

**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 Boulevard, Suite 300  
Arlington, VA 22201

**RE: Comments on 2021 Community Energy Plan Implementation Framework (CEPIF) Update**

Dear Chair de Ferranti:

The Climate Change, Energy and Environment (C2E2) Commission, in consultation with the Energy Committee, expresses our deep concern with the current status of Arlington County's Community Energy Plan (CEP) Implementation Framework (CEPIF) update. The CEP and its CEPIF represent the commitment of the County Board and our community to the mission of confronting and staving off the existential threat of climate change. Arlington needs a significantly more detailed, trackable roadmap for achieving its CEP goals. Were the CEPIF draft to be published in its current state, it would not sufficiently reflect the County Government's (and the Arlington community's) commitment to rise to the challenges of this moment.

We recognize the staff of the Arlington Initiative to Rethink Energy (AIRE) is carrying a significant burden with the development of the CEPIF, in addition to the expectation of the execution of their ongoing AIRE operations, all amid the COVID pandemic. Moreover, we want to be as constructive as possible in our contributions. Thus, we request that the Board seriously consider our recommendation, directing the AIRE staff to restructure this document to create a roadmap that meet the criteria outlined below.

- 1) The CEPIF should clearly articulate how the County will drive toward its topline goal of carbon neutrality.** While not every detail needs to be fleshed out, at a minimum the CEPIF should lay out when and how missing details will be provided.
- 2) The CEPIF requires whole-of-government planning and execution and should provide a plan and timeline for how the County Government and APS will achieve the goals for renewable energy and carbon neutrality.** If other County Government departments and offices only see the CEPIF as an AIRE document, they will review it, if asked, but will not consider it an integral part of their operations. The CEPIF requires buy-in by the entire County Government as a priority. The County clearly faces enormous public health and economic challenges right now due to COVID. However, so does the Biden Administration. Yet, the Biden Administration has not only made these issues a very high priority, they have also interwoven these solutions into the economic recovery plans through a whole-of-government approach.

- 3) **Adopt a holistic approach, prioritizing reaching carbon neutrality.** The current CEPIF structure consists of a list 63 often disjointed “strategies,” with little clear articulation of the ranking system. The CEP’s primary goal is to reach net-zero emissions for the community by 2050. Yet many of the strategies offer no clear description of how they contribute to that goal. The decision to prioritize strategies within the draft CEPIF according to nine equally-weighted criteria, only one of which involves reducing greenhouse gas emissions, seems highly unlikely to identify or prioritize the best strategies for achieving carbon neutrality. We suggest Arlington consider using the same tool Montgomery County, Maryland used, the “C40 Cities Action, Selection, and Prioritization” (ASAP), or something similar.
- 4) **Address cross cutting issues throughout, not just as add-ons.** The CEP requires the County to consider four cross-cutting themes throughout: economic competitiveness, energy equity, energy security, and environmental commitment. However, the current draft does little to address these issues within each “strategy.” As part of the process every program and policy should also be assessed on its contribution to each of these goals.
- 5) **The CEPIF requires metrics, timelines, and tracking mechanisms to be effective.** Ambitious plans such as the CEP require metrics, timelines, and tracking mechanisms to ensure progress is being made toward those goals. The current CEPIF has virtually no quantifiable metrics or timelines.
- 6) **The CEPIF should include an emphasis on sustainability and climate change community outreach and education.** The goals of this should be to significantly increase outreach efforts to our community on how they can directly contribute to the success of our sustainability and climate change goals. Where needed, new messaging efforts should be created to focus on age, gender and race demographics to ensure an all-inclusive messaging campaign.
- 7) **Finally, the CEPIF should be built around achieving carbon neutrality for buildings and transportation through sharp reductions in energy consumption, elimination of fossil fuel use, and shifting to 100 percent renewable electricity.** In particular, strategies and programs should be built around achieving:
  - a) Energy efficiency improvements of at least 38 percent in existing buildings and even greater improvements in new construction and major renovations.
  - b) Electrification of all buildings.
  - c) Sharp reduction in vehicle miles traveled through improvements in public transportation and accelerated adoption of other multimodal transportation options to allow community members to conveniently and affordably meet their transportation needs without reliance on personally-owned cars.
  - d) Conversion to electric transportation.
  - e) Transition to renewable energy through maximizing Arlington’s potential for solar power and supporting initiatives for ensuring community access to renewable energy through the electric grid.

We recognize that the County faces barriers to moving forward aggressively to achieve these goals due to “Dillon-Rule” constraints on local government. We urge the County to make addressing these constraints a top priority in lobbying the State Government in Richmond, particularly on building codes. Furthermore, with the inauguration of a climate-friendly White House and Congress, we recommend that the County identify high-impact projects and programs to set the stage for taking advantage of

additional funding and assistance from the federal government. Regardless, the County can still take a wide range of actions to accelerate progress on achieving the CEP goals. The technology *exists, and is cost-effective today* to move toward these ends.

In the CEP, the Board has set ambitious and laudatory goals. They deserve an implementation plan that demonstrates the commitment of Arlington and the County Board to meeting those goals. We urge the County Board to provide the necessary guidance to the County staff to produce a useful roadmap and advance efforts to address the climate crisis.

We appreciate your serious consideration of these concerns and recommendations.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joan J. McIntyre". The signature is written in a cursive style with a clear, legible font.

Joan McIntyre  
Chair, C2E2

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Timothy Effio". The signature is written in a cursive style with a clear, legible font.

Timothy Effio  
Vice-Chair, C2E2

CC: Mr. Mark Schwartz, County Manager