

## Meeting Notes

<b>DATE</b>	1.19.12
<b>PURPOSE</b>	Workgroup Launch Meeting
<b>FROM</b>	Patrick Harper
<b>ATTENDEES</b>	Geoff Ferland (Platinum Payroll Solutions, LOSRC Brownfields), Jon Snover (AB-Tech), Jessica Hocz (Mountain Valleys RC&D), Matt Siegel (WNCGBC), Amy Musser (Vandemusser Design), Dan Kincaid (Waste Reduction Partners/EvolveEnergy Partnership), Ashley Featherstone (WNC Regional Air Quality Agency), Joan Walker (UNCA), Ron Martin-Adkins (n/a), Jane Hatley (Self-Help Credit Union), Steve Cochran (Blue Ridge Sustainability Institute/Alliance Autogas), Maggie Ullman (City of Asheville Environmental Manager)

**Workgroup Representation and Objectives.** Who should be at the table and how are we going to reach them? What has been most successful in improving the region’s energy landscape and where have similar efforts fallen short?

- **Reach the Private Sector/Market-Based Approach** – If one of our objectives is to support the private sector, we should engage throughout every step of this process, especially at the outset in the initial goal-setting phase of our work. We need to be cognizant of the fact that this is an issue and this is where previous efforts have fallen short. The benefits of our work should reach the people who are paid to do it from day-to-day. If we can figure out how to make that happen and paint a clear picture of how it will happen, then we can successfully engage them. What direct value will our work bring to the private sector? Suggestions for how to reach the private sector include lunches, small groups, leveraging partner organizations (e.g., WNCGBC) that have existing relationships with these groups, evening meetings, keep time commitment low, and establishing an industry advisory council or board where input can be sought.
- **Reach the Entire Region/Avoid Asheville Centric-Approach** – It is essential to remember that Asheville doesn’t represent the entire region and that we should set objectives/goals that can be translated different in different communities. If this group is primarily made up of representatives from Asheville, then the group setting energy goals for the region will not work. We must maintain a regional focus. Along this same note, we can’t prescribe the answers to these smaller communities. We need to provide a goal, provide information, provide support, and then work with them to develop their own solutions. Our work must support a broad range

of communities and strategies must be developed that don't hold people back or push people too far.

- **Reach the (Smaller) Local Governments** - Provide Tech assistance and support to those without the capacity to do it themselves throughout the five county project area. Need representatives from local governments throughout five counties; however, issue is limited staffing/resource capacity (especially considering they could be participating in other workgroups). This is typical of most similar efforts. Need to determine means of engaging smaller municipalities and counties (e.g., Waynesville).
- **Reach the Utilities** – Given the control and influence of the utilities on our region's energy landscape, the group must maintain a focus on how our work and recommendations may best reach Progress, Duke, EMCs, and Munis and how it may influence their actions, programs, and objective setting. In order to do this, we need to understand their purpose, concerns, restraints, obstacles, etc. For example, several years back the Community Energy Advisory Council—a community based energy advisory group— was successful in providing a set of recommendations that resulted in several positive projects from the utilities. Second, this issue is particularly relevant given the utility merger and the critical junction point we're at. We need to understand how the merger will directly impact energy rates and sources in western North Carolina.
- **Leverage Existing Energy Efforts** – Group named several other organizations that should be involved in discussion (e.g., Utilities, NCSEA, etc.). In order to leverage other energy groups and efforts, we need to identify overlapping members and determine how to coordinate our efforts.
- **Document and Share Environment and Economic Benefits** (for financial incentives, student/internship programs, etc.) – There have been very successful programs (e.g., financial incentives, student/internship, workforce development, etc.) used in the past to catalyze clean energy projects and economic activity. We should be looking both inside the region/state and elsewhere for best-practices. In doing so, we should first share the economic and environmental benefits of these programs, and then provide a clear path for putting these programs in place. Specific examples cited include financial incentives in Cincinnati and Boulder, Section 1603 Public Tax Credit, SunSense, UNCA's energy internship program, Texas Loan Star Program,
- **Reach the Community/Energy Education and Outreach** – If we're really going to make an impact, we have to figure out a way to reach a broader base of people and educate the general public at all levels. A logical place to start would be outlining and communicating the benefits of having an energy strategy for the region. Explain why we're doing this, why it's important, and what we hope to accomplish. It is extremely important how we articulate that message.

## Next Steps

- **Document energy initiatives/members and existing energy plans to identify existing gaps and inform workgroup objective/regional energy goal** – With these issues in mind, next steps include examining the work of existing energy groups and determining if these issues are being



adequately addressed. If not, let's design this workgroup to fill these gaps. In doing so, we'll be able to identify a set of objectives for our work that not only builds off of existing efforts, but adds value to those efforts as well.

- **Next Meeting Date** – Facilitator will email to share meeting notes and set next meeting date.
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