

# Climate Change, Energy, and Environment Commission (C2E2)

Summary of March 27, 2023

## Hybrid Meeting

**Members Present:** Joan McIntyre (Chair), Carrie Thompson (Vice Chair), Mark Greenwood, Cindy Lewin, Rob Sandoli, Jonathan Morgenstein, Majdi Shomali, Mikaila Milton, Kevin Vincent, Eric Gibbs

**Members Present Virtually:** Doug Snoeyenbos,

**Members Absent:** Stephen D'Alessio

**Guests Present In-Person:** None.

**Guests Present Virtually:** Judy Collins (League of Women Voters), Ruth Woollett (Local Sierra Club), Kristin Patterson, John Bloom (former C2E2 Commissioner,

**Staff Present:** Rebecca Moser (DES), Demetra McBride (DES)

### 1. Introductions

### 2. Public Comment

None

### 3. Minutes from February

Meeting minutes for February 2023 were reviewed and unanimously approved.

### 4. Green Building Density Incentive Policy, Demetra McBride

Demetra McBride provided a 75,000 foot overview of the Green Building Density Incentive Policy. The AIRE team will be proposing an update to the program that is very bold and very different. This update will take a lot of time and effort to socialize internally.

Program has been around for about over 20 years, the first of its kind in the Commonwealth of Virginia. It is a way to incentivize high-performing buildings and go beyond state code, which is very constraining, along with a very strict application of Dillon Rule.

Started 7 months ago, reviewing the program's impact. In the last iteration, there were four different tiers of bonus density. At the time, the Board allowed developers to grandfather in current plans under the old plan.

- To date, over 25 million square feet of new commercial and multi-family development has been designed and constructed under the incentive program.
- In 2022, 5 million out of the roughly 12 million square feet of new construction in-progress is under the Green Building Density Program.

The AIRE team will evolve this program and think about bold changes with this update. An elastic and more future changing program. AIRE is happy to share the more specific data/numbers as they become available.

Eric Gibbs – question: what is the draw if it's not for profitability? Answer: Certainly, for bragging rights. But there was an anticipation that all the measures would perform exactly as advertised. Follow up: Is there any anecdotal evidence or any data about resale, so if developers are selling off a project with this designation, is there any value in that in the market? Answer: It is hard to find consistency in the

data due to programmatic changes over the years.

Arlington will think about urban heat island effect and flooding with the next program update.

- **New Proposed Pathways**
  - Alongside an updated version of the traditional, LEED-based GBIP pathway, expand developer choice with:
    - An adaptation model reimagining strategies and criteria -- the **Climate Adaptation Pathway** (developed and benchmarked against other U.S. local jurisdictions and leading-edge practices).
  - An **Existing Buildings Pathway**, with the potential to link to the County's C-PACE program
  - **Pre-launch Training Program**, in advance of any Ordinance/Program updates going live, AIRE Green Building staff are designing an introductory 6-month cycle of developer-architect-contractor workshops to introduce and socialize new options
  
- **Timeline Extension**
  - Due to the newly proposed pathways, as well as revisions to the current program, the update to Arlington County's Green Building Incentive Program will extend past June 2023
  - The AIRE Green Building Staff will continue to convene inter-departmental conversations with County Staff and conversations with external stakeholders and citizens regarding the proposed ideas
  - We anticipate sending a draft of the Board Report to the County Board by the end of the calendar year

Question: Is there a place in the strategy here to reach out to bankers who partake in this program? Banking and real estate partnership. The US is not close to where Europe is.

DC is requiring full electrification of buildings, and perhaps Montgomery County; does it make it easier to do that in Arlington as well? Response: it is unknown at this point.

- Consider: Electrification is more expensive for low-income renters. It is not super equitable. Discussed the split incentive for the owner of the building to begin to electrify. Gas is cheaper (for heating, water heating and cooking) for the equipment and the cost of the energy. This is nation-wide, not just in Northern VA.
- Summary to share with C2E2 the Governor's Energy Plan. He put a lot of investment into nuclear, and now going full steam on gas.

Early May 2023 presentation to department leadership. Afterwards, the County Manager's office. Afterwards, commissions and public engagement. Getting a new policy in place by the end of 2023, tentatively. Depends on how long each engagement session takes. Six-month outreach period is the current staff proposal. \*The training for building owners would be after the public engagement period.

Mark Greenwood: Is there a sense for someone to go into the program with a building, push the envelope and risk to show and be a model for other buildings? Certain categories of companies that will take financial risk, and in return they get recognition. Recognition is an easy (and cost effective) way to promote the program.

## 5. Accelerate

Demetra McBride showcased the AIRE team's first ever edition of *Accelerate*. This report showcases Arlington's climate progress and will be released three times a year or bi-annually. The frequency is still to be determined.

The Commission enjoyed the report and suggested reducing the length in future publications.

## **6. Budget Letter Review**

The Commission reviewed the Budget Letter. More emphasis was placed on the money saved from investing in energy efficiency technologies and AIRE programs, County-wide. The Commission voted and unanimously approved the letter.

## **7. Americana Project Letter Review**

The Commission reviewed the Americana Project letter (1400 Richmond Highway, Arlington, VA 22202) in detail. Cindy Lewin reviewed why she gave the marks she did as it pertained to the SPRC checklist the Commission developed.

Can the Commission reach out to NREL to get answers to the viability and cost of electric heating and space heating here in Arlington?

## **8. SPRC Discussion**

Current approach is frustrating. It is not meant to discuss building efficiency systems early enough in the process, and thus such measures are not incorporated. The Commission spends a lot of time on this. Is there a way for the Commission to be more efficient? Perhaps the Commission reaches out to the Chair each meeting to have this topic discussed at the beginning of each SPRC meeting, and work to standardize this approach.

The Commission discussed asking County staff to collect the information and make firm recommendations at the beginning to use the SPRC checklist. However, the County cannot require private buildings to incorporate energy efficiency measures, but the County can push that the C2E2 Commission would like to see this.

The Commission discussed speaking with the Planning Commission and coordinating with them on this issue. And possibly arranging a joint meeting with the Planning Commission and the Transportation Commission.

## **9. Round Robin – Updates and Comments**

The Commission ran out of time to discuss this agenda item.

Meeting ended: **9:15 p.m.**