

**Climate Change, Energy and Environment Commission  
c/o Department of Environmental Services  
2100 Clarendon Blvd., Suite 705  
Arlington, VA 22201**

February 23, 2021

Mr. Matt de Ferranti  
Chair  
Arlington County Board  
2100 Clarendon Blvd.  
Arlington, VA 22201

**RE: Proposed Chief Climate Change and Sustainability Officer and Interdepartmental Working Group**

Dear Chair de Ferranti,

As you know, the world currently faces multiple interconnected environmental crises: a climate catastrophe; a sixth extinction; and pervasive pollution of our air, water, food, and soil. Arlington County will not be spared these crises but can play an important role in their mitigation. Addressing these crises requires sustained, coordinated, and bold actions at all levels of government and society. The Climate Change, Energy and Environment Commission (C2E2) believes that now is the time for the County Government to make a strong commitment to successfully fulfill its environmental protection responsibilities. Despite its well-deserved reputation as a leader on environmental sustainability, the County may be lagging on action towards implementing its sustainability and climate change mitigation goals. As an example, the current draft of the Community Energy Plan Implementation Framework (CEPIF) fails to provide a roadmap for achieving goals for carbon neutrality and renewable energy (we will be sending a separate letter that addresses the CEPIF in detail).

These multiple crises require comprehensive and integrated attention to the complex dynamics spanning multiple sectors: community planning, housing and development; transportation; parks and recreation; natural resources; waste management; stormwater management; environmental equity; and schools. As the County Government is currently organized, we believe that climate and sustainability goals often are not fully accepted or internalized by the staff who have the greatest ability to implement them. This situation is at least partly due to the fact that the County's energy and climate change-related work is managed and championed from just one unit--the Arlington Initiative to Rethink Energy (AIRE), which resides relatively low on the government's organizational chart (below an office director, department director, and deputy county manager).

Therefore, C2E2 recommends that the Board direct the County Manager to establish a new position--the Chief Climate Change and Sustainability Officer--within the County Manager's Office (CMO). The official in this position would serve a role equivalent to that of the Chief Race and Equity officer. The Chief Officer would oversee senior-level interdepartmental efforts to develop and coordinate across the entirety of the County Government an agenda for ensuring the implementation of the CEP and other critical sustainability goals. The Chief Officer would:

- ensure that sustainability goals are incorporated into all County plans, programs, and operations;
- coordinate efforts by disparate departments toward common objectives;
- analyze what budgetary and personnel resources are needed and where;
- address projects that span the mandate of multiple offices and departments, which are otherwise difficult for the current chain of command to enact;
- establish measurable targets that are explicitly linked to the County's climate and sustainability goals (including, but not limited to those in the CEP) and track progress toward them;
- help resolve conflicts between County priorities; and
- ensure that County communication efforts for sustainability and climate change are substantially increased.

We recognize the burden that COVID continues to place on County Government resources. However, we believe this pandemic crystalizes to an even greater degree the utility and importance of efficiencies and effectiveness of a government-wide coordination for the fulfillment of the County's goals for carbon neutrality, zero waste, protection of natural resources, biophilia, and other sustainability objectives. Moreover, moving in this direction will position the County to take advantage quickly of new federal and state programs that will advance its goals. Our County residents and the rest of the region are watching us to see how we respond to these crises, so we must act boldly and quickly.

Thank you for your continued efforts toward the common goal of preparing Arlington County today for the significant challenges it faces in the future.

Very respectfully,



Joan McIntyre  
Chair  
Climate Change, Energy and Environment Commission



Timothy Effio  
Vice-Chair  
Climate Change, Energy and Environment Commission

CC: Mark Schwartz, County Manager