

Meeting Notes

DATE	1.13.12
PURPOSE	Interim Meeting #1
FROM	Patrick Harper
ATTENDEES	Geoff Ferland (Platinum Payroll Solutions, LOSRC Brownfields), Jon Snover (AB-Tech), Jessica Hocz (Mountain Valleys RC&D), Matt Siegel (WNCGBC), Terry Albrecht (Waste Reduction Partners/EvolveEnergy Partnership), Joan Walker (UNCA), Jane Hatley (Self-Help Credit Union), Steve Cochran (Blue Ridge Sustainability Institute/Alliance Autogas), Maggie Ullman (City of Asheville Environmental Manager), Phil Bisesi (Town of Black Mountain Housing Commission), Jennifer Squires, Megan Piner (Henderson County), Ron Townley (LOSRC), Carrie Runser-Turner (LOSRC)

Meeting Notes	
Objective	Outcome
<i>Outline workgroup objectives and role within GroWNC</i>	-Workgroup will function as conduit between participant organizations and GroWNC -Workgroup will assume additional functions based on future GroWNC tasks and objectives prioritized through process
<i>Review GroWNC project—tasks, process, and end goal</i>	-Reviewed GroWNC tasks and timeline -Identified immediate tasks at hand (i.e., identify issues, opportunities, and goals to communicate to GroWNC)
<i>Complete regional snapshot exercises to capture and revise, if necessary, prioritized issues, opportunities, and goals</i>	-See summary notes on following pages
<i>Select Workgroup Chair</i>	-Joan Walker, UNCA Environmental Specialist, selected as workgroup chair. See Workgroup Chair and Consortium Agreement for additional information.
Other Notes: Selection of Steering Committee representative will occur at March meeting	
Next Meeting: Tuesday, March 13, 10:00-12:00 at Land-of-Sky Regional Council	

Regional Snapshot Exercise: Issues	
<p>Workgroup reviewed issue list (attached) compiled by staff to prioritize and frame items to share with full GroWNC. Workgroup agreed to frame issues and opportunities in a tiered structure (regional, state, and federal categories) to better communicate with GroWNC. Note: issues not listed in order of importance.</p>	
Issue	Notes
Access to Finance	<p>-Access to financing has identified as a key obstacle in the continued development of clean energy by multiple sources. Furthermore, its importance is amplified because it is inter-related a majority of other key issue. Educating finance stakeholders (i.e., banks, CDFIs, credit unions, other lenders, consumers, realtors, etc.) is imperative. Energy data (see item 2) demonstrating savings from projects throughout western North Carolina should be compiled and communicated in an effective manner. Doing so will help push the financial organizations towards buying into energy projects and recognizing the full life-cycle impacts of energy investments. Banks are beginning to take this step (e.g. new Bank of America program). -See notes from BRSI finance summit for additional detail.</p>
Lack of Documented Data on Energy Savings	<p>-While our region is home to many notable renewable energy and energy efficiency projects, there is currently an information gap with regards to the direct financial savings derived from these investments. Compiling this data and communicating it in an effective manner appropriate for various target audiences would significantly strengthen efforts in all energy-related sectors and activities (i.e., finance, local government, econ development, etc.) and would serve as a critical component in public outreach and education. -Well document financial savings (dollars & jobs) would allow us to reach a larger audience. Public input has shown that this resonates well in GroWNC's more rural areas.</p>
Uncertain Regulatory Environment (state & federal)	<p>-In order to encourage more strategic energy planning and investments, we must ensure local decision-makers are aware of relevant state and federal regulatory issues (i.e., market barriers) -There are potential concerns regarding the impact weakened commitment at state and federal levels (REPs, tax incentives, rebates) might have on the regional energy landscape. -Opportunities to streamline public performance contracting should be identified and explored.</p>
Public Education/Building Consumer & Institutional Awareness	<p>-Building consumer and institutional awareness will have a large scale, community impact and will drive market demand. Our region could be doing a much better effort of integrating and leveraging public education and outreach efforts.</p>
Limited Resources & Capacity	<p>-An issue common to many smaller localities and organizations is limited capacity and resources to address energy issues. We need to clearly communicate local government's need for policy & supporting resources</p>

	and the potential benefits these resources offer. If we are able to communicate these potential benefits effectively, we can affect the priorities and goals at the local (e.g., City of Asheville).
Aging (Residential) Infrastructure	-The GroWNC region is home to many old and low-income residential structures that present significant energy challenges. There is a direct and immediate need to provide energy upfits for these properties.
Other	-Uncertainty surrounding utility merger and how to best engage and work with energy providers? -How to address issue of challenging job market (with few options for young professionals, part-time work, etc.)?
Regional Snapshot Exercise: Opportunities	
<i>Workgroup reviewed opportunities list (attached) compiled by staff to prioritize and frame items to share with full GroWNC. Note: opportunities not listed in order of importance.</i>	
Opportunities	Notes
Emerging Opportunities for Cross-Sector Collaborations & Leading-by-Example	<p>Each sector presents a unique opportunity for improving the regional energy landscape and addressing identified issues. Opportunities exist to tie the region’s emergence as center for clean energy with other more widely recognized regional industries including tourism, dining, art, healthcare, and outdoor recreation. Addressing energy issues according to these cross-sectors make the task seem less daunting.</p> <p>-Educational Institutions – When it comes to energy outreach and education, there is no better place to start than schools. They offer a unique set of resources for implementing projects and leading-by-example. Our region needs to share programs/best-practices and ensure institutions are aware of potential benefits. Blue Ridge Community College and Henderson County’s partnership was cited as an example of sharing information and working collaboratively to address an opportunity (performance contracting). Universities and community colleges should be utilized as resources (i.e., free creation of data, internships, etc.) and partners for opportunities (i.e., funding). They could provide a natural fit for local governments with limited resources. The Reading Riding, Retrofit program was cited as particularly successful model in engaging educational sector.</p> <p>-Local Government –Local governments are in unique position to lead-by-example through demonstration projects, innovative deployments and public-private partnerships.</p> <p>-Agriculture – The decline of farming presents an opportunity to transition the local agriculture sector toward more biomass and biofuel projects. This is an area Mountain BizWorks, the Extension Office, Henderson County and others are working to address.</p> <p>-Finance-Need to push financial sector as much as possible. See “issues” discussion for additional notes.</p>
Public Awareness Campaign	-Outreach should start at educational level and emphasize local community. Creating a well-organized public awareness and outreach campaign (e.g., buy-local) could be very successful in catalyzing a regional shift and behavioral changes. This might offer an easier way for people to

	conceptualize how their decisions directly impact energy use. Positive peer pressure can be a very strong force in catalyzing a cultural shift.
<i>Rural- Urban Gap</i>	- The region could do a better job of recognizing different needs between rural and urban stakeholders and developing programs that effectively leverage the unique resources both have to offer.
<i>Regional Clean Energy Goal</i>	-The EvolveEnergy Partnership is in the process of crafting a regional, clean energy goal. This goal will be designed in a way to engage communities at the local level and encourage them to craft individual strategies for reaching the goal.