



Meeting Notes
Community Advisory Board (CAB)
May 19, 2021
2:00pm – 4:00pm
Virtual Meeting – WebEx

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

Introductions

- We'll be posting a recording of this meeting on the web. Meeting is being livestreamed thought YouTube.
- Objectives
 1. Provide updates on 1:1s with business and community organizations
 2. Provide updates on public town halls
 3. Provide updates on community survey
 4. Introduction to clean energy plans: purpose and critical topics
 5. Provide brief update on state legislation relevant to clean energy
 6. Provide update on community engagement to-date

Report Out from Business Leader 1:1s

- *The following notes have been shared previously. There have been no additional business leader report-outs since last CAB meeting.*
- *On May 10, a document was shared with the CAB which included a summary of all the stakeholder engagement feedback to-date.*
- 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

- *The following notes have been shared previously. There have been no additional community organization report-outs since last CAB meeting.*



- On May 10, a document was shared with the CAB which included a summary of all the stakeholder engagement feedback to-date.
- 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 hours, 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?
- 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

- *The following notes have been shared previously. There have been no additional electric provider report-outs since last CAB meeting.*
- *On May 10, a document was shared with the CAB which included a summary of all the stakeholder engagement feedback to-date.*
- 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 member
- Town Hall #3 – 13 attendees, no CAB members
- Town Hall #4 – 9 attendees, no CAB members
- Town Hall #5 – 7 attendees, incl. 1 CAB member

Town Hall #4 – What we've heard:

- Concern regarding EV "penalty tax" in Georgia
- Interest in recommended compan(y/ies) for energy efficiency audit
- Interest in EMC community solar programs
- Interest in new hydroelectric power sources. Question about how Athens will encourage local renewable energy generation.
- Interest in coordination between large companies/manufacturers interested in solar investments. Could ACCGov play this role?
- Concern regarding legislation preempting local government from restricting certain energy sources
- Is ACCGov considering Solar Energy Procurement Agreements?
- Strong interest in job creation. Who will get new jobs? What types of jobs? How long will jobs stay in town?

Town Hall #5 – What we've heard:

- Green Jobs Pipeline opportunity for connection.
- Concerns about reaching goal due to challenges at state level.



- Interest in learning more about Community Energy Fund.
- Status of funding? Opportunities for using funding?
- Impacted by COVID?
- Encouragement to meet with Winterville City.
- Have we gotten expected/adequate participation?

Town Halls - Reflections

- Highlights: Great conversations, questions asked, and connections made
- Causes for concern: Attendance remained low
- Reflections from CAB
 - *John Newland – How does the attendance at these town halls compare to pre-COVID town halls?*
 - *Mike Wharton*
 - *Public meetings with Leisure Services, 20-25 was a “good” crowd. When considering land development, land owners, ~50 was more common.*
 - *Part of the difference here is that this isn’t a controversial issue, we’re simply gathering information.*
 - *John – Agreed. Unfortunate that we can’t pop-in to in-person spaces.*
 - *Amy Kissane – We need an ongoing conversation, communication with the community. We need some sort of marketing plan. Not sure when this would/could happen or what the cost would be. But marketing plan is needed to be successful.*
 - *Mike – Do you see this as something we should be doing now? Or do you see this as something needed around Plan adoption and/or implementation?*
 - *Amy – Now and in the future.*
 - *Tom Lawrence – Could we include an add in the water bill?*
 - *Mike Wharton – I have not gotten this out. In the fall, we’ll try to get something out about the Plan.*
 - *Andrew Saunders – From what I’ve heard, there’s been an overall need/desire for education. This isn’t uncommon for County initiatives that will fundamentally change and benefit the community. Would recommend that we prioritize community engagement and education in the action plan that comes out of this process.*
 - *Michael Songster – Agreed. We suffer from an overwhelming amount of vagueness. At every opportunity where we have concrete / discrete plans, we should utilize and communicate those.*
 - *Megan O’Neil – Have seen other cities bring in outside additional marketing support.*

Community Survey Updates

Low response rate. Please continue to share the community survey with your networks.

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

- 210 total responses (as of 5/19)
- Reside in Athens
 - Yes – 194, 90.23%
 - No – 16, 7.44%
- Gender



- Female – 107, 49.77%
- Male – 88, 40.93%
- Non-binary / Third gender – 3, 1.4%
- Prefer not to answer – 12, 5.58%
- Age
 - Less than 20: 1, 0.47%
 - 20-29: 24, 11.6%
 - 30-39: 42, 19.53%
 - 40-49: 30, 13.95%
 - 50-59: 35, 16.28%
 - 60 or older: 69, 32.09%
 - Prefer not to answer: 9, 4.19%
- Race/Ethnicity
 - American Indian or Alaskan Native: 2, 0.93%
 - Asian (including Asian Indian): 0, 0%
 - Black or African American 4, 1.86%
 - Hispanic or Latino or Spanish Origin of any race: 3 1.4%
 - Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander: 1, 0.47%
 - White: 171, 79.53%
 - Two or more races / ethnicities: 6, 2.79%
 - Prefer not to answer: 23, 10.7%

Introduction to Clean Energy Plans: Purpose and Critical Topics

- Three plan examples:
 - “Clean Energy Atlanta: A Vision for a 100% Clean Energy Future”
 - “Clean Energy DC: The District of Columbia Climate and Energy Plan”
 - “Cleveland’s Clean and Equitable Energy Future”
- Purpose of clean energy plans:
 - Education: Educate residents and stakeholders about the goal and processes to achieve the goal
 - Advocacy: Make the case for why the goal is important for the environment, health, economics, energy burden, etc.
 - Advocacy tool with stakeholders: residents; political leadership in municipality, state, and federal; utilities, etc.
 - Tailor language based on audience and goals
 - Value and goal setting: Demonstrate how the process for community, stakeholder, and expert engagement enabled the organization to discover the values and priorities guide the plan and evaluation of commitments
 - Analysis: Provide data to define and achieve the goal
 - Define: Where are we now? Where do we need to be? What clean energy pathways can help us achieve the goal?
 - Evaluation: Evaluate policies and programs to determine which will help us achieve the goal, informed by community engagement
 - Commitments: Make commitments that the organization is willing to move forward with, informed by community engagement
 - Accountability: Describe a plan to keep the organization accountable to its goals and commitments
 - Transparency: Detail how the plan was created, who it was funded by, who participated, how the community was engaged and how their feedback integrated, etc.



- Critical Topics in Clean Energy Plans
 - **Introduction**
 - **Define the clean energy targets**
 - **Define clean energy for your community**
 - **Why did you pass the 100% CE? Make the case for why is this meaningful to your community**
 - **The role of equity in the plan**
 - *Michael Songster – A lot of times the role of equity can be generic. Let's define equity up here, and identify the intersection of energy and equity*
 - **Energy landscape**
 - **Baseline information about the city's energy landscape**
 - **Where you are now? Climate targets baselines, energy burden, other**
 - **What has been done? Municipal initiatives, community driven efforts**
 - **How much further there is to go?**
 - **Business as usual is not sufficient, planning and action is needed**
 - *Michael – Discuss uses of SPLOST \$15.8M in this piece.*
 - *Tom – Do we intend to include in this section a breakdown of how energy is used?*
 - *Yeou – Yes. Will be in "Where are you now" section.*
 - **Stakeholder engagement**
 - **Community engagement informs the values, goals, and initiatives that are prioritized throughout the plan**
 - **Engagement process: CAB, surveys, public meetings, stakeholder interviews, etc.**
 - **Engagement process findings: Describe findings around how much people support clean energy, what is clean energy, equity priorities, etc.**
 - **Transparently detail how community feedback informed the plan including forming values, evaluating policies and programs, defining commitments, etc.**
 - *Andrew – Infographics, visuals will demonstrate timeline of engagement. Will there be more detail of engagement in appendix.*
 - *Yeou – Yes!*
 - *Tom – In the engagement section, is this also a time to talk about future engagement, advertising, etc.?*
 - *Yeou – This could be both forward-looking about how ACCUG plans on engaging community in "implementation," and can include the process to-date.*
 - *Mike – We could include planning for media, communications in this section as well.*
 - **Pathways to clean energy**
 - **Define how stakeholder feedback guided values and priorities to use in analysis**
 - **Show results from analysis: clean energy impacts of climate, economy, jobs, health, etc.**
 - **Policy and Program Evaluation**
 - **Descriptions and rankings of policy and programs based on priorities identified during community engagement**
 - *Michael – Concern about scoring system leading to people going for only low hanging fruit.*



- *Mike – One way to address that might be the priority rating in these rankings.*
- *Yeou – Another way to do it is to break it up into short-term and long-term (Atlanta did this). Also depends on County choices; Cleveland, for example, decided that they wanted to pursue high impact but difficult policies.*
- *Andrew – Michael, can you give some examples of experience you've had where outcomes from something like this haven't been productive?*
 - *Michael – I'm not sure that I can. I'm worried that if we move into implementation, those who weren't involved in these kinds of discussions will lean towards those "easy" things.*
 - *Andrew – I offer 3 ways this can be tweaked:*
 - *Putting words (high/medium/low) to rankings might help.*
 - *CAB has been invited to this table because you're active in this space, or you're engaged with people in the community who this may benefit. Maybe there could be some weighting for the CAB.*
 - *Some grouping could help – high importance-short term, high-importance-long term, high importance-medium term; moderate importance-short term....*
 - *Michael – Absolutely agree regarding some sort of short/long term piece. Also agree regarding adding some "narrative" (e.g., high/medium/low).*
- *Amy – What goes into determining feasibility?*
 - *Yeou – Depends on the government. Legality / policy restrictions. Political feasibility. Economic feasibility – whether or not would be economically challenging for city and difficult to get passed by city council.*
 - *CAB and ACCGov have input into how we do this ranking. It's just a tool to help illustrate why we may or may not move forward with some things.*
- **Commitments**
 - **What will the municipality commit to moving forward?**
 - **Policies and programs**
 - **Funding**
 - **Accountability to ensure action**
- **Appendices**
 - **Summary of Community Engagement**
 - **Glossary**
 - **References**
 - **Acknowledgements**
- **Additional Optional Topics**
 - **Economic Development and Workforce Development**
 - **Utility Burden**
 - **Internal County Commitments**
 - **Role of utility and/or state decision makers**
 - **Role of community members**
 - **In depth policy or program descriptions**
 - *Amy – I want to look at the examples in our folder to see what some of these plans ended up looking like.*
 - *I like "where do I fit in."*



- Mike – *What is the budget impact for all of this?*
 - Yeou – *I'm sure there is but I'm sure we can work through it. Also, not all of these have to be full sections.*
 - Mike – *We can assess funding needs before we make decisions on what we include.*
- Michael – *There's the role of city/county, community members, and utility, and more. Can we talk about the interface of those, especially in areas that lack structure/leadership, or may struggle to make progress. Not sure how to cover that, but let's make sure to cover that.*
 - Amy – *Yes, let's look at the role of the CAB, of off-shoots of 100% Athens, of advocacy groups, etc. to help address that.*
- Amy – *Curious about the Commission's knowledge of what we're doing.*
 - Mike – *They're certainly aware. We'd take a recommendation to move forward to the plan. We'll have a work session and present. We'll also have public feedback at that point. That's when Commission feedback will be. (We'll also be sharing all of the feedback in general in the addenda.) There will be about 4-6 weeks between the work session and the agenda setting meeting where they send it for a vote, in which case we could adjust. Our aim is that public input to-date and CAB input to-date make that a smooth process then.*
- Amy – *Is there a point prior to that last phase where we'd want to present to Mayor & Commission (and as a result, the public), to make sure we don't miss anything. ... What has this looked like in other communities?*
 - Yeou – *It's really depended on the community. We've seen CAB members get very hands-on in plan writing, and Mayor reviewed those sections, then published without public session. Others, similar to as described above.*
 - Mike – *Is the concern that 4-6 weeks for adjustment isn't enough?*
 - Amy – *Not overly concerned, just want to get a good sense.*
- Mike – *We intend to hit the target of the current timeline, but that's not the goal. The goal is to get it right. We're not going to rush it.*
 - Michael – *Concerned that work session, to agenda setting, to vote is too short of a cycle to adjust it all. If there is a hiccup, it's then a big hiccup. That seems like too short a cycle for the quantity of information we'll be showing them.*
 - Mike – *With that in mind, will we move up the timeline to be done and ready in August? Or are we okay with having two months from having it done, and thus pushing it past December? Don't have to make this decision now.*
 - Amy – *Not sure yet, but we'll want to extend the time to have more input from Commission and the Public.*
 - Michael – *Is there another way to make it public besides the work session? Athens In Motion had an event where residents including Commissioners came to a public unveiling/event. Is something like that going to be possible in the late summer? And/or is that an acceptable manner to make it public?*
 - Mike – *We can explore that. I haven't done it that way, but doesn't mean we can't.*
 - Amy – *Yes, let's explore this.*

2021 Georgia Legislative Session Update

- PASSED (and signed by Gov.)
 - [HB 150](#) - Preemption of local government authority to restrict certain energy sources (e.g., natural gas)



- This includes, and as we understand it was designed to protect, natural gas. The bill bans local government from being able to pass any policy to “prohibit, or have the effect of prohibiting” any one energy fuel source, including gas.
- As written, this would also protect solar power. Local governments will not have the authority to restrict clean energy.
- *Andrew – Do we anticipate that this will be hashed out in court?*
 - *Bailey – That’s what we’ve heard. It’s happened in multiple states, so likely to be hashed out in other cities in other states.*
 - *Michael – Have you heard of a specific basis for challenge?*
 - *Andrew – The last language I saw was incredibly broad, included infrastructure. It’s poorly written policy. ... Could a Tybee regulate or not regulate offshore wind? Gas pipeline impacts?*
 - *Michael – We posed a hypothetical when it was going through the session – it seemed to have a lot of interference with pretty basic building codes.*
- [HB 355](#) - Georgia Carbon Sequestration Registry
 - Resurrects the existing but underutilized GA Carbon Sequestration Registry. Makes qualified building products eligible for the registry. Will incentivize the use of mass timber, carbon-infused concrete, and other materials the trap and hold carbon rather than result in intense emissions like other materials like steel do.
 - Complex process to create the registry. Will be the first of its kind in the nation. With that will come kinks to work out.
- [SB 213](#) - Clarifying language in statutory provision for Energy Savings Performance Contracts (ESPCs) for schools
 - Energy Savings Performance Contracts are long term agreements which provide major energy efficiency improvements for buildings and facilities, and guarantee the customer energy savings over the lifetime of the contract.
 - We see this as a minor update to legislation that has been in place for years.
- FAILED
 - [EMC investment in gas](#)
 - There is currently a cap on the amount that Electric Municipal Corporations may invest in natural gas infrastructure. This bill would have raised that cap from 15% to 60%.
 - [Study committee on childhood lead exposure](#)
 - This committee would have been a joint study committee to look at childhood lead exposure from buildings and infrastructure. Legislators from both the House and Senate would have met during the non-session months and prepare a report with the intention of identifying issues needing legislative action.
 - [Electric vehicle sales/access](#)
 - This bill would’ve allowed EV manufacturers to have retail locations, allow test drives, and sell directly to customers.
 - [Indoor air quality assessment requirement](#)
 - This bill would require every public building to conduct an indoor air quality (IAQ) assessment according to the EPA’s Indoor Air Quality Building Education and Assessment Model (I-BEAM) before 2023.
- NEXT SESSION
 - [SB 299](#) - Solar access legislation
 - Introduced at the end of the 2021 session. Will be brought back up in 2022.
 - Bipartisan sponsorship – R Sen. Jeff Mullis (Chickamauga), D Sen. Gloria Butler (Stone Mountain)



- If passed, this will be the most significant solar legislation in the state since 2015. Expansion of solar access in Georgia through changes to the Georgia Cogeneration & Distributed Generation Act of 2001
 - Provides for fair monthly billing (aka net metering)
 - Protects solar customer generators from unreasonable retail rates
 - Increases solar PV capacity that’s allowable for residential and commercial distributed generation systems
 - Allows SEPA’s for nonprofits including schools, houses of worship, and nonprofit affordable housing facilities
 - Increases customer data access

Update on community engagement

- Project Team updates
 - Fliers & Print
 - Volunteers posted in 25 locations around town
 - Flagpole
 - Radio:
 - Reached out to 5 station.
 - WUGA aired
 - Social Media
 - 9 times posted to Facebook page
 - ACC Newsletter
 - Reminder sent with monthly newsletter and a reminder email newsletter for each Town Hall
 - Commissioners’ networks
 - Jesse Houle, Tim Denson, Carol Myers, and Mariah Parker said they would share
 - *Michael – Have the other commissioners chosen not to share it?*
 - *Maggie Songster – These are just those that we already had connections with and reached out to. We’ll reach out to the rest soon, also, Mike is preparing an email to all department staff.*
 - Email - All contacts from charrettes, town halls, and interviews
- CAB updates
 - *Tawana Mattox – Have you reached out to the Neighborhood Leaders?*
 - *Maggie – Yes. We’ve met with the Family Connection Neighborhood Leaders. A few have spoken to us directly.*
 - *Tawana – Each of the Neighborhood Leaders are having a series of block parties. Reach out to Teris Thomas, she can help include you so you can set up a table.*
 - *Mike – We’ve also reached out to the Federation of Neighborhoods and NextDoor. Additionally, an email blast to ACCGov staff as well as UGA staff.*

Conclusion & Wrap Up

- Key Takeaways from Today
 - Community Engagement Efforts
 - Survey Updates
 - Clean Energy Planning Processes
- Objectives for June Meeting
 - Clean Energy Planning Work Session (draft outline to be sent in advance)