ARLINGTON VIRGINIA

Climate Change, Energy and Environment Commission

(C2E2)

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C2E2 Website

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April 1, 2026

The Honorable Matt de Ferranti
Chair, Arlington County Board
Ellen M. Bozman Government Center
2100 Clarendon Blvd, Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22201

RE: Proposed FY 2027 Budget

Dear Chair de Ferranti and members of the County Board:

This letter concerns the County Budget for fiscal year 2027 that has been proposed by the County Manager. We were surprised and concerned that the proposed budget would reduce, rather than increase, the County's staffing of efforts to fight the threat of climate change. We ask that staffing be increased as detailed below. Additionally, we ask that the budget question framework set forth in the Climate Action Resolution for the FY 2027 budget be utilized and we encourage the use of the Climate Action Fund for direct financial incentives.

In February of 2025, the Board passed a Climate Action Resolution. That Resolution emphasized the threat posed by climate change, pointed out that Arlington is already experiencing the effects of climate change, and stated that the County strives to become a national leader in responding to the climate change challenge. The Resolution also stated that the County would endeavor to "Develop questions to be used on the Operating Budget process, beginning in Fiscal year 2027, to support sustainability and climate-related decision-making."

In a letter of November 26, 2025, this Commission urged the Board to increase the number of County staff dedicated to addressing climate change, which at that time totaled nine. Specifically, we suggested adding two staff positions to the AIRE (Arlington Initiative to Rethink Energy) team, which implements climate policy for the County. We pointed out that increasing the number of County staff dedicated to addressing climate change is a simple and obvious way for the County to begin to take action to implement the goals set forth in the Climate Action Resolution. We also recommended that the County allocate funds directly to incentives to address the climate change threat.

The County Manager has now submitted a proposed budget for FY 2027, which would spend approximately $1.69 billion. The proposal states that the County employs nearly 4,000 staff. However, the proposed FY 2027 budget does not allocate any funds directly to incentives to fight climate change. The proposed 2027 budget also does not increase the number of County staff dedicated to fighting climate change. In fact, just before the proposed budget was released, one member of the AIRE team was transferred off the team. The County manager's proposed 2027 budget would also eliminate another currently unfilled position on the AIRE team, and eliminate another currently unfilled position in the Climate Policy Office. The proposed budget also contains no indication that any questions were ever developed to be used in the 2027 budget process "to support sustainability and climate-related decision-making."

Rather than increasing the County's staffing of efforts to address the threat of climate change, as our letter of November 26 recommended, the County Manager is instead proposing to reduce the staffing of those efforts. At a time when the federal government is reducing its efforts to address climate change for political reasons, it is particularly important that other levels of government step up their efforts.

We also note that the proposed budget does not include any plans to use the Climate Action Fund. We suggest that part of the Fund be used for direct financial incentives to County residents and businesses to fight climate change. We note that Alexandria City has at least three separate programs that provide direct financial incentives to residents.

Current projections are that in 30 years, global temperatures will be more than 2 degrees Celsius over pre-industrial levels. This additional heat will greatly increase the ongoing disruptions to global climate patterns. We should all ask ourselves whether in 30 years our children and grandchildren will think that we have done enough to fight climate change. Arlington County should be increasing its efforts to fight climate change, rather than reducing them. If we invest appropriately, Arlington can become a more affordable and healthier place to live and work, which will further equity.

<u>Our Recommendations</u>

We ask the Board to direct the County Manager to revise the proposed 2027 budget to retain the position in the Office of Climate Policy that he has proposed for elimination, and to add at least two positions to the AIRE team. The Board should also direct the County Manager to, without delay, develop questions to support sustainability and climate-related decision-making to be used in the budget process, as set forth in the Board's Climate Action Resolution of February 2025.

Finally, the Board should consider using the Climate Action Fund to provide direct financial incentives for County businesses and residents to encourage them to take actions to fight the climate change threat. We look forward to learning of the planned uses for the Climate Action Fund.

We would be happy to discuss these matters in more detail with you or your staff at your convenience.

Sincerely,

Cindy Lewin

Cindy Lewin
Chair, Climate Change, Energy, and Environment Commission

cc: Mason Kushnir, County Board Clerk
Mark Schwartz, County Manager
Jennifer Fioretti, Deputy County Manager for Climate Policy
Jason Papacosma, Bureau Chief, Office of Sustainability and Environmental Management
Stephen Burr, AIRE Program Manager