

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

Summary of February 1, 2021 Meeting
Virtual Meeting

Members Present: Liliana Duica, Carrie Thompson, Timothy Effio, Jonathan Morgenstein, Teresa Leonardo, John Bloom, Joan McIntyre, Kevin Vincent, Stephen D'Alessio, Gabriel Thoumi, Mike Mesmer, Shawn Norton

Takis Karantonis (County Board Member)

Guests: Emily Emory, Gilbert Campbell, Jay Collins, Kendall Ernst,

Staff Present: Adam Segel-Moss (DES), Joan Kelsch (DES), Demetra McBride (DES), Rich Dooley (DES), Helen Reinecke-Wilt (DES)

1. Public Comment on General Topics

None

2. Board Member Takis Karantonis

Mr. Karantonis noted that now is the time to step up on climate issues keeping equity in mind. The Commission has provided critical support to the green building incentive policy and climate issues in general. The Commission's input helps guide the County's direction. Arlington is very serious about addressing the climate crisis before us. We need to press previously reluctant stakeholders to participate and contribute to climate change mitigation efforts. We need to implement the Community Energy Policy (CEP) and we need to address conflicts of interest to decarbonize our community.

Mr. Karantonis said he has had substantial conversations with a few developers about greening projects. He is happy to support staff in this effort as well. Joan McIntyre asked about electrification. Mr. Karantonis noted that developers are still having to explain why electrifying more of their buildings is necessary. We need to keep the sustained pressure on the development community and keep an eye on technology.

Mr. Morgenstein noted that the vaccine is important, and the Federal stimulus package is still underway. There is some feeling that climate and energy should take a back seat because of the COVID crisis at the county level. He noted that President Biden put extra emphasis on climate issues. He asked whether the County Board feels urgency around these climate energy issues. Mr. Karantonis responded that the County must do more to solve all these issues, but it is a balancing act. When asked if the County can do more, he wants people to think about how investment in Arlington will attract the most cutting-edge companies to

Arlington. He noted that it can be abstract, but Arlington is now getting some attention and we want to show that we have a good transportation system, energy efficiency, sustainable built environment, etc. The Commission is critical in pushing for these issues.

Gabriel Thoumi asked if or when the County will issue green bonds. Mr. Karantonis noted that he is an economist by training and is a big fan of green bonds – return on investment is good and he does believe there is a threshold where more capital will be invested in a decarbonized economy. He would also like to see if the County can make better green investments. The County’s legislative priorities included advanced green banks in the region.

Mr. Karantonis thanked the C2E2 for their service, work, and for advancing the critical issues to address climate change. He looks forward to working closely with the Commission to take further action.

3. Community Energy Plan Implementation Framework Update / Discussion

Rich Dooley shared the CEPIF Public Process. The process has been underway for several months and comments are being collected from the public. The current timeline is to bring this before the County Board in late spring.

Jonathan Morgenstein noted that the County wants to get to Carbon Neutral by 2050. The CEPIF is supposed to give structure toward achieving the goals of the CEP passed in 2019. The Energy Committee submitted 4 major concerns in August. The document appeared to be an ad hoc collection of strategies and it was not a coherent roadmap with sufficient detail. The four cross cutting concepts (equity, economic development, energy security, and environment) were sporadically addressed, but not in a coherent way. The process has continued and released the latest CEPIF draft in December. The Energy Committee reviewed and felt that the updated draft did not address any of the issues they articulated.

Issues of concern:

The AIRE team doesn’t have the whole-of-government authority to develop and ensure that the holistic approach needed to achieve the CEP goals. Mr. Morgenstein compared it to the National Security Advisory who coordinates all the departments to ensure coordination and commitment to the policies. The EC will send a letter recommending that the County appoint a staff person in the County Manager’s office who would ensure that all the County departments are coordinating to move toward the Carbon Neutral goal. Because the budget is strained, this could be assigned to one of the existing Deputy County Managers or elevate a staff person to the role.

They are also concerned about the CEPIF process, lack of sufficient detail, and a plan for how the goals will be achieved.

Joan McIntyre brought up the issue of whether this position should just address the climate issues or have broader sustainability responsibilities. She asked if there is consensus about the issues being discussed. She said they will draft letters to send after the next C2E2 meeting.

Carrie Thompson noted she supports the need for someone to integrate County efforts across all sectors of the County. She suggests that the position should be called "Climate Coordinator" to emphasize the Board need. Gabriel Thoumi suggested "Green Growth Coordinate." Joan McIntyre noted that there is a Racial Equity Coordinator in the Manager's Office and climate is at least as important.

John Bloom said he agrees that a Climate Action Coordinator makes the most sense. He recognizes that this is a big ask and he thinks climate is the most important issue, as opposed to overall sustainability. He generally supports the idea and recognizes it could take time. He recommends proposing the idea now to get the conversation started.

Timothy Effio supports a whole-County approach. It would not be a CEP position – it would be a Climate position. He asked whether there is a significant difference between a CEP position vs. a Climate position. Ms. McIntyre responded that climate is the ultimate goal. Mr. Morgenstein noted that it would be the CEP plus other issues that would fall under the purview of this position. Mr. Effio asked if the CEP doesn't cover all climate issues? Mr. Bloom noted that public health, stormwater, flooding, etc. could also be addressed through this position. Ms. Thompson noted that open space and tree cover would also be relevant. Mr. Vincent's concern is about the substance instead of realigning the Manager's staff. The County's response to climate change needs to be more coordinated and focused. Reorganizing the CEPIF and a high-level coordinator together with a whole-of-government approach is needed. Ms. McIntyre emphasized that the whole-of-government approach is key, nothing less will be effective.

The criteria used to prioritize the CEPIF strategies include 9 items and greenhouse gas reduction is only one of them. The Commission feels that 9 items are equally weighted, and he is concerned that more focus should be placed on climate change. Mr. Morgenstein suggests that the other criteria are not as critical.

Ms. McIntyre asked for a couple volunteers to work on a draft letter for the next meeting. The letter should be from C2E2 and should focus on making it more climate focused. Mr. Morgenstein and Ms. Thompson volunteered.

Ms. McIntyre asked for comments specifically on the CEPIF. The CEPIF should be more strategic and differently organized. How to balance having a reasonable roadmap without taking too much time? Implementing key components of the CEPIF is a priority. Mr. Morgenstein has the letter they drafted in August with high

level critiques of the draft CEPIF document. Detailed comments on the strategies are included as well. Ms. McIntyre emphasized the importance of keeping the letter higher level and not including detailed strategy comments to the Board. Prioritizing items to achieve the County's goals. Montgomery County has used a different approach worth looking at. Montgomery's approach quantifies how much GHG reduction is achieved through specific actions.

Mr. Bloom noted the letter should ask for reasonable changes that won't draw the process out unduly. There should be clarity about how we get from the CEPIF to a high-level strategic plan (road map) that outlines the steps needed to get to carbon neutral buildings and transportation and full carbon neutral electricity.

Mr. Bloom noted the Commission could start looking at the all-renewable goal by 2035. There is no plan to get there in the CEPIF. Ms. McIntyre noted that the EV study should be a priority. The Green Building Incentive Policy helps get toward the goal but needs to do more in the future. What areas need more robust planning (ex: Transportation). She recommends addressing mobility as a service approach which moves away from privately owned vehicles.

Mr. Morgenstein said that if there is no roadmap, then he doesn't see the utility of the CEPIF. The process could be changed to focus more on a roadmap. He was expecting more specific details in the CEPIF. At least a 5-year plan that would then be updated. Ms. McIntyre suggested taking the components of the CEPIF and rearranging and ranking into a roadmap. If carbon neutral buildings are the goal, then energy efficiency and electrification needs to be high priorities. Mr. Effio agrees that the CEPIF is not enough. He wants to communicate the overarching points to the Board (need a roadmap, etc.). Ms. Thompson agrees as well. The 9 criteria are too broad and there needs to be a clear overarching direction. The plan needs to be framed and then propose the most effective strategies for achieving the goal.

Demetra McBride said that a roadmap would be accountable and measurable, how do they feel about measuring climate change as GHG reductions. Ms. McIntyre noted that the CEP has high-level goals. It should focus on measurable actions. Mr. Effio suggested that the CEPIF could focus more on smart technologies to manage the electrical load.

Recommended CEPIF Roadmap:

- Building efficiency
- Building electrification
- Transport
- Renewable generation
- Smart technologies
 - Demand
 - EV
 - Generation

The C2E2 discussed revisions and if the CEPIF takes several months to finish and then a roadmap is started, there would be a lot of wasted time.

Ms. McIntyre suggested that the Commission outline the roadmap and what it needs to achieve. Mr. Bloom asked about the timeline for a letter. March seems early to go to the Board. Ms. McBride noted that Rich Dooley has meetings with other commissions in February. She suggests that these meetings go forward. There could be a break at the end of that period to discuss. The Commission should alert the Board that letters are coming and ask to allow the County to elongate the schedule. She wants to leave time to do the letters and give the Board a heads up. She suggests the Commission talk with the Board and the Manager to figure out a schedule.

Ms. McBride suggested sending an email to the Board asking for more time. Mr. Segel-Moss noted that a formal letter needs to be voted on in a public meeting. The letter should be fully framed, even if it isn't drafted in final at the next meeting. Ms. McIntyre will let the Board know that they have serious concerns via email and will be recommending major changes in subsequent letters.

Mr. Bloom asked if a whole-of-government approach is part of the CEPIF; he articulate that it should be. Ms. McIntyre will tie the roadmap and the holistic approach together for the Board message. The Energy Committee will take the lead on drafting the whole-of-government letter.

The C2E2 will continue this work at the next meeting. Letters will be drafted and circulated within the Commission in advance of the February meeting.

4. Work Planning and Priorities Review and Approval

The Commission reviewed, discussed, and amended the 2021 Work Plan. The Plan was approved and shall be sent to the Board.

The Commission will continue to update the Work Plan as new commissioners come aboard and as other to-do items arise.

5. SPRC Discussion

Carrie Thompson and Timothy Effio provided an update on the Site Plans that are coming before the County and community. There are many projects pushing to submit before the new Green Building program goes into effect. They are tracking these projects as well as finding ways to incorporate electrification, high degrees of energy efficiency, electric vehicle charging, and more.

Ms. Thompson provided background on the Site Plan Review Committee. It is a Committee under the Planning Commission. They review and provide input before going before the Transportation Commission, Planning Commission, and ultimately the County Board.

Ms. Thompson created a matrix of projects, where they are in the process, who is on point for each, and hot topics related to each. There should be one or more commission assigned to each project.

There are currently 5 projects that are active. Ms. Thompson detailed each and asked that people continue to share interest.

Mr. Effio noted that one of his goals that he would like to achieve this year is to put together a tool that allows anyone on the commission to assess an SPRC and how far it is away from C2E2s goals for CEP implementation. The second item is a standardized letter to effectively and repeatedly convey C2E2s priorities related to these projects.

Ms. McIntyre also noted that letters to the Board should be the goal for each project. The timing is tight, and commissioners should be thinking in advance for each project as the turnaround time between SPRC or PC meetings and Board action may only be weeks.

Ms. Thompson volunteered to meet with anyone that may be interested and bring in any commissioners to help support with this effort. Ms. McIntyre also noted that there is strong interest to bring in developers to speak with the C2E2 in the coming month.

5. Annual Report

The Commission reviewed, discussed, and amended the 2021 Annual Report. The Annual Report was approved and shall be sent to the Board.

6. Meeting Minutes

Approved unanimously.