

## Climate Change, Energy, and Environment Commission (C2E2)

Summary of April 15, 2024

### Hybrid meeting

**Members Present:** Joan McIntyre, chair; Cindy Lewin, Mikaila Milton, David Evans, Doug Snoeyenbos, Rob Sandoli, Eric Gibbs, Joe Trivette, Kevin Vincent

**Members Virtual:** Majdi Shomali, Elizabeth Whitney

**Members Absent:** Jonathan Morgenstein, Mark Greenwood

**Guests Present:** Laura Watchman, Bill Eger, two students from Arlington high schools, Trevor Montano

**Guests Virtually:** Sonia Jackson (student), Rich Dooley (AIRE), Elenor Hodges, Vicky Kiechel, Paul Roman

**Staff Present:** Jenna Peabody (DES-AIRE), Demetra McBride (DES-OSEM)

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### **Public comment**

None.

### **Environmental priorities of Arlington High School students**

Arlington Students for Climate Action presented on Arlington Clothing Swap, including a collection and event. They presented on composting, e-waste and the importance of plant-based food. They have an ECOS group which meets after school. They have a Trash pick up team and tend to the school garden. On behalf of Arlington youth, Sonia urged the County to take the strongest actions to combat the climate crisis. Actions include: electric buses, installing more solar panels, finding places to offer more vegetarian options, helping to subsidize residents who choose a renewable energy electric subscription from Dominion, composting education and action. She attends Flint Hill School and recently led the Environmental Club at Bon Air Park in Arlington to remove ivy from trees to save them. Concluded with open discussion and support for Arlington high school students and their environmental volunteering.

### **Bill Eger update**

Bill discussed updates on the policy officer position, provided updates on recent activities, discussed C2E2 passing the 2024 work plan and opened the conversation for opportunities for partnership, collaboration and help, and then had a general question and answer discussion. Elizabeth Whitney asked about the procurement policy. Bill will get back to her with an answer.

## **Continuing Discussions on the GBIP**

Demetra McBride, Paul Roman and Vicky Kiechel discussed the GBIP update. They covered the following topic areas; ILFI, PHIUS and LEED, affordable housing, and energy efficiency. A question was asked on what is the financial incentive. Paul noted that within the proposal was an added financial incentive. More baseline requirements are being added.

Paul and Vicki conducted exhaustive research and engaged with principals responsible for various programs across three jurisdictions. Some of these programs had been in place since the early 2000s but had seen minimal uptake. The challenge lay in promoting the program effectively. For instance, offering a fixed percentage tax break (e.g., 20% or 25%) on existing buildings with lower values didn't align with the value of new construction. The rigidity of this approach didn't make sense.

While tax breaks had worked successfully in Maryland (especially in Montgomery County), Virginia law limited flexibility in this regard. The team explored alternative financial incentives and considered literature reviews and benchmarking. They found that some jurisdictions used tax variables, while others offered cash incentives. The program, designed to be a five-year pilot, might include caps on the number of buildings in each category. The goal was to predict costs more accurately.

Vicky and Paul's extensive research improved the performance of our program. Currently, we're hearing that commercial building applications are somewhat decreasing, with more interest in multifamily buildings. Additionally, there's a trend of "2 plus 5" structures—two mixed-use floors on the ground level and five stories of multifamily above. The discussion centered around the need for education and outreach related to financial incentives for developers. People often lack awareness of available incentives and how to apply for them. The team considered creating an educational program akin to TED talks, targeting contractors, designers, architects, building owners, and developers. The goal was to address ambiguities and unfamiliarity associated with financial incentives.

In pursuit of funding, the team applied for a grant called RECI (Resilient and Efficient Codes Implementation). However, local governments were ineligible applicants, so they sought a responsible state-level entity. After navigating challenges, including contacting the Department of Housing and Community Development, they filed a concept paper. The grant would cover single-family site plan review, code enforcement, and potentially an education module.

Additionally, the team explored the possibility of subsidizing program costs through the CPRG (Capital Projects Review Group). While awaiting approvals, they considered the differences in outcomes between IFLI (International Living Futures Institute) and PHIUS Zero. The focus remained on promoting awareness and understanding of available incentives .

Paul Roman discussed two options for achieving higher bonus density: the traditional pathway with LEED Platinum Certification, or ILFI Zero Carbon or Zero Energy. The ILFI options require third-party verification and are based on actual energy performance metrics rather than

predictive modeling. The ILFI certification is stringent in terms of energy requirements and also considers embodied carbon accountability.

Comparing the two options:

- **ILFI Zero Carbon:** It emphasizes actual energy performance and avoids on-site combustion. It specifically targets embodied carbon.
- **PHIUS Zero:** While also stringent, PHIUS Zero primarily emphasizes passive design and energy avoidance. It doesn't specifically target embodied carbon as rigorously as ILFI Zero Carbon. During climate-related disasters, PHIUS buildings tend to hold up better than code-built or LEED-certified structures.

Both ILFI and PHIUS are among the most stringent energy standards available. They surpass alternatives like LEED, Green Globes, and NGBS EarthCraft.

With respect to GBIP, Doug Snoeyenboes is very concerned about the absence of a plan for funding the incentives.

Elizabeth K. Whitney expressed concerns similar to Doug's regarding the tension between adding desired elements to the green building incentive policy and the relatively straightforward option of contributing to the Affordable Housing Fund. Elizabeth wondered if increasing the fee for the fund might make the incentive pathways more appealing. Additionally, she asked whether developers had provided feedback on the attractiveness of these pathways compared to the fund.

Paul initiated discussions with NAIOP (National Association of Industrial and Office Properties) about the proposed changes. NAIOP's initial reaction was that the proposal was onerous and lacked sufficient incentives. However, given the radical departure from past policies, the board would consider various voices and input. While the proposal faced challenges, it was essential to engage in further discussions and address questions raised by developers. The program's stringency and unique requirements necessitated careful consideration and cost-benefit analysis.

The conversation revolved around balancing affordable housing and sustainability incentives. The proposal included an SPRC (Site Plan Review Committee) accelerated process that would address both aspects. The idea was to define baseline GBIP (Green Building Incentive Policy) requirements at a .35 FAR (Floor Area Ratio) and avoid the higher FAR options. These higher options were comparable to the PHIUS.

Regarding the trend or pathway, the discussion touched on embodied carbon considerations beyond what PHIUS currently covers. Existing buildings were also part of the conversation. While a 10% energy efficiency improvement seemed reasonable for most buildings, there was a suggestion to collapse adaptive reuse and extensive renovations into a single category with equivalent incentives to new construction.

The need for a robust education program emerged—one that informed developers about available funding and provided calculators to estimate savings and benefits. Electrification was also discussed as a potential mandatory aspect for asset incentives. The focus remained on

addressing core priorities, including equity and carbon reduction, while continuing the conversation.

**Review Summaries: January, February, March**

All approved unanimously.

**Review and approve FY25 budget letter to Board**

All approved unanimously.

**Updates**

Put procurement on the list of priorities. Cindy will be Chair. Joan will be Vice Chair. AIRE will be tabling at Earth Day Festival - Langston Boulevard.