

CLIMATE CHANGE, ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT COMMISSION

c/o Department of Environmental Services
2100 Clarendon Blvd., Suite 705
Arlington, VA 22201

December 18, 2024

The Honorable Libby Garvey, Chair
Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Blvd., Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22201

Re: Arlington County Climate Resolution

Dear Chair Garvey:

In light of the serious and credible threat to human life and property posed by climate change, C2E2 calls on the Arlington County Board to immediately 1) adopt a Climate Resolution and 2) direct County staff to prepare a bold and forward-looking Climate Action Plan.

The urgency of the climate crisis calls for an ambitious vision for local leadership, accelerating the scope and pace of County action to reduce harmful carbon emissions and protect future generations from the most threatening effects of a warming planet. The Board's Climate Resolution should therefore adopt challenging, ambitious goals that provide a framework for immediate action for whole-of-government and whole-of-community approaches to addressing the climate crisis. While the current goal of reaching carbon neutrality by 2050 has been an important rallying point, C2E2 believes more aggressive targets, such as a 50 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, a goal of zero emissions in County operations by 2040, and a county-wide net zero by 2040 goal, are achievable if supported by aggressive policy and prioritization.

Within this Climate Resolution, the Board should direct the Assistant County Manager for Climate Policy to prepare a Climate Action Plan. This Plan should build upon and incorporate the next iteration of the County's Community Energy Plan, while not diminishing the crucial importance of energy as it relates to broader climate policy. The Climate Action Plan must be both ambitious and self-executing, and the Board's Climate Resolution should include sufficient direction so as to provide a cross-cutting, County-wide mandate that can be acted on even while the Plan is being developed. Therefore, the Board's Resolution should include:

1. **A vision for local leadership on climate action.** County operations must reflect our residents' values. This means all policies are viewed through an equity and environmental justice lens, and our actions reflect a commitment to reducing both direct and indirect carbon emissions. To lead by example, the County should develop a timeline for phasing out fossil fuel use in government and APS operations and reducing embedded carbon in its purchases, contracts, and operations and reflect those priorities in the annual budget and the Capital Improvement Plan. The County should also develop programs and incentives to encourage residents to take individual and

collective action to support decarbonization efforts and the County's zero-waste goals. In addition, Arlington County should seek to align and connect with other jurisdictions committed to climate action to share best practices and identify synergies.

2. **Plans to ensure a path to a zero-emissions grid.** A robust Climate Resolution should direct staff to engage regulatory bodies and our General Assembly delegation to put Dominion Energy on a path to 100% clean and renewable energy to power the electric grid, as well as authorize the exploration of alternative paths to zero carbon power within the County, such as the creation of Community Choice Aggregation, municipalization, or a microgrid.
3. **Creative solutions to ensure the built environment maintains access to nature and avoids locking in emissions for decades.** All new construction within the County should be zero-emission, equipped for the bidirectional flow of electricity, and constructed to at least the latest LEED Gold standards, with incentives for the reduction of embodied carbon and biophilic design. Outreach and incentive programs should be implemented to assist owners of homes and buildings to reduce energy consumption and phase out onsite combustion of fossil fuels. The Board should also prioritize legislative changes to the Dillon Rule to unlock additional options to drive building decarbonization.
4. **Intelligent, cost-effective transportation planning that encourages transit and EV adoption.** County planning should strive toward transit-oriented, walkable community centers with visible and resilient infrastructure supporting electric vehicle adoption and clear targets for reducing vehicle miles travelled by at least 20 percent by 2030. Simultaneously, the County must identify meaningful investments and policies that expand EV adoption without disadvantaging vulnerable County residents.
5. **Adaptation measures.** In addition to aggressive prevention, a Climate Action Plan should seek to protect vulnerable populations and shared infrastructure from early hazards of global warming. This should include planning to address flooding, heat hazards, and other challenges expected in our area as weather becomes more intense and less predictable.

The debate over whether climate change is occurring is over, and the time for coordinated, impactful local action is now. C2E2 acknowledges that the Board's action on the recommendations above will necessitate the dedication of additional resources and recommends providing the Assistant County Manager with sufficient tools and financial resources to generate actionable intelligence, source contractors to assist in formulating the Climate Action Plan envisioned above, and resourcing the AIRE team sufficiently to implement these targeted measures.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Cindy Lewin, Chair
C2E2