



Chatham County, NC

Meeting Minutes

Board of Commissioners

Friday, October 17, 2025

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

Special Meeting Agenda with the Climate Change Advisory Committee for a Climate Retreat Day 1

CALL TO ORDER

Climate Advisory Committee in 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

Chair Howard called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone.

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

BOARD PRIORITIES

[25-0534](#)

9:00 to 9:45 Welcome, Brief History, and Around-the-Room

The CPRC team welcomed participants and began the retreat by acknowledging the Climate Change Advisory Committee's decade-long efforts since its formation in 2015, emphasizing the importance of continuing this progress through strategic planning and coordinated climate action. The team shared an overview of the purpose of the retreat: to build shared understanding of climate science, establish a common framework for a county climate action process, and create clarity around roles, timelines, and expectations.

Emily Barrett introduced the facilitation method of implementing a "parking lot" system to capture ideas requiring later discussion. She also shared the following reflection question to guide discussion:

"What is one thing you are looking to learn about climate change, climate mitigation, etc.?"

Participants shared around-the-room name, title, & organization, noting their roles in Chatham's climate work

[25-0535](#)

9:45 to 11:30 Receive a presentation on the Urgency of Climate Change and the Effects We Can Expect to See in Chatham County from Dr. Jared Bowen, Associate Director of the North Carolina State Climate Office at NC State University

Attachments: [Urgency of Climate Change - Bowden Presentation 10-17-2025](#)

Dr. Jared Bowen with the State Climate Office presented data on increasing temperature extremes, humidity, and weather variability. He emphasized that recent summers may serve as early indicators of accelerating climate instability and noted the increasing intensity and inland reach of severe storms and hurricanes, underscoring the need for heat resilience and emergency preparedness.

Council members and the Advisory Committee discussed the importance of working to build resilient communities with these projections in mind to ensure public safety and infrastructure security. The issue of addressing public climate belief was raised with a focus on the role of community outreach, education, and a neutral framing of climate resilience.

Topics Raised:

- *How might the county expand communication strategies to reach residents skeptical of climate science?*
- *What tools exist to frame resilience in ways that broaden support and participation?*

RECESS

[25-0536](#)

12:30 to 2:00 Receive a presentation on What is a Climate Action Plan (CAP) from Emily Barrett, Facilitator with Central Pines Regional Council and Discuss Elements and Processes

Attachments: [What Is a Climate Action Plan Barrett 10-17-2025](#)

Emily Barrett with Central Pines Regional Council provided a detailed walk-through of climate action planning best practices, emphasizing that Chatham County's community needs should determine the plan structure. She outlined common plan components, including baselining emissions, identifying mitigation and adaptation strategies, establishing performance metrics, and creating implementation steps. However, she encouraged a flexible approach-highlighting Town of Pittsboro's choice to track action-based metrics without an initial emissions baseline within their Climate Action Plan.

Council and Advisory Committee members asked clarifying questions regarding data collection, alignment with state guidance, and process timelines. Emily reiterated that the development process is iterative and should be paired with robust community engagement.

Topics Raised:

- *Capacity and staffing needs to support CAP creation and long-term implementation.*
- *Integration with county's comprehensive plan and growth projections.*

[25-0537](#)

2:15 to 3:15 Receive a presentation on Climate Adaptation, Community Impact, and Education and Engagement from Dr. Susan "Susie" Crate, Professor Emeritus of Anthropology in the Department of Environmental Science and Policy at George Mason University

Attachments: [Presentation Outline Crate 10-20-2025](#)

Dr. Susan Crate stressed the power of local stories and intergenerational learning to

build climate understanding. She emphasized meeting residents where they already gather-parks, sports fields, farmers' markets, and festivals-and highlighted successful "climate memory" exercises that best engage the public to think critically about climate change.

Dr. Crate prompted participants to identify common challenges in public engagement and identify opportunities for community in Chatham County.

Common Challenges in Climate Public Engagement:

- Lack of shared understanding of what can and cannot be done to address climate change*
- Gaining the trust of the general population*
- Lack of shared identity*
- Need for an acceptance of diversity*
- Lack of opportunities to address climate change publicly*
- Public may feel as if it is hard for their voice to be heard; a need to "share the microphone"*
- Lack of transparency and/or equitable communication*

Opportunities for Community in Chatham County:

- Encouraging education and awareness of projected climate trends, with an emphasis on emergency management*
- Building a sense of community with neighbors to encourage preparedness*
- Seeding community discussions*
- Creating a broad communications & outreach strategy to build community resilience*
- Meeting people where they are with use of common language, engaging storytelling, and focus on lived experiences*

Topics Raised:

- Ensuring equitable engagement across demographic groups.*
- Use of personable community outreach, branding and engagement tools to encourage public participation.*

[25-0538](#)

3:15 to 3:45 Receive a presentation and discuss a Sector-by-Sector Approach to Framing Climate Change Action from Emily Barrett, Facilitator with Central Pines Regional Council

Alana Keegan explained the purpose of organizing climate action by sectors such as agriculture, energy, buildings, transportation, land use, and emergency management & resilience. She noted that this approach supports easier planning, communication, and implementation.

Participants discussed agriculture's prominence and agreed it would be an important early lens in Chatham's climate plan development.

[25-0539](#)

3:45 to 4:45 Receive a presentation on Sector: Agriculture from Dr. Michelle Schroeder Moreno, Director, Center for Environmental Farming Systems (CEFS) and Agroecology Professor, NC State University

Attachments: [Sector Agriculture - Moreno Presentation 10-17-2025](#)

Presenter: Dr. Michelle Schroeder Moreno (CEFS)

Dr. Michelle Schroeder-Moreno with the Center for Environmental Farming Systems discussed the importance of agricultural resilience and local food systems, noting

Chatham's strong assets and the role of local farms in emergency supply scenarios. She encouraged participants to think holistically about soil health, biodiversity, and farmer networks, and emphasized Chatham's unique positioning to lead in this area.

Participants reflected on relevant agricultural topics, such as the use of traditional farming methods that sequester carbon, and brainstormed farming strategies that may provide support for Chatham County's rural and farming communities amidst climate disasters, etc.

Topics Raised:

- Local agriculture asset inventory and mapping.*
- Opportunities to integrate local farmers into emergency food systems.*

[25-0540](#)

4:45 to 5:00 Closeout and Next Steps of the Climate Change Retreat with Facilitator Emily Barrett, Central Pines Regional Council

Alana Keegan closed the session by encouraging participants to continue identifying assets and opportunities before the next retreat day and asked for individuals to write down or email her one thing they hoped would be covered in the second day. She confirmed that notes and flip-chart materials would be compiled and shared with attendees.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Vice Chair Katie Kenlan, 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