

Brooks Pierce Presents Seminar on State of Sustainability

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Brooks Pierce law firm presented “The State of Sustainability” on Wednesday, June 22 at 18 Seaboard restaurant in Raleigh.

The event was organized by the Brooks Pierce sustainability practice, which works with clients to solve complex natural resource problems in collaborative, value-adding ways that advance the missions of multiple stakeholders while sustaining the resources. This practice area complements the firm’s extensive and longstanding practice in environmental law and environmental litigation, as well as the firm’s other practice areas.

Bill Ross, Of Counsel at Brooks Pierce and former Secretary of the North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources, moderated a panel of sustainability leaders in three different sectors including Jim Simons, N.C. State Geologist; Henry McKoy, Assistant Secretary of Community Development at the NC Department of Commerce; and Tom Hendrickson, principal developer of Veridea, a mixed-use sustainable development in Apex.

About 50 business and community leaders attended the seminar and heard updates on current sustainability issues surrounding energy, commerce, and land development. Ross noted, “This panel is looking out at a room full of experts passionate about sustainability. At Brooks Pierce, we aim to help you move multiple missions ahead simultaneously in sustainable ways.”

In speaking about the potential natural gas resources uncovered in North Carolina, Simons noted, “We have approval and funding to do a study about the potential social and economic impacts and to determine the feasibility of getting the gas out of the ground in the most environmentally-friendly way possible. If we can’t do it that way, I hope that we recommend that we leave it there until we can.”

McKoy spoke about his role with the N.C. Department of Commerce in helping urban and rural communities plan for growth, encourage economic development and address community needs in a sustainable way. With the state population expected to grow by three million by 2020, “many of the smaller and more rural towns do not have the infrastructure and capacity to sustain that influx.”

McKoy and his division of the department are focused on planning for sustainable growth through infrastructure, housing and job creation. He says, "Not all our citizens buy into 'sustainability' by name, but when you begin discussing water resources, development, waste management, etc., everyone is concerned and interested."

Following McKoy, Hendrickson gave an update on the Veridea project, noting recent approval of the Veridea sustainable development plan by the Town of Apex in May. "People come here to get away from the cul-de-sac capitals and automotive-dependent communities that reign in other parts of the country. In order to prevent becoming just like them, we need to create sustainable, mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented places and develop something different."

Ross concluded the program by challenging all in attendance to, as sustainable architect and author William McDonough advocates, "instill into every project 'cradle-to-cradle' principles so that creations and ideas are begun with multiple uses in mind. Sustainability is a global matter than depends on local action."