



www.chathamclimateaction.org

January 2026

Hello ChathamCAN Community,

Whoa! 2026 is off to a chaotic start. But a look at the mounting frequency and cost of climate disasters tells us it's essential to keep our focus on implementing climate solutions. Every tenth of a degree of heating that we prevent matters - a lot.

CALLS FOR ACTION AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Climate Change and NC [January 27, 2026 at 7pm.](#)

The Fearington Democratic Club will welcome Dr. Robbie Cox, Chair of the Chatham County Climate Change Advisory Committee and three-time President of the Sierra Club to discuss Climate Change and North Carolina. Dr. Cox will explain the growing impacts of climate change, globally and in North Carolina, and share new initiatives by Chatham County that respond to this crisis. The meeting will be available to the community on Zoom. Register with the Fearington Democratic club at [Contact Us](#). Leave your request and the registration link will be emailed to you. (Deadline to Register 1/27/26 5pm)

Climate action:

NC WARN's new documentary (18-minutes) is available for viewing online. Described as going "right at one of the world's worst climate polluters," it "features a globally prominent scientist insisting that Duke Energy's massive expansion of fossil fuels and suppression of climate solutions absolutely must be stopped. Watch the film, **The True Cost of Power** at this [link](#). Take action [here](#).

Run for office?

What if thousands of us ran for local office on climate? There's training to help you prepare! A free [6-part training series](#) for people running for office (and their staff/teams) on climate is now online.

And speaking of running for office, ChathamCAN's Kate O'Brien (www.kateobrienchathamnc.com) is running for county commissioner! To learn more about Democratic candidates running for office in Chatham, attend **Candi-Dating 2026** in Siler City on

Saturday, February 7, 2026 @10 am - 12 pm at Holy Trinity Church, 309 Trinity St. Sign up [here](#). We encourage you to ask candidates what they will do to advance climate solutions.

Bike Chatham!

Calling all bike enthusiasts in Chatham County! Whether you bike for recreation or transportation, we're convening a team of folks who are interested in creating better bike infrastructure across the county. We need your vision, ideas, creativity, and energy. Please send an email with your interest to Lenore at chathamclimateaction@gmail.com.

UPDATES and FOLLOW UP

It's Not Over. Ongoing efforts with Chatham Park's "Small Area Plan"

On January 8, the Southern Environmental Law Center (SELC) filed a legal complaint against the Town of Pittsboro concerning Chatham Park's South Village Small Area Plan on behalf of ChathamCAN, the Haw River Assembly, and 7 Directions of Service.

You may recall that the South Village Small Area Plan was approved by the Pittsboro Board of Commissioners on November 10 by a 3–2 vote. At that time, Town planning staff assured the Commissioners that revisions made in the November draft would preserve the Town's long-term legislative oversight of the Chatham Park planning process. However, that authority is not clearly reflected in the language of the approved document.

We hope that, upon discussion and reflection, the Town will make straightforward changes to guarantee the phased planning, thorough analysis, and legislative decision-making originally agreed upon between Chatham Park Investors and the Town of Pittsboro. As always, please let us know if you have any particular questions or concerns about this matter. And let the Town Commissioners know that this issue is not resolved until their long term oversight in the planning process has been clearly articulated in the actual plan. For more, see [New lawsuit escalates battle over Chatham Park's 5,000-acre 'small-area plan'](#)

The Chatham County Board of Commissioners heard a presentation from the Climate Change Advisory Committee chair, Robbie Cox, at their recent budget retreat. The presentation focused on "sectors" to be included and culminated in a charge for County staff to draft a "request for proposal" to create a **Climate Action Plan**. Seven sectors are recommended: Agriculture, Land Use Planning, Built Environment/Energy, Waste and Water Management, Community Resiliency, Natural Ecosystems, and Transportation. Each of these seven sectors should center Equity, Community Engagement/Public Private Partnerships, Feasibility and Performance. Many opportunities for input will be forthcoming, and we'll be sure you know about how to get involved..

Taking a Proactive Stance

The Board of Commissioners voted to hold a special session in early February to proactively address the threat of Data Centers in Chatham County. No applications are active at present. Information about public hearings will be shared when available. To take action now, if you live in the NC-04 districts of Wake, Chatham, Durham, or Orange County, you can sign the open letter here: [Open Letter to NC-04 Congressional Candidates](#). (Not sure if you're in NC-04? You can quickly check your congressional district here: [Find Your District](#))

The Southern Environmental Law Center (SELC) released a new report titled "Getting It Right: Local Approaches to Data Center Development." The report is meant to offer guidance to local governments and community members for data center development. You can read the report here: https://www.selc.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/SELC-Data-Center-Development-Report-All-0126_F.pdf?blm_aid=2420814

Community Conversation

We are considering several topics. What would you like to learn, share and talk about?

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

Southern Environmental Law Center www.selc.org/

SELC is the largest environmental organization in its region and a valued partner. With roots in its six-state footprint of Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia, it is their mission "defend and protect our air, water, climate, wildlife, and the people who live here. And we win." With a five-star Charity Navigator rating, SELC focuses on:



- Clean Air and Water
- Environmental Justice
- Climate Change
- Land and Wildlife

WHAT WE'RE READING/WATCHING/LISTENING TO

(send us your favorites!)

Plug-in Solar is catching on! Watch PBS (7 minutes) [Small plug-in solar panels gain traction as an affordable way to cut electricity bills](#)

Dividing Lines: How Transportation Infrastructure Reinforces Racial Inequality (suggested by Southern Environmental Law Center). "Our nation's transportation system is crumbling: highways are collapsing, roads are pockmarked, and commuter trains are unreliable. But as acclaimed scholar and ACLU president Deborah Archer warns in *Dividing Lines*, "before we can think about rebuilding and repairing, we must consider the role race has played in transportation infrastructure, from the early twentieth century and into the present day."

Read [In 2025, the US suffered a billion-dollar disaster every 10 days](#) (Grist).

Looking to make 2026 a year of climate action? [Check out SHIFT](#), the individual climate action guide Project Drawdown launched last year with scientist Kimberly Nicholas, Ph.D., to learn more about YOUR climate superpowers.

In community,

Betsy, Lenore, Maura, Meredith and Vickie - organizing for ChathamCAN

P.S. Please forward this email to others who might be interested in being a part of ChathamCAN. Let us know if you'd like for us to remove you from our mailing list.