning Case
- e. Duke Energy Carbon Plan and Letter of Support
- f. Status of LDC (formerly UDO)

#### **6. Adjournment**

Meeting adjourned at 8:07 PM

#### **New and Continuing Business Notes**

##### **Topic: Packet of Life Initiative**

- Durham has faced increased water risks. Packet of life is a student led non-profit organization dedicated to preserving the availability of safe and sustainable drinking water
- The group provides water purification packets and uses a predictive water-crisis AI model to help people understand water risks in their area.
  - The Model can be accessed from the Packet of Life website directly and is free to use.
  - The group is looking to determine with city staff and elected officials on how this model can complement or aid current water efforts in Durham
- Packet of Life also welcomes the opportunity to support DPS to further educate students on water issues.

##### **Questions & Comments**

- More information to come to the EAB on what type of data is the model trained on
- Discussion about water use from AI and the challenges there that we see with AI using a lot of water. How to rationalize the cost/benefit of water usage in AI to predict water risk.
  - This AI model is not a large language model like we see with other AI, so there is less water used.

##### **Topic: Status of Reservoirs and Water Supply System**

- Durham has two reservoirs and an allocation from Jordan Lake to supply water.

- Design stage of building a plant to access that Jordan Lake allocation as we currently access this via a transfer from the Town of Cary.
- Current demand is approximately 30 million gallons of water per day
- City of Durham Water customers should follow the year-round odd-even schedule for outdoor water with irrigation or sprinkler systems.
  - You can be cited for violating the water schedule ordinance
- The Water Management Department has a water shortage response framework that helps to preserve long-term water supply and ensure public health and safety.
  - Reservoir model is run on a weekly basis and department uses that data to make decisions on operations
- Other useful services and programs from the department include: a toilet rebate program, water kit and rain barrel sales, and water use assessments that are offered to residents.
- **Questions & Comments:**
  - Currently the city does not have a water intake directly from Jordan Lake. Cary sends the water to use through their intake, then treats the water that is sent to Durham.
  - The department is currently in the process of replacing water meters through out the city.
  - How does the department educate or publicize water ordinances to residents?
    - Social media and commercials via Durham's Communications Department. The department also hosts and attends special activities throughout the year to bring awareness to residents.

**Topic: Update on Brenntag/Burton Park Pollution**

- The last update from Michelle to the EAB was last spring. A lot of regulatory things have happened since that last update. A notice of violation was issued in June of last year to Brenntag.
  - Currently there is monthly monitoring of the site
- Elevated levels of VOCs, metals, and other parameters continue to be found along the unnamed tributary to Rock Creek/Third Fork Creek.
- Current Project Goals of Stormwater Department and the consultants monitoring the site include: source tracking of pollutants, understanding the trends of the pollutants and conducting a statistical analysis of key parameters with elevated levels.
- A walkthrough of the data that has been collected was discussed during the meeting as it relates to water quality.
- Next steps will be to continue the monitoring through 2027, while analyzing the flow, and working with models to determine the best ways to address the pollution.

**Questions & Comments:**

- Conversation around methylene chloride that was found at the site by community members, but not in the City's analysis.
- Discussion of how the surrounding community was made aware of these issues.

- It is typically not standard practice to do a lot of communication with the community around issues when enforcement actions are involved. In this case, when the pollution was first found, signage around the park and flyers and conversations with those homes that are backed up to the stream did occur to make residents aware.
- Construction fencing still remains in Burton Park.
- Complaints about smells in the areas from residents have been sent to the air quality regional office.
- Public Comment from Residents was given during the meeting.

**Topic: Cheek Road Rezoning Case**

- Preserve Rural Durham has sent over a document of their assessment of the Cheek Road rezoning request. The request from Preserve Rural Durham is that the EAB also take a look and potentially draft a letter of support.
- The EAB's Land Use and Planning Committee will take a look at the information and potentially draft a letter before our April meeting.

**Topic: Duke Energy Carbon Plan**

- The North Carolina carbon plan is how we predict our energy grid mix in the future. This plan is produced by Duke Energy that works to balance the needs for low cost, reliable power, and grid decarbonization. The plan is refreshed every two years.
  - For the state of North Carolina, the ultimate goal is carbon neutrality by 2050 based on House Bill 951 with an interim goal of 70% carbon emissions reduction by 2030.
- The new carbon plan was released and highlights were discussed during the meeting. Notable findings include:
  - Onshore and offshore wind has been removed from future predictions, but was present more in prior versions of the plan.
  - Demand costs and costs were also shared in the plan. Importantly, data centers are estimated to be a large percentage of estimated growth in energy demand across the state.
  - The current proposed plan relies on methane gas more than use of renewables. While this can lower carbon emissions, it does not expand renewables across the state. This could make it difficult for municipalities like Durham to meet their own climate and renewable goals.
- Local governments have drafted a letter via the Southeast Sustainability Directors Network (SSDN) to ask for greater transparency and to call for a prioritization of fossil fuels within the plan as the current plan hinders local governments to meet their goals and places cost burden for fuels on residential customers.
  - The SSDN letter has been sent to the various municipalities in the state for signature.
- Individual residents can speak about the plan at upcoming public hearings that will take place through the month of May.

**Topic: Status of the LDC (formerly UDO)**

- LDC is currently on pause following legal challenges and conflicts with a 2024 state law.

- The outstanding recommendations from the EAB subcommittee on this will be sent to Planning Staff in the hopes they will be incorporated when the LDC work restarts.