



Meeting Notes  
Community Advisory Board (CAB)  
April 21, 2021  
2:00pm – 4:00pm  
Virtual Meeting – WebEx

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Meeting attendance available [here](#). | Recording of meeting available [here](#).

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Introductions

- We'll be posting a recording of this meeting on the web. Meeting is being livestreamed thought YouTube.
- Objectives
  - Provide updates on 1:1s with business and community organizations
  - Provide updates on public town halls
  - Provide updates on community survey
  - Preview Plan development and review process
  - Identify engagement and outreach opportunities, learn from experience

Report Out from Business Leader 1:1s

- Competition fuels progress.
- Regulations - Well-designed and implemented regulations are not a dealbreaker, but should be handled with advance notice, compliance phase-in, costs/benefits equitably distributed, etc.
  - Businesses are largely in support, so long as it's a "fair share" commitment
- Education around how to engage in clean energy
  - How to find trusted and responsible vendors, how to implement effective clean energy contracts
- Multifamily ownership changes and financing create disincentives for long-term investment in clean energy. Support, innovative ideas needed in this field.
  - "Promotions" in multifamily housing rentals may be useful; if businesses take on expenses due to their energy savings, location, transit options, etc.
  - Through recognition from ACC or other organizations
  - Highlighting *total* cost of affordability
  - Competitive advantage leads to market transformation, a change towards clean energy investment (Example of opportunity: benchmarking policy)
- Tax incentives over fixed period of time - such as property tax abatement / incentive; similar to TADs - in exchange for energy efficiency measures in building.
  - Pass on savings to renters.

Report-Out from Community Organization 1:1s

- Meetings are still ongoing.
  - The following summary are the themes thus far. **Bolded items** are new since the last CAB meeting.
- Q1.) Please tell us about any energy-related sustainability efforts that your organization currently has underway, in planning stages, or may be considering.
  - Some community gardens, but desires for more.
  - Occasional catching and storing rainwater



- Trying to get solar panels for schools
- Not as much as they would like
- Converting to LEDs
- **Always trying to reduce energy costs.**
- **Applied for solar panels, but did not receive the grant**
- **Working on a 10-15 year energy plan.**
- **UGA students and GPC did energy assessments.**
- Q2.) If your organization is not currently engaged in energy sustainability efforts, what are some of the barriers or considerations that have prevented you so far?
  - Many community members are renters. They are afraid to complain about issues fearing they will be evicted. As a result, they wouldn't bring up energy saving changes since they aren't even successful at basic updates like working appliances and fixing broken windows.
  - Equity & communication
    - The work available isn't diverse enough, and the marginalized communities are the last to know about initiatives and energy saving benefits.
  - Financial burdens
    - The upfront costs of things like solar, or even LED light bulbs.
    - **Hard to budget for these expenses.**
    - **Understanding and justify ROI.**
- Q3.) What are some ways that our local government could support your organization's' efforts towards energy sustainability?
  - Jobs
    - Engage people at resource & job fairs; ACC table at or attend these events.
    - Ensure the new jobs address livable wage setting, and that people are paid during training for the new green jobs.
    - If someone is working 40 hrs, they should be able to pay their bills.
    - Protection for immigrant workers.
  - Education
    - Increase communication, advertising, and education of the programs and their benefits
    - Use local radio/new/podcast/flyer/churches to spread the word
    - ACC talk with people about the benefits in person
    - **Educational workshops for the organization and the communities they serve around energy efficiency**
    - **A list of existing programs that ACCGov provides.**
      - **Struggle to coordinate all of the pieces in order to benefit from a program/service.**
    - **Computer literacy can be an issue. Having alternative education sources.**
      - **Strong channels for outreach include the newspaper, The Flagpole, and bus ads.**
    - Helping with renter protection, and landlord compliance
      - Enforcing code compliance
      - Marketing the support of the office of housing/community development.
      - Creating a tool kit for renters to ensure they are receiving livable conditions, and know their rights. E.g tenant handbook or one sheets
      - Policy around standardized clean energy requirements
      - Creating low or no cost audits
    - Financial



- Funding or incentives to help with things like solar installation
- Lower property taxes
- **Financial benefits and ROI**
- Q4.) What are some strategies that you would caution our local government against implementing to meet the 100% Clean & Renewable Energy commitment, and why?
  - Not addressing the equity and fair wages opportunities first before the plan is put in place.
  - Ensure rental spaces are assessed and meet livable standards before adding in the energy saving components
  - **Avoid unfunded mandates. Do not require us to meet certain energy efficiency standards without providing resources to help them do so.**
- Q5.) What are the long-term concerns you have, if any, about efforts toward ACC's 100% Clean & Renewable Energy Commitment?
  - We don't want to create institution(s) where workers are not paid a fair and livable wage
  - We need to create good opportunities with living wages or higher
  - That the stated barriers won't be addressed. The commissioners already know what the barriers are and they can't find solutions to the barriers.
  - **Implementing things that would accidentally hurt our constituents. We don't know what we don't know**
  - **Members have a lot of mistrust/anxiety about services being offered, and are often in vulnerable situations. How do you know who is a good resource and who is not?**
  - *Question from Amy Kissane: What do we currently have on the books in Athens that requires building owners / landlords to make energy efficiency improvements?*
    - *Response, Megan O'Neil: Code enforcement is important, but generally building owners don't have to comply unless major renovation, or another (rare) instance of needing a permit. Tenants' rights groups can help enforce policies. At the most fundamental level, major plumbing repairs, broken windows, etc. These "life / safety" requirements are where we see code enforcement come in most often.*
    - *Response, Tom Lawrence: Agree. Life-safety stuff is most likely.*
    - *Amy – If/when we share with tenants that they have the right to ask landlords for improvements, we need to know what policies are currently on the books that they can refer to.*
    - *Megan – We will research this. May take a few weeks.*
- Q6.) What partnership opportunities would you like to see expanded or started involving the community and local government?
  - Working with landlords and renters
    - Incentives for landlord to provide the needed updates
    - Give renters the tools/education they can use now to take action themselves.
    - Higher zoning [sic] standards for all landlords. Require changes so no one loses their competitive prices.
    - Increase communication and knowledge between tenants and landlords.
    - Compiling a citywide list of identifiable issues that are being overlooked/not addressed to push for solutions
    - **Working with utility providers to help bridge the gap from energy programs to programs for home repairs and other necessary service**
  - Education
    - Help homeowners know what is a good contract and how to find a good contractor when making improvements



- Increased education for things homeowners can already be doing. Info around weatherization, and the programs already in place that can help
- Include education sessions and outreach around benefits/programs
- Reach out to high schools and start the conversation around labor and career pathways.
- Help people understand the ROI for these energy saving initiatives
- **Include the community in conversations, input opportunities, education sessions, etc. will be powerful engagement opportunity.**
- Funding
  - Revolving loan funds specifically for energy efficiency and solar.
  - Ensure that the money & jobs going towards electricity and gas are not leaving our community. We should be hiring local, and keeping the funds in our community.
  - If solar panels were more affordable, more would use them.

Energy Provider 1:1 Report-Outs

- Different approaches - Driven by members v. State-regulated
- Even with different drivers, "C&I" (commercial & industrial) customers are considered important to the utility
- Power providers strongly recommend clean energy "credits" as alternative for customers, though different types
- Power providers have heard interest in community solar -like projects
- ROI is often the "deal breaker" for some customers seeking clean energy investments

Report-Out from Public Town Halls

Objectives:

1. Provide information to the public on ACCUG's 100% Clean & Renewable Energy goal
2. Respond to questions from the public on progress and future plans
3. Gather feedback from the public on community priorities in clean energy planning

Dates:

- Town Hall #1 – 17 attendees, incl. 3 CAB members
- Town Hall #2 – 5 attendees, incl. 1 CAB members
- Town Hall #3 – 13 attendees, no CAB members
- Town Hall #4 – TO BE RESCHEDULED
- Town Hall #5 – April 27

Town Hall #1 – What we've heard:

- What organizations will the Sust. Office plan on collaborating with?
- Discussion about opportunities for solar installations, and potential conflicts / overlap with other development, with natural lands, with historic farmland.
- How can we apply equity in hiring and pay/labor benefits for workers from marginalized communities entering the clean energy field?
- Prevailing wages, paid opportunities while in training programs, apprenticeship standards that align with the labor dept. etc.?
- Another participant: How will this increase average wage in ACC?
- Consideration of hydroelectric on the Oconee River?

Town Hall #2 – What we've heard:

- What other community partners are you working with or are considering that aren't listed in the presentation?
  - Another participant: Are Oconee and Jackson Counties included?



- Addressing zoning reform as being excluded from our presented “list” (of pathways towards clean energy). “Reducing our carbon footprint means getting people closer to jobs, parks, grocery stores, etc.”
- Solar-ready workforce. Will there be a plan to create this including investments in trainings and apprenticeships?
  - Will these jobs be guaranteed at fair, or prevailing wages?
  - Another participant: How many people from marginalized communities have been employed by local clean energy employers?
  - If ACC is willing to push for policy that will protect local workers?
- Where is the resistance to this program in the community?

Town Hall #3 – What we’ve heard:

- Interest in SPLOST funding to-date, and ACCGov solar programs / projects to-date
- Interest in an ACC Carbon Footprint
- Why is nuclear energy not included in the current listed sources of clean and renewable energy?
- Discussion about Athens-Ben Epps Airport, opportunities for solar installations, fuel sources, and other clean energy opportunities
- How many residential homes have been served through the Athens Land Trust efficiency project? Are there plans to continue / increase this project?
  - *Question from Amy Kissane: Do they have before-and-after energy bill data from these projects?*
  - *Response, Megan O’Neil: Will follow-up.*
- How energy managers can support small and medium sized business?
- Discussion of accountability for plan implementation; prevention of gentrification

Town Halls - Continuous Improvement

- Lessons Learned
  - Audio challenges
    - Changes made: Improved instruction clarity; Practiced internally
  - Timing / pace of presentation
    - Changes made: Omitted detailed “ACES” slides; Speakers match pacing throughout
- Causes for Concern
  - Attendance low
    - Email: charrette invitees (120+), CAB members, peer sustainability NGOs
    - ACCUG Sustainability Office Facebook
    - Print media ads
    - Radio stations - WUGA
- Reflections?
  - Tom: Churches, faith groups.
    - Dan Everett: Universalist Unitarian and the Catholic Archdiocese in Atlanta.
  - John Newland: How long did presentations last?
    - Megan: 90 minutes
    - Suggestion: Could we have more town halls after this first round, that are a condensed (15 min.)?
    - Suggestion: Get on agenda of existing meetings (e.g.: Home Builders’ Association chapter meeting)
      - Megan: We can follow-up with you (Jon) about groups to join.
      - Megan: What other groups?
        - Amy: Envision Athens
  - Jon: Have we done anything w/ USGBC?



- Tom: Not other than Tom emailing.
- Megan: Others? BOMA?
  - Tom: Not really.
- Amy: Has Flagpole run anything?
  - Need to confirm w/ Maggie. We'll follow up.
    - Follow-up: <https://flagpole.com/news/city-dope/2021/04/21/athens-makes-slow-progress-toward-100-clean-energy/>
- Amy, John: Suggest short videos, short presentations that can be shared with multiple groups, and on many platforms.
- Megan: Asheville – City is uploading quick videos from their version of the CAB stating what the clean energy campaign means to them.
  - Potential for involving CAB.
- Amy: Radio stations – which ones have we been on?
  - Bailey Shea: WUGA – run; WXAG, WGAU, WUOG – submitted.
    - Amy: Has a contact at WXAG, can help reach out to.
    - Caleb: Fred Smith, ED at EADC, does a lot of radio work, would have connection to WXAG.
    - Amy and Caleb to email Maggie as follow-up.

Community Survey Updates

Thank you for your support so far. We're also working on a business-focused survey, which we'll share with you.

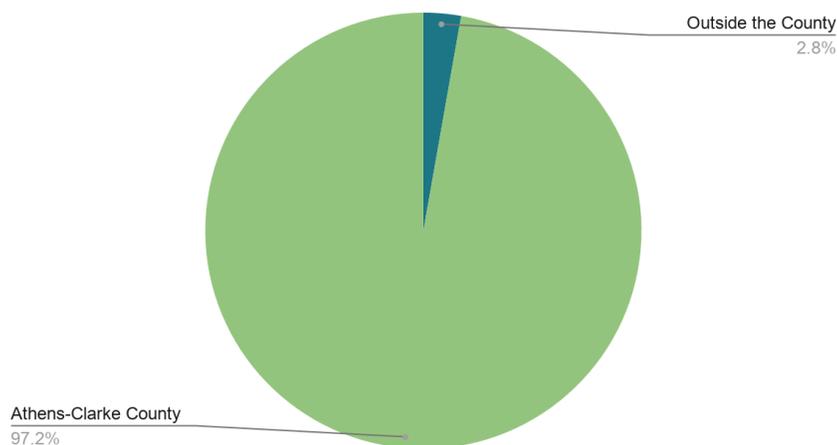
The survey will gauge public views on:

- Community values in shaping the Plan
- Level of support for the clean energy target to date
- Views on clean energy sources
- Prioritization of clean energy policy and program areas

Responses To-date

- 75 total responses (as of 4/14)

Where do respondents live?

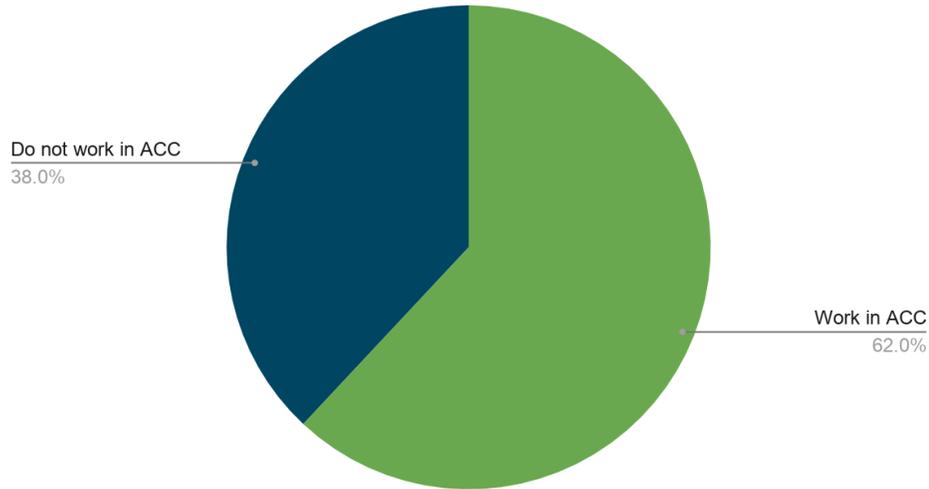


- Residential ZIP codes:
  - 30601 (4)
  - 30605 (23)
  - 30606 (35)



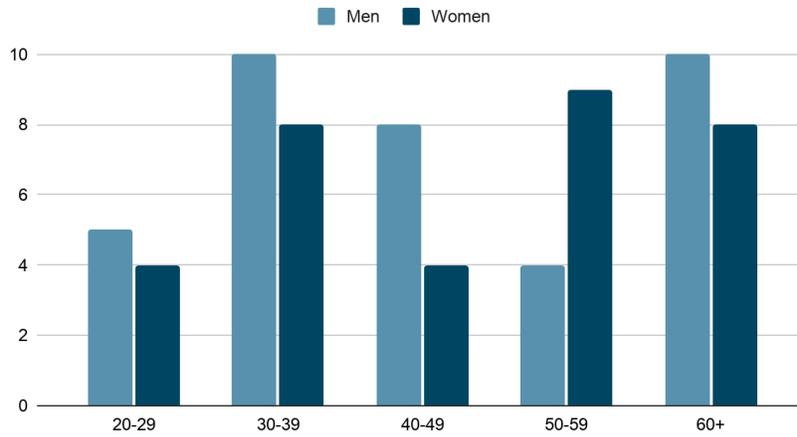
- 30607 (3)
- 30609 (1)
- 30622 (2)
- 30646 (1)
- 30683 (3)

### Respondents working in the County



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- 38 women, 31 men

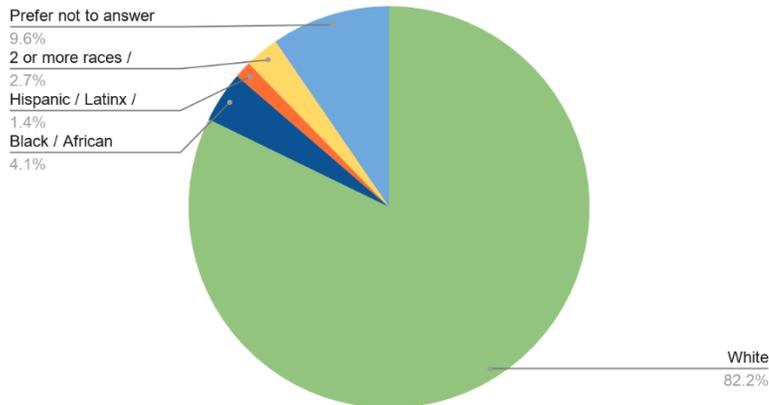
### Gender and Age



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Race / Ethnicity



Plan Development: Process Lookahead

Opportunities for CAB Input

- Community values (a.k.a. the local “why”)
- Highlighted successes from Athens area
- Goals
- Implementation priorities
- Community commitments

Next Steps

1. Consider and confirm ACCGov internal processes
2. Outlining; identification / confirmation of priorities based on community and stakeholder values
3. Plan development commences; CAB input process begins

Thoughts?

- Amy: Requests a compilation of all feedback from community & stakeholders to-date.
  - Megan – We’ll share this.
- Tom: If I was talking to my students, I’d say you should have an outline now.
- Megan: Work session to get started; would you be open to this? (In next scheduled CAB meeting, or standalone.)
  - Using online tool such as Miro, Jamboard, or even an outdoor convening.
  - Amy: Would want compilation of feedback document well in advance of meeting, in addition to an outline.
  - Megan – We can provide:
    - Feedback compilation document
    - Draft outline, to get people thinking in right mindset
    - Pull a few example clean energy plans to demonstrate different approaches

Discussion: Community engagement strategies

1. Of the community engagement approaches used to date, which do you feel have been most effective?
  2. What community engagement activities have CAB members been utilizing? Which approaches have you found most effective?
  3. What additional strategies should we be employing?
  4. What additional strategies should CAB members be utilizing?
- John: What would be higher priority – participating in Town Halls, or taking survey?



- Megan: If either-or, survey. Even getting in front of folks in meetings they're already having would be good. We want to meet people where they're at.
  - John will share survey with his network.
- Amy: Reach out to Mayor & Commission. Mayor to give shout-out at beginning of meeting.
- Amy: Utilize Athens Land Trust networks. Share information through public health facilities, unemployment office, etc. Disseminate new flyers / tri-fold brochures with information specific to those audiences.
  - Amy: Melinda Lord's office, Office of Housing & Community Development, could help with this.