

**CLIMATE CHANGE, ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT COMMISSION**

**c/o Department of Environmental Services  
2100 Clarendon Blvd., Suite 705  
Arlington, VA 22201**

January 24, 2023

Honorable Christian Dorsey, Chair  
Arlington County Board  
2100 Clarendon Blvd., Suite 300  
Arlington, VA 22201

Honorable Reid Goldstein  
School Board Office  
Syphax Education Center  
2110 Washington Blvd.  
Arlington, Virginia 22204  
Re: Arlington Career Center

Dear Chairs Dorsey and Goldstein,

The new Arlington Career Center should be built based on the principles of climate awareness and carbon neutrality. The climate crisis is real and time is of the essence if we are to meet Arlington's commitment to a county-wide transition to clean energy and carbon neutrality. The success of Arlington's Community Energy Plan (CEP) depends, in large measure, on the County's resolve in ensuring that all buildings are at least carbon zero-ready. In practical terms that means three things for every new and renovated building: Make it highly efficient; make it 100% electric; and, as soon as possible, make the electricity renewable.

C2E2 urges the School Board to reverse the staff decision to use a fossil fuel heating system, which would lock in greenhouse gas emissions for more than a decade. This decision also violates the language and intent of specific Guidance provided by the County Board regarding fossil fuel building systems in new public facilities. The operative part of that Guidance states: "The default policy of the County is to use high efficiency electric heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems, hot water systems, and appliances, in County owned facilities, when existing building systems planned for replacement or part of new facility construction projects, where use of such systems is feasible."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> FY 2023 – 2032 Capital Improvement Plan County Board Guidance, available online at <https://www.arlingtonva.us/files/sharedassets/public/budget/documents/cip-webpage/1.-cip-final/overview/5.-fy23-32-guidance- -final- -7.19.22.pdf>.

C2E2 also encourages APS to strive for excellence in sustainability for this school by seeking to reduce embodied carbon in building materials, optimizing energy efficiency, maximizing rooftop solar, and providing sufficient charging infrastructure to support the transition to electric vehicles. The Career Center should inspire students who hope to work in jobs in the new green economy by showcasing building systems of the future, with technologies available.

C2E2 is also concerned with the lack of transparency in making this decision. Throughout the public facilities review process, staff has been vague about the sustainability plans for this project and details remain unclear. The decision to use gas-fired boilers was not disclosed through this process but instead shared late in the game, in December, with C2E2's Energy Committee. This short circuits community engagement in important County decisions.

Arlington Public Schools is already a national leader in building net zero schools—Fleet, Cardinal, and Discovery—that align with the County's goal for carbon neutrality as part of the Community Energy Plan and demonstrate APS's commitment to a sustainable future for their students. We urge the School Board and the County Board to make the principles embedded in these buildings the default for all APS and County new construction and retrofits. The future of our students and community depend on such actions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joan J. McIntyre". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and "M".

Joan McIntyre

Chair, Climate Change, Energy and Environment Commission