

**Climate Change, Energy, and Environment Commission (C2E2)**  
Draft

Summary of September 22, 2021 Meeting  
Virtual Meeting

Members Present: Liliana Duica, Carrie Thompson, Timothy Effio, Jonathan Morgenstein, John Bloom, Joan McIntyre, Kevin Vincent, Stephen D'Alessio, Shawn Norton, Emily Emery, Jonathan Morgenstein, Joshua Griset, Mikaila Milton, Majdi Shomali

Members Absent: Gilbert Campbell  
Guests: Joan Lowry, Elise Bean, Judy Collins

Staff Present: Adam Segel-Moss (DES), Adam Riedel (DES) Demetra McBride (DES), Rich Dooley (DES), Lyndell Core (Parks), Jennifer Fioretti (Parks), Stephen Burr (DES), Charles Njoku (DES),

**1. Public Comment on General Topics**

An Arlington resident provided comments on pesticide drift. The gentleman noted that pesticides impact numerous animals, insects, and people. He noted that pesticide drift can occur especially from fogger application. They can drift as far as 3 miles per application. The Virginia State law gives homeowners protection from pesticide drift but catching and enforcement of the law is cumbersome, inefficient, and stressful. They must be caught in the act. Most homeowners are away from home or don't know it is happening if they are home. If an applicator is caught, a complaint may be made to the Virginia Department of Pesticide Services. The Office is responsive and may take samples. Penalties may be issued, but then another company may be hired.

The attendee asked the C2E2 to advocate to the Board for action on this issue and solutions.

Joan Lowry is the Executive Director of Quiet Clean NOVA. This is a grassroots organization that was started this past year to address gas-powered lawn equipment. Specifically, the group is trying to address gas-powered leaf blowers and lawn equipment that create significant noise pollution, air pollution, and general environmental degradation.

Ms. Lowry asked the Commission to address the gas-powered leaf blowers first. They are the most egregious offenders. Using a leaf blower for 1 hour is the equivalent of driving a Toyota Camry for more than 1,100 miles. The gas leaf blowers use two-stroke engines that are extremely inefficient and polluting.

Ms. Lowry thanked the Commission for pushing for legislative action at the state level to ban gas-powered leaf blowers. Further, Ms. Lowry asked that the

Commission push the County Board to ban all fossil-fuel lawn equipment on County property and consider further action to ban these items in the community.

## 2. Electrification of Lawn Equipment – Parks Presentation and Discussion

Lyndell Core is the Park Service Area 2 Manager for Arlington County Department of Parks and Recreation. He presented on the transition from gas-powered lawn equipment to battery powered equipment.

Lyndell noted that Arlington County Parks has 2,078 acres of open space. That area is detailed in the graphics below:





## FACILITIES



Mr. Core detailed all of the gas and electric lawn equipment that the County owns and operates. This includes the following:

## INVENTORY



The times of year when these items are most needed are in fall. Leaf collection is significant in many areas and the County receives calls from residents to address County leaves blowing into private property. Lyndell noted that these are intensive

concentrated efforts that are mobilized at specific times of year. Each mature oak tree has between 200,000 and 500,000 leaves per year. Gas powered blowers do this work very well, but the County has been using battery equipment for lighter duty efforts.

Leaf blowers are also very active for snow removal as needed for bike trails and walkways at community centers.

The blowers are also used for leveling out safety surfacing and are used in landscaping to keep dirt of walkways and sidewalks. There are approximately 500 beds that are managed by the County.

There are also limbs that need to be trimmed for safety purposes or due to deadfall. The electric chainsaws work well for medium to small tree trimming.

Mr. Core detailed the emissions, pollution, noise, and operating costs associated with gas-powered maintenance equipment. The smaller 2-stroke engines require significant time and money to maintain. Battery equipment doesn't have as many points of failure. Additionally, Lyndell noted that the initial cost of battery equipment is higher but that the cost savings from lower maintenance can offset or be cost positive over time.

Parks staff are considering the capability of the tools, battery charging capacity, and budget as decisions are made. Parks are targeting a full transition to battery powered landscape tools by 2030, or as technology permits.

Joan McIntyre asked what the life-cycle cost of electric versus gas equipment are. Lyndell noted that he doesn't have those hard numbers yet or the return-on-investment at this point.

Carrie Thompson acknowledged the high expectations of residents that Mr. Core raised. She asked that expectations be managed, with some understanding of bike paths and walkways. She asked that staff provide information when immediate leaf removal be requested by neighbors to help residents understand a broader context of what results from their request.

Joan McIntyre asked that the County consider leaving the leaves in more places to support biodiversity and natural habitats in leaf banks. She also noted that the amount of area in turf grass should be studied and transitioned to natural areas that align more clearly with biophilic goals.

Ms. Fioretti noted that the County is currently updating the Forestry and Natural Resources Plan. This is a sub element of the Public Spaces Master Plan. It is very much a topic of discussion and staff hope to put forward the draft plan in the coming months. Staff are also hopeful about the decreased maintenance cost associated with less turf grass and reduced leaf management.

Ms. McIntyre asked about the replacement of contractor equipment, both the timeline and mechanisms. Jennifer noted that the contractual components are 3-5

years in length. Anything that is done will need to be done in the renewal cycles. The current mowing contract is just over \$1 million dollars. It is something that staff will need to look at and want to do this when it come up for renewal.

John Bloom asked why 2030 for full transition to battery equipment. He noted that this is a long goal for County equipment. He understands that lawnmowing equipment and contracts may be more complicated. He asked that the dozen or so leaf blowers that the County has should be switched more expeditiously than the 2030 goal, possibly within the next year or two.

The Commission discussed the draft letter, amended it, and will bring a revised letter forward at the October C2E2 meeting for approval.

Kevin and Carrie will work through the letter with Linda to finalize the draft.

### **3. Curbside Composting and Zero Waste Goal**

Adam Riedel provided an update on the transition to zero waste and the County's Solid Waste Management Plan.

Mr. Riedel noted that all jurisdictions are mandated by the State to have a Solid Waste Plan. These are required 20-year planning documents. The current plan must be in place by July 1, 2024. The legal mandate sets minimums for solid waste handling, contracts, disposal facilities, and what localities must do. This is to ensure that localities don't run out of places to send their solid waste or have gaps in contractual hauling.

There is a small recycling component that mandates that localities have a minimum 25% recycling rate. Arlington's rate is currently approximately 52%.

The state gives localities the abilities to go above and beyond the minimum rates and thresholds for waste management, hauling, and recycling. Arlington intends to do that. In 2015 the Board enacted a zero waste resolution to develop a Zero Waste Plan.

This is the path that the County is moving toward to meet and exceed the state regulations.

The Zero Waste Plan (ZWP) will serve as the Solids Waste Management Plan (SWMP). Specific elements include:

SWMP Compliant with Regulations

- SWMP centered on Zero Waste Resolution

Solid Waste Committee (SWC) as Steering Committee

- Per 2015 Zero Waste Resolution

Technical Working Group & Advisors

- County Staff (Facilities, Libraries, DPR, APS, OSEM)

Public Engagement: Collaborate

- Per 6-Step Guide

Schedule & Cost

- Oct. 2021 – Dec. 2023 (Board adoption 2024)
- \$300k-\$500k

It will take 2-3 years to develop the SWMP. It will leave 17 years to achieve the Board’s Zero Waste resolution.

Equity issues are being considered for these items. Solid waste facility siting is top of mind. Access to programs as well as multifamily access are important for consideration too.

The detailed timeline for this is as follows:

OPTION	ACTIVITIES	CY 2021		CY 2022				CY 2023				CY 2024				CY 2025				CY 2026			
		FY 2022		FY 2023				FY 2024				FY 2025				FY 2026							
		Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2		
Develop Combined SWMP/ZMP																							
	Assemble SWC	X																					
	Hire Consultant		X																				
	Engage Community			X						X	X												
	SWC planning process/Engage community/Consultant Plan Preparation			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X												
	County Board plan review												X										
	County Board adoption													X									
	Submit plan to State														X								

The County will also be looking at integration with other County efforts. These include:

- Greenhouse gas impacts (Community Energy Plan)
- Social and Environmental Justice
- 90% Diversion (County Board Zero Waste Resolution)
- Arlington REGEN (Water Pollution Plant)
- Sustainability Efforts
  - Plastic Bag Tax
  - Styrofoam Ban
  - Plastic Straws

Regional partners include:

- Fairfax Government and Schools Zero Waste by 2030
- Alexandria – 20-year plan to Sustainability Recover Resources
- Montgomery County – Solid Waste Management Plan 2020

Ms. Milton asked about tree recovery and reuse. Specifically, high quality trees that come down should be turned into lumber and low-quality trees should be turned into mulch or seating. She noted that this was to save money and tree resources. Adam noted that trees and brush are mulched in Arlington. Adam thanked the Commissioner for the input.

Linda Delgado asked how much of what the County is trying to achieve is constrained by contracts. Adam noted that contracts are rarely renegotiated until they come up for renewal. This is mainly because once contracts are put out then vendors purchase materials and plan staffing accordingly to meet our legal agreements. Pulling them and revising them mid-stream could cause legal entanglements or fewer bidders in future RFPs.

Jonathan asked about the break-even point of composting related to the curbside program. Mr. Riedel noted that the County pays per ton to have materials deposit at the compost facility. It is a capital-cost intensive and technically difficult process to perform. This requires the County to pay for disposal by the ton.

Adam noted that there have been significant comments from the public about the curbside composting. Messaging is being crafted to help residents move along the learning curve. Staff are encouraging residents to act and will do an waste audit in October to better understand the overall diversion. Tonnage invoices will be able to compare composting amounts as well as Covanta tonnages of hauling.

Carrie asked what the actual cost is to the County and residents and how to answer naysayers about this. The household solid waste rate went down this year even with the addition of composting. The cost of County solid waste hauling is also less than neighboring jurisdictions. Overall, it is about \$1 a month per household to add the composting.

Linda asked if staff looked into the products being made by Freestate Farms. There are other organizations that make higher quality soils from composting. Adam noted that the product is very high quality. Some of the product will be brought back to the County that will be available for residents and the County to use.

The Commission is happy to see that the Zero Waste Plan is moving forward and is aligned with the Community Energy Plan.

#### **4. Meet and Greet with new County Legislative Liaison**

The Commission discussed their Legislative letter. Ilana Creinin is the new County Legislative Liaison. She introduced herself and took questions from the Commission. She noted that electric vehicles (EV) and associated EV charging are important. Green Banks are a hot topic that will be put forward. Stormwater and tree management are an area where multiple jurisdictions are looking to take legislative action as well.

John Bloom asked about the possibility of tackling stretch codes and set floors instead of ceilings related to building energy standards. He noted that this has been helpful in other states and authority like this would be useful for many local jurisdictions.

Ilana noted that something about strengthening the codes will be part of the package. The language needs to be refined, but it will almost certainly remain. Ilana also noted that depending on how the election turns out, it could complicate the approach on issues such as this. Once the election is over she expects to have more information for the Commission.

John Bloom asked for clarity on the process as it relates to presenting the legislative package and how that relates to elections and passage. Ms. Creinin noted that the hearing will be in October and the passage will be in November.

The draft package will be ready immediately before the October 13 Board date. Public comments will be available for the Commission and public.

The Commission thanked Ilana for her time and welcomed her to the County.

## **6. Energy Committee Charter**

The Energy Committee (EC) spent time over the past 8 months writing a Charter. This is the first charter for the group. Stephanie Burns was the lead on this and did a tremendous amount of work to gather input, edits, and finalize the draft. It was approved unanimously at the September Energy Committee meeting to be brought before the C2E2 for approval.

The Commission reviewed, discussed, and approved the EC Charter unanimously.

## **7. Meeting Minutes**

Approved unanimously.

## **8. Old / New Business**

The Commission discussed the CEP Roadmap. John Bloom asked if there was a chance to provide topline input on the draft. There are approximately 43 strategies at this point. Demetra McBride noted that the narrative is still in development. Demetra asked that all comments be aggregated and provided by COB on October 8. Demetra noted that work is still ongoing to prioritize the strategies and develop the narrative.



Joan McIntyre noted that the Commission will be engaging on the FY'23 Budget priorities in the coming weeks. Joan suggested that this would be a good time to ask the Board to declare a climate emergency. There are also some recovery act funds that may be available to address climate change. Taking advantage of these finite funds are important to think about in advance. The Commission will put thoughts together and have a letter for review in October. Joan also noted that the County Board provided guidance to the Manager for a 'whole of government' approach on climate change. Joan noted that the Commission will have to wait and see what the approach is on a climate czar or whole of government approach, but noted that they should draft a letter to provide input once details are available for review.

Tim Effio provided an update on the Site Plan Review Committee (SPRC) process. The C2E2 is trying to detail a checklist to evaluate projects and their sustainability elements in a standardized process. This includes recommendations to the SPRC and Board. Staff have had an opportunity to review the process and checklist. The socializing of the process with staff is complete. The next step is to use the checklist with other groups such as the Planning Commission, Transportation Commission, Parks and Rec Commission, and EcoAction Arlington. The Wendy's SPRC will be the first project to pilot this evaluation with the new checklist.

Meeting ended at 9:12 p.m.