

ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY CONSERVATION COMMISSION
c/o Department of Environmental Services
2100 Clarendon Blvd., Suite 705
Arlington, VA 22201

September 2, 2020

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

Re: E2C2 Input on Arlington's 2021 Energy and Environmental Legislative Priorities

Dear Chair Garvey:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on Arlington's 2020 legislative priorities. The 2021 General Assembly will bring countless opportunities to advance the County's strong interest in energy efficiency, clean energy, stormwater control, a thriving tree canopy, and other vital environmental priorities. In addition to the legislative priorities outlined below, we recommend that the County advocate for priority restoration of funding for environmental programs as the State's revenue recovers from losses during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Recommendations are listed in priority order within two categories: Energy and Environment.

ENERGY

1. Stronger Energy Conservation Code: Support legislation to reform the process of updating the Virginia Energy Conservation Code. The International Energy Conservation Code updates should be adopted promptly without weakening amendments each time a new iteration is adopted by the International Code Council. Localities should be authorized to adopt measures that are more stringent than the statewide code. These approaches are common in other states including Pennsylvania.
2. Advanced Clean Cars Program Standards: Adopt the Advanced Clean Cars Program Standards currently followed by California, 13 other states, and the District of Columbia. These standards will reduce auto emissions (Low Emission Vehicle standards) and require vehicle manufacturers to sell more electric vehicles (Zero Emission Vehicle standards) in Virginia. This approach is crucial to achieving Arlington's CEP transportation goals.
3. Energy Benchmarking: Enact legislation to grant localities authority to require building energy benchmarking for large commercial properties. Benchmarking requires the disclosure of important energy use information. It is a successful practice used by many localities to ensure greater attention by building owners to energy efficiency and reduced GHG emissions.
4. Energy Efficiency and Clean Energy Financing:

- i. Green Bank: Direct the Department of Mines, Minerals, and Energy (DMME) to establish a Green Bank using public and private funds to serve as a catalyst for innovation and implementation of advanced energy efficiency practices, renewable energy deployment, and other environmental programming throughout the Commonwealth. This is a proven approach used by many states and localities including New York, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and Washington, D.C.
 - ii. On-bill Financing: Establish on-bill utility financing for energy efficient upgrades to homes and businesses in Virginia. For most projects, this results in immediate benefits to utility customers as energy bills drop by more than the amortized cost of the project. On-bill repayment of loans provided by third-party lenders would provide similar benefits. More than 110 utilities across the nation already provide on-bill financing.
 - iii. Green Bonds: Direct DMME and the Virginia Resources Authority (VRA) to create a task force to make legislative and administrative recommendations to promote greater use of green bonds by state agencies and local jurisdictions. Green bonds often are able to secure better pricing and lower interest rates.
5. Local Administration of Clean Energy Programs: Direct the State Corporation Commission (SCC) to find it in the public interest for localities to manage appropriate energy efficiency programs using funds available under the Grid Modernization Program.
6. Electric Vehicle Incentives: Adopt a rebate or other incentives for purchase of electric vehicles based on the findings of the study mandated by HB717 to be completed by November 1, 2020.
7. Electric School Buses: Pass legislation to speed the transition of school bus fleets to zero emissions, leveraging bus batteries as a vehicle-to-grid asset when not in use.
8. Energy Storage Safety and Permitting: Revise statewide codes and standards regarding installation of battery, thermal, and mechanical energy storage systems in densely-populated areas, as well as development of model ordinances for localities to consider for zoning and permitting purposes, like the Model Ordinances for Wind and Solar developed by DEQ.
9. Cost-Effective Demand-Side Management Programs: Require Dominion to use existing market penetration of Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) (a.k.a. smart meters) to provide those customers with feedback on energy consumption and suggestions on reducing peak demand, such as through a pilot program in regions with higher levels of AMI deployment. This effort would be particularly beneficial for the Northern Virginia urban region with known transmission and distribution congestion issues.

ENVIRONMENT

1. Stormwater Management: Reinstate funding for the Stormwater Local Assistance Fund (SLAF). These 50-50 matching grants are critical to helping localities better manage polluted run-off.
2. Plastic Pollution and Waste Reduction:
 - i. Reenact HB 533 to ban use of expanded polystyrene food containers by vendors of prepared food. This bill has been passed by the General Assembly and signed by the Governor but must be reenacted in 2021 before it can go into effect.
 - ii. Allow localities to impose a 5-cent tax on paper bags. Paper bags have serious environmental impacts and are not environmentally sound replacements for plastic bags.
 - iii. Expand the authority of local jurisdictions to ban or tax select single-use plastics such as straws that are not recyclable or compostable and for which suitable alternatives exist.
 - iv. Authorize a food waste study as proposed by Senator Barbara Favola (SB486), which called for a study of the sources, scale, and prevention of food waste. This bill was passed in the Senate and continued to 2021 in the House Rules Committee.
3. Urban Forest and Natural Resources: Support legislation to preserve and promote growth of healthy, vibrant urban forests essential to the environment and quality of life by reducing heat island effects, improving water and air quality, reducing stormwater runoff, and combating climate change.
 - i. Tree replacement and conservation ordinances: Support legislation to allow local jurisdictions to adopt more ambitious tree replacement and conservation ordinances than currently permitted by state law.
 - ii. Invasive Plants: Provide local jurisdictions with authority to adopt ordinances to control the commercial sale and planting of invasive plants.
4. Gas-powered Leaf Blowers: Enact legislation that allows localities to ban or heavily regulate the use of gas-powered leaf blowers and other lawn equipment within their jurisdictions. Gas-powered lawn equipment accounts for 5 percent of GHG emissions in the United States, affects air quality, and is a major source of noise pollution.

We appreciate your consideration of these recommendations. We are prepared to answer questions and provide additional information regarding any of these proposals.

Respectfully,



John Bloom, Chair
Environment and Energy Conservation Commission

cc: Arlington County Board
Patricia Carroll