



# Chatham County, NC

## Meeting Minutes

### Board of Commissioners

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Thursday, November 6, 2025

9:00 AM Chatham County Agriculture & Conference Center located at  
1192 US Hwy 64 West Business in Pittsboro

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#### Special Meeting Agenda with the Climate Change Advisory Committee for a Climate Retreat Day 2

#### CALL TO ORDER

Chair Howard called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone.

Climate Advisory Committee Attendance: Robbie Cox - Chair, Vickie Atkinson - Vice Chair, Michael Petruska, Keith McLaurin, Sharon Garbutt, John Bonitz, Deb Gallagher, Alicia Koblansky, Charlie Cooper, Nita Dukes, John Graybeal, and Pam Hawe

**Present:** 5 - Chair Karen Howard, Vice Chair Katie Kenlan, Commissioner David Delaney, Commissioner Franklin Gomez Flores and Commissioner Amanda Robertson

#### BOARD PRIORITIES

[25-0576](#)

9:00 to 9:30 Welcome, Retreat Day #1 Recap, and Retreat Day #2 Goals

*The session opened with remarks from facilitator Alana Keegan and Environmental Quality Director Kevin Lindley, who welcomed returning and new participants, including several who were unable to attend the first retreat day. The group reviewed changes to the Day 2 agenda outlined in the addendum provided at the start of the meeting.*

*Keegan reminded participants of the retreat's purpose and asked whether additional goals were needed for the day. She shared three overarching goals developed from pre-retreat feedback submitted by participants:*

*Retreat Goals:*

- Build shared understanding of climate science.*
- Establish a common framework for the climate action process.*
- Clarify roles, timelines, and expectations.*

[25-0580](#)

9:30 to 10:15 Chatham County Work Underway: Solid Waste, Heat Action, and More

**Attachments:** [Climate Retreat Day 2 Solid Waste](#)

*Chatham County Environmental Quality Director Kevin Lindley shared updates on current Chatham County sustainability work, emphasizing solid waste management, waste collection emissions, and landfill operations. The county has a relatively low recycling contamination rate and continues to separate and collect glass for recycling through dedicated vendors. Composting and food waste diversion pilot programs are underway, with attention to waste reduction at county facilities. The presentation also*

highlighted ongoing monitoring of landfill gas and emissions, noting that fuel consumption for trash collection remains a leading source of emissions as Chatham County outsources their landfills. Kevin also clarified how greenhouse gas emissions are calculated in county inventories, noting distinctions between local operational emissions and emissions occurring at landfills where county waste is transported.

*Topics Raised:*

- State oversight and regulatory differences across landfills.
- Strategies to increase public participation in recycling and waste reduction.
- Measurement and scaling of composting programs.
- Opportunities to track emissions from Chatham Transit for inclusion in future inventories.

[25-0578](#)

10:15 to 11:15 Climate Impacts on Energy Use and Energy Burden, and the Role of Local and State Policy

**Attachments:**     [Climate Impacts - Brooks 11-6-2025](#)

*Josh Brooks provided an overview of energy challenges and opportunities in North Carolina, focusing on how utility systems, renewable integration, and economic factors influence local government planning. The discussion emphasized how solar energy, microgrids, and renewable infrastructure can increase community resilience and reduce long-term energy burdens. Brooks noted the importance of collaboration between county staff, policymakers, and developers to plan for sustainable energy transitions and equitable access to clean energy opportunities.*

*Topics Raised:*

- Land-use conflicts related to renewable energy planning, namely between housing development and agricultural land.
- Public misinformation surrounding solar projects.
- Limitations of the electric grid and potential upgrades.
- Alignment of building codes and future infrastructure needs.

**RECESS**

[25-0577](#)

11:30 to 12:15 Funding Climate Action

**Attachments:**     [Shared day of HIPinvestor-Chatham-Climate Funding 11\\_06\\_2025-short](#)

*Nick Gower discussed strategies for financing climate action and resilience projects, highlighting the range of public and private mechanisms available to local governments. The session emphasized the need for fiscal planning that balances affordability, stability, and long-term investment. Participants explored the importance of engaging finance teams early in climate planning processes and identifying partnership models that reduce large debt burdens. The discussion underscored how climate action funding can be paired with cost savings to make implementation more achievable.*

*Topics Raised:*

- Examples of financial tools used by other counties.
- Leveraging mixed funding models for greater impact.
- Upcoming state and federal funding opportunities.

[25-0579](#)

1:15 to 2:00 Coordinating Climate Action Plans and Community Engagement: Pittsboro, Orange County, and the Greater Region

**Attachments:** [Final Chatham Workshop\\_SG\\_11.05](#)

*Shuchi Gupta discussed regional coordination and the importance of community-based organizations (CBOs) in advancing climate goals. The presentation highlighted the role of the Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) as a regional framework for engagement and emphasized the need for continuous communication and support from local governments with CBOs. Gupta discussed ways to strengthen relationships between local government staff and CBOs to ensure projects reflect community needs and priorities.*

*Topics Raised:*

- How local governments can best align engagement strategies with regional planning efforts.*
- Opportunities for ongoing surveys and public input.*

## **RECESS**

[25-0583](#)

2:00 to 3:30 Developing a Vision for Climate Action in Chatham County

*Alana Keegan facilitated an activity that prompted participants to create a shared vision for Chatham County's climate future. The conversation touched on insights from previous sessions, focusing on values such as equity, community resilience, and relevant sectors.*

*Prompt:*

*"Imagine It's 2045"*

*"Imagine it's the year 2040. Our county is recognized as climate leaders. What specific results are we most proud of? Write out 3-4 specific outcomes. Focus on sensory and emotional language - not just facts or metrics.*

*Next, Keegan asked participants to label their ideal outcomes as "essential for long-term goals" and/or "most likely to make near-term progress."*

*The Following Key Themes were Identified:  
(Near-term votes, long-term votes)*

*land Use (8, 6):*

- Increased tree cover, including urban areas.*
- Strategic land use planning.*
- Robust agricultural community & integrated local food culture.*
- Thriving natural ecosystems.*
- Significant amount of preserved natural and working lands (e.g. farms, grasslands, pastures, forests).*
- New developments have large, preserved tracts of undisturbed land (e.g. 100 ft minimum buffers).*
- Programs that support residents to reforest and put in native plants.*
- Edible forests on public lands, urban centers, and county property.*

*Sustainable Development (7, 5):*

- New construction is net zero.*

- Restoration efforts.
- 50% multistory.
- Well-planned, accessible housing & development.
- Recruitment of eco-housing developers.
- Energy-efficient residential & commercial buildings.
- Energy burden for low-income residents eliminated.
- Sustainable influence within utilities commission.

*Transportation (4, 6):*

- 100% electric vehicle fleets.
- Highly utilized public transit and transit-oriented development.
- Dramatically reduced vehicle miles traveled by usage of EV bus options.
- Towns have multi-modal forms of transportation.
- Leader in transportation solutions (e.g. all automated electric vehicles have 80% carbon tax).

*Equity & Inclusion (1, 6):*

- Equity of resources.
- Improved livability, affordability.
- Marginalized and low-income communities receive the support and opportunities they need to survive and thrive.
- Achieved the lowest need for affordable housing in NC.
- Public health considered a high priority.

*Outreach & Education (4, 2):*

- Creation of a community that strives for resilience and prides itself in climate leadership.
- Effective communication and engagement strategies in place.
- Empower the community through education.
- Climate interests enabled by engaged, growing communications activity.
- Highest level of climate literacy in NC.
- People in Chatham County know about and are involved in climate solutions.

*Renewable Energy infrastructure (0, 4):*

- Local solar batteries for all, community solar access.
- Use of agri/aqua voltaic systems.
- County converted to all electric.
- County is a leader in solar farms.
- Large scale local renewable energy generation.
- County has multiple sources of clean energy generation sources.
- More electric use than fossil fuels.

*Zero Emissions (0, 3):*

- Key emitters have been identified.
- Solutions developed to eliminate emissions.

*Waste Management (3, 0):*

- Efficient waste management with 100% use of recycling and composting.
- Waste to landfill per capita is half the current rate.

*Water Management (0, 1):*

- Protection of wetlands and local waterways in planning.
- Prioritization of stormwater management.

*Public-private partnerships (1, 1):*

- Public-private innovation and collaboration.
- Chatham is home to climate-based research and innovation through nonprofit and business.

*Building Resilient Communities:*

- Communities are intra-dependent vs. Inter-dependent.
- Communities can withstand natural disasters.
- Resilient infrastructure for clean water, power, and connectivity throughout developed areas of the county while maintain rural tracts.
- Officially recognized as a "transition community".

*Food Production & Soil Health:*

- Use of soil building and sequestration.
- Prioritized local good production and community gardens.
- Topsoil systems that emphasize priority of care for land and regeneration.
- Chatham is a beacon of resilient agriculture and farmland productivity, leading to economic vitality.

*Ecological Health:*

- Ecological health and long-term sustainability are a priority over profit-driven models.

*Green Economics:*

- Finance Office engaged in "Green Economics".

**RECESS**[25-0581](#)

## 3:45 to 4:45 Where Do We Go from Here?

*The final session centered on synthesizing themes from the two-day retreat and identifying tangible next steps. Participants expressed shared interest in continuing collaboration, developing clear metrics for success, and ensuring consistent communication between the Climate Advisory Committee and the Board of Commissioners. Emphasis was placed on aligning climate initiatives with existing county priorities while remaining adaptable to new opportunities and funding resources.*

*Participant-Identified Next Steps*

*Each participant was asked to write down and share 1-2 tasks that they felt were the most important next steps for the county to take.*

*1. Organize and Assess*

- Identify staff point-persons.*
- Assess current plans for CAP alignment, conduct a gap assessment (e.g. Plan Chatham).*
- Identify current deficits and areas that can be built upon.*
- Study of other community CAPs to help develop high-level categories.*
- Sample RFP's and related materials to be sent to group by Kevin Lindley.*

*2. Build Framework and Structure*

- Decide on the outlined metrics, goals, and structure of CAP.*
- Develop a framework that incorporates an equitable balance, addressing varied/diverse interests.*
- Develop clear timeline and list of priorities.*
- Identify issues with zoning, housing, & development.*

### 3. Strengthen Partnerships and Coordination

- a. Identify potential partnerships and topics for collaboration; see how to incentivize collaboration.
- b. Communication and coordination with other counties and municipalities.
- c. Establish continuous meetings between Committee & Board.

### 4. Public Engagement and Communications

- a. Comprehensive public engagement that incorporates diverse voices and impactful storytelling.
- b. Address misinformation through reframing attitudes around climate change.
- c. Develop a communications strategy.
- d. Strengthen community values surrounding climate change (e.g. awards, incentives).

### 5. Funding and Resource Allocation

- a. Amend budget to accommodate CAP (budget process & considerations).
- b. Begin search for varied funding opportunities.

### 6. Implementation and Tracking

- a. Formulate dashboard for organization and/or public engagement.
- b. Land conservation efforts.
- c. Develop EV Fleets.

[25-0582](#)

## 4:45 to 5:00 Closeout and Next Steps

*Alana Keegan closed the retreat by summarizing key takeaways and reiterating the importance of maintaining cross-departmental collaboration. Next steps include refining the county's climate vision, coordinating follow-up meetings, and developing an actionable framework to guide Chatham County's next phase of climate planning.*

#### Action Items:

*November 20 - Climate Advisory Committee will convene to review outputs of retreat, assess and inventory existing work by the county related to climate, and identify recommended sectors for climate plan focus based on other county plans and priorities. This will also be used to outline a proposed scope of focus for the county's RFP for a Climate Action Plan.*

*December 15 - Central Pines will present to County Commissioners on the retreat, discussion, and next steps.*

*January (Date TBD) - The Committee will present an updated inventory and recommended RFP scope to the Board.*

## **ADJOURNMENT**

**A motion was made by Commissioner David Delaney, seconded by Commissioner Amanda Robertson, that the meeting was adjourned. The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Aye:** 5 - Chair Howard, Vice Chair Kenlan, Commissioner Delaney, Commissioner Gomez Flores, and Commissioner Robertson