

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

December 18, 2024

**TO:** Libby Garvey, Chair, Arlington County Board

**FROM:** Cindy Lewin, Chair, Climate Change, Energy and Environment Commission

**SUBJECT:** Climate Change, Energy and Environment Commission 2024 Annual Report

The Climate Change, Energy and Environment Commission (C2E2) appreciates the opportunity to present a review of its 2024 activities and actions. In addition to recognizing our own members and members of the Energy Committee for contributing their time and expertise on a volunteer basis, we would like to thank Takis Karantonis and Susan Cunningham, each of whom served as Board liaison to C2E2 for part of the year and both of whom have been extremely helpful and insightful.

**I. Major Accomplishments**

- Whole of Government/Whole of Community/Vision 2025 - C2E2 continued to advance a “whole of government and whole of community” approach to addressing the climate crisis and ensuring a rapid and equitable transition to a sustainable and carbon neutral community by weighing in on the FY2025 budget, the 2026-2034 Capital Improvement Plan, and the County’s legislative priorities and by submitting a detailed proposal for the Vision 2050 initiative, emphasizing actions that must be taken in the next 2-5 years.
- Green Building Incentive Policy - C2E2 brought its expertise to bear to suggest numerous ways to improve the proposed Green Building Incentive Policy (GBIP) to advance the County’s goals while working to ensure it is attractive enough to draw developer and building owner participation. We look forward to working further with the Board and staff on the GBIP in 2025, which we believe can be an incredibly important initiative to move the County forward on its climate change goals.
- Innovation – C2E2 and the Energy Committee sought innovative ideas from outside our jurisdiction and worked to educate ourselves and County staff. Our many speakers included representatives from Redbrick, a developer building a one million square foot green development in DC, and Turner Construction, who educated us on the key role of a construction company in creating a sustainable building as well as the low added cost of green construction when planned for from the start. On environmental justice and equity, we hosted the environmental justice coordinator from the Virginia Department

of Environmental Quality, and on energy efficiency, we heard from a representative of Virginia Clean Energy on Community Choice Aggregation.

- Sustainable Development - Through our consistent participation in the site plan review process for private sector projects and continued innovative use of a standardized checklist for evaluation, C2E2 highlighted for the Planning Commission and for the County Board the strengths and weaknesses of building designs in meeting the County carbon neutrality and other sustainability goals.
- Advancing Zero Waste Goals - C2E2 built on its ongoing engagement during the development of the updated Solid Waste Plan/Zero Waste plan, highlighting the climate and environmental impact of our waste streams. We encouraged greater emphasis on reduce and reuse strategies over “recycling right,” the inclusion of actions to address diversion of construction and demolition waste, and the improvement of recycling in multi-family buildings.
- Solar Tax Exemption Program - With thanks to our colleagues on the Energy Committee of C2E2, we pushed hard for passage and implementation of a real property tax exemption for the cost of purchasing and installing certified solar energy equipment. The issues we raised, which were appropriately addressed by County staff, made the program work more smoothly from the start.

## II. Key Takeaways from Our Work

Throughout the course of our work this year, C2E2 emphasized and continues to emphasize consistent themes:

- **“Whole of government/whole of community” approach**
  - View all government decisions, from strategic initiatives to procurement, through the climate lens, with appropriate education to bring the community along
  - Lead the way with County facilities, including APS, at zero GHG emissions
- **Green construction and improved GBIP**
  - Use the GBIP to leverage the available incentives creatively to increase building owner and developer participation in order to accelerate decarbonization of new and existing buildings, given that buildings are the source of 58% of County greenhouse gas emissions (GHG)
  - In the SPRC process, consider sustainability much earlier, preferably in the applicants’ initial submissions before the SPRC starts
  - Reduce the embodied carbon in construction materials and divert materials for reuse or recycling during construction demolition for new buildings and renovation of existing buildings
  - Design buildings to minimize heat absorption and urban heat island impacts, including using building envelope materials with low heat conductivity and reflective coatings
- **Equity**
  - Provide enhanced public transit in underserved neighborhoods
  - Improve tree canopy, biophilia and parks in underserved areas

- o Provide affordable housing multifamily residential owners and residents access to technical and financial assistance so they are not left behind in the clean energy transition
- **Public education and outreach**
  - o Engage in outreach on actions individual residents and small businesses can take on energy efficiency and to combat climate change, combined with technical assistance, incentives, and financing
  - o Update the APS K-12 curriculum, which currently barely touches on climate change
  - o Reduce GHG emissions from APS operations
- **Climate resilience**
  - o Enhance rooftop solar, microgrids, and battery storage, possibly through battery-powered buses that can serve as flexible giant roving batteries
  - o Improve stormwater management to prepare for more violent storms
- **Energy efficient transportation**
  - o Continue expanding electric vehicle charging infrastructure
  - o Enhance dedicated bike lanes, bike storage, and well-maintained sidewalks
  - o Use vans and similar microtransit options and transit on demand apps to go the “last mile”
- **Green ecosystems**
  - o Meet the County’s tree canopy goals and require native biophilia
  - o Utilize an appropriate deer management strategy, as the County has planned
  - o Follow Dark Sky standards for both human and wildlife livability
  - o Amplify bird-friendly glass requirements
- **Zero waste**
  - o Focus policies and programs on “reduce and reuse” strategies that can result in less overall waste generated per capita
  - o Reduce overall food waste and divert any organic waste to composting
  - o Ensure effective recycling, especially in multifamily buildings and for construction and demolition waste

Many of these points are captured in our Vision 2050 submission, attached here for convenience, while also reflected in other letters we submitted to the County Board this year.

### **III. Letters from C2E2 to the County Board in 2024**

We provided 14 letters to the County Board on a variety of issues this year:

- o Environmental Issues that Arose in 2024
  - APS Lack of Curriculum on Climate Change
  - Call for a Climate Change Resolution
  - Columbia Pike Form-Based Code
  - Deer Management Proposal
  - Green Building Incentive Policy
  - Solar Tax Exemption
  - Visioning 2050

- o SPRCs
  - Crystal House 7 and 8
  - Crystal Block W
  - Goodwill
  - Barcroft Apartments – because Barcroft was subject to the Columbia Pike form-based code, it did not go through the SPRC process, so we arranged for a representative of Jair Lynch to present to C2E2 about both the impressive sustainability approaches and the obstacles to sustainability in this project
- o Recurring Annual Topics
  - FY25 Budget
  - Capital Improvement Plan
  - Legislative Priorities
  -

We also completed the Transportation Survey for Commissions and provided it to DES Transportation as part of the preparation for the new Master Transportation Plan, which we will continue to participate in during 2025.

#### **IV. Representatives from C2E2 to Other County Groups**

Commissioners served as C2E2 representatives to the following County advisory commissions, committees, or other groups:

- Energy Committee of C2E2
- Solid Waste Committee of C2E2
- Natural Resources Joint Advisory Group
- Forestry and Natural Resources Commission
- Transportation Commission
- Public Facilities Review Commission
- BioSolids Advisory Committee
- Various Site Plan Review Committees and Long Range Planning Commissions
- Chesapeake Bay Ordinance Review Committee
- Public Spaces Master Plan Update Advisory Committee

C2E2 commissioners also met regularly with representatives of environmental advocacy groups to stay apprised of their priorities and insights, including the Sierra Club, EcoAction Arlington, and the Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions. While the role of these groups is somewhat different from C2E2's role as an advisory commission to the Board, connectivity and collaboration with them is valuable in informing the advice we give to the Board and in continuing to expose C2E2 to new ideas and perspectives. For similar reasons, we also met with our counterparts in other nearby jurisdictions to discuss regional approaches to problems and share ideas.

The Climate Change, Energy, and Environment Commission will continue to prioritize comprehensive action and environmental justice as it explores options and opportunities for

addressing climate change and other environmental challenges. In 2025, we expect our work to again encompass a range of issues on green building construction, energy, transportation, natural resources, and climate resilience, including stormwater management. For more details, see our 2025 Priorities and Work Plan, which is attached. We look forward to working with you and your colleagues while continuing the Commission's work and taking on new environment and energy issues that face Arlington in 2025.

Respectfully,



Cindy Lewin  
Chair, Climate Change, Energy and Environment Commission

Attachments: Visioning 2050 Submission from C2E2  
2025 C2E2 Work Plan