

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

Summary of February 22, 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, Mike Mesmer, Shawn Norton

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

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

1. Public Comment on General Topics

None

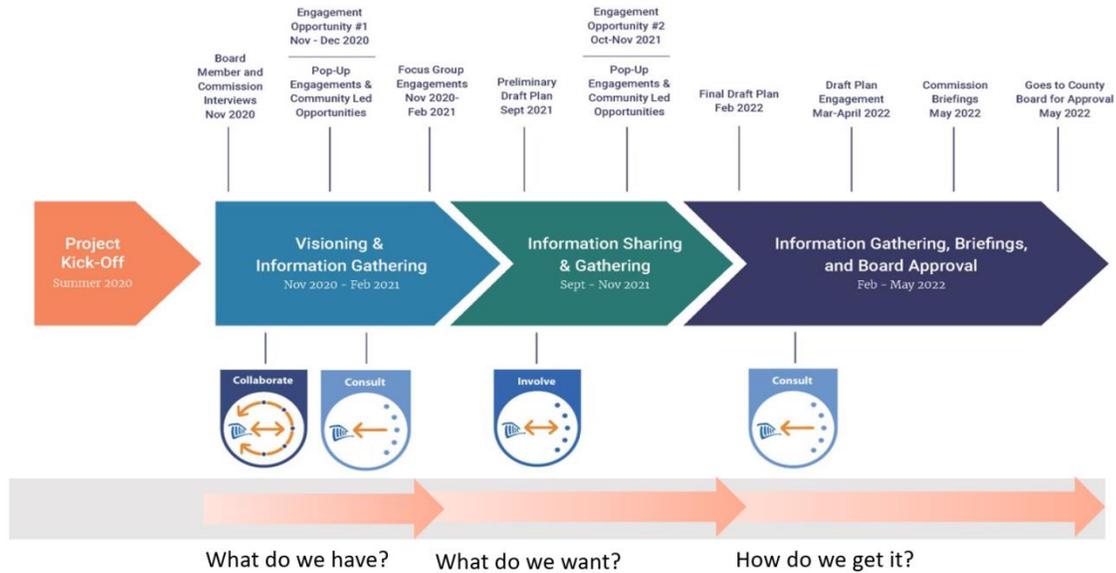
2. Forestry and Natural Resources Master Plan

David Farner provided an update on the Forestry and Natural Resources Master Plan (FNRP). He provided a frame for the FNRP and noted that it is an update to the 2004 Urban Forest Master Plan and the 2010 Natural Resources Management Plan. As a sub-element of the Public Spaces Master Plan, the FNRP will provide recommendations and best practices to enhance, preserve, and protect the County's natural resources.

This is a Department of Parks and Recreation led effort but is a County-wide effort.

Larry Wiseman provided an update on the engagement process. Mr. Wiseman noted that the process is an iterative process where input comes in and changes are made as the project evolves.

The engagement timeline is noted below:



In effect, staff are asking 3 questions.

What do we have?

What do we want?

How do we get it?

This process started in November 2020 and should wrap up in December 2021.

There was an extensive online engagement process that garnered more than 1,000 total responses.

Communications staff are still tagging and analyzing the survey results, several topics have floated to the top in terms of number of responses received, these are:

- Land acquisition
- More planting/ reforestation/ habitat restoration
- Discouraging or limiting development
- Stronger zoning ordinances
- Amenity/ land conversion
- Public education, volunteerism, and outreach
- Accessibility and connectivity—many comments specifically asking for the addition of natural surface multi-use trails that would accommodate bikers

While survey respondents have expressed a variety of opinions on each of these topics, they represent the top issue areas the public is concerned about as they began the plan update.

Mr. Wiseman noted that they examined 6 communities. Four from Virginia, one from Maryland also in the Chesapeake Watershed and Seattle, largely because it's both an innovator in urban forestry management but also in blending natural resources activities into an overall land use strategy.

Their process relied heavily on document review, but they conducted supplementary interviews in each of the six benchmark communities.

Mr. Wiseman detailed benefits and next steps, then posed questions to the Commission for discussion.

What elements of the FNRP can help the County achieve its climate, energy, and environment goals?

Mr. Morgenstein noted that he recommends that all light posts and lighting have their own onsite solar generation.

Ms. McIntyre also raised the issue of Dark Sky lighting and the importance in natural areas especially. She also noted that migratory birds are impacted by light pollution.

Mr. Norton noted that the Pentagon is the largest land holder in Arlington. He raised the issue of reforestation and revegetation as part of the Plan.

Mr. Bloom noted that the Plan can contribute by increasing the tree canopy for areas of low income and high rental percentages. Another area that is more challenging is how the Plan can support Arlington's smart growth plan. Mr. Bloom asked that the plan blend development and nature while supporting smart growth.

Mr. Wiseman asked if the Commission had policy-oriented solutions to land acquisition or restoration.

Ms. McIntyre noted that putting land in conservation trusts in the Plan may be a way of taking action. A tax credit would help move the needle on this.

Other challenges noted were political challenges, Dillon Rule challenges, education, and maintenance of tree planting.

Carrie Thompson noted that a challenge is increasing population, home size growth, and creating missing middle housing types that eliminate green space.

Joan McIntyre agreed to aggregate comments from Commissioners and pass them along to staff.

3. Budget

Demetra McBride provided an update on the budget. The County Manager is using one-time funds to fill a budget gap. The County Manager expects that COVID will be behind us when the next budget cycle comes around again. The commercial sector

was down this year as expected. The residential sector increased in value this year which helped to balance out some losses.

Ms. McBride noted that no staff are being cut from the Rethink Energy team. Staff are being preserved and needed should Federal funds be made available as well as for CEPIF implementation.

Ms. McIntyre clarified that mid-year CEP implementation will be evaluated for further action. Many grants require a 25-50% match. That is something that will need to be evaluated as the year(s) unfolds.

Ms. McBride noted that staff mapped out a scope of work with a contractor to create a CEPIF roadmap for how the CEPIF will be operationalized. That should be complete in the next 4 months.

There are many action items that will carry over from this year through the next CY.

Ms. McBride noted that there is a tremendous amount of work from the Rethink Energy team that continues.

Demetra noted that there are a number of projects in the stormwater pipeline. The County is also moving to implement composting. The plastic bag tax is still in a holding pattern.

Ms. McIntyre noted that she plans to provide public comment at the DES work session on Thursday March 4th from 3-5pm. That is a public meeting and all Commissioners are welcome to attend virtually.

Joan asked the Commissioners how they felt about the budget and asked for input given the current budget constraints. Ms. McIntyre will aggregate budget comments to form a draft a letter for the March 22 meeting. She also noted that there may be interested in additional focus on natural resources.

4. Chief Climate Change and Sustainability Officer and Community Energy Plan Implementation Framework Letters

The Commission reviewed, discussed, and amended two letter to the County Board: Proposed Chief Climate Change and Sustainability Officer and Interdepartmental Working Group, and Comments on the 2021 Community Energy Plan Implementation Framework (CEPIF) Update.

The letters were approved unanimously.

5. Letter on the Courthouse Landmark Project

The Commission discussed a proposed letter on the Courthouse Landmark Project and agreed not to forward the letter to the County Board. Carrie, Jonathan, and Tim will continue to create a checklist and template for assessing development projects

and drafting letters to the Board on future projects up for approval through the SPRC process.

6. Meeting Minutes

Approved unanimously.

7. Old / New Business

Demetra McBride noted the following updates:

- The ART bus study and the scope is being finalized.
- The EV Community Master Plan should be underway shortly.
- The Energy Assurance Plan is starting in the next few weeks.
- Dominion noted that they are no longer interested in contracts similar to the large-scale solar deal that was done with Amazon and Arlington.
- There are some regional and corporate discussions going on regarding large-scale renewable installations.
- The public engagement plan is launching for the LDA 2.0.
- Working with CPOWER – there will be a payment from PMJ through CPOWER to the County for energy efficiency and avoidance of energy use and a larger payment to the waste water treatment facility for putting power into the grid.
- Virginia Tech DOE grant letter of support submitted for a specific DOE grant to utilize 5 government building for demand response software.

Ms. McIntyre noted that she spoke with the Transportation Commission Chair. They discussed the CEPIF. On the issues of transportation and particularly public transportation, and the TC is keen on pushing public transit, multi-modal transit, and a whole-of government approach to reduce VMT and associated carbon emissions.

Meeting ended at 8:49pm