

# Arlington County C2E2 Energy Committee

## Meeting Summary

Wednesday, January 12, 2022

### Agenda Items

#### 1. Greetings and introductions (7:30)

- PRESENT: Claire N., Scott D., Doug S., Greg B., John B., Kevin V., Jonathan M., Rick K., Scott S., Stephanie B., Stephanie G., Tim E., Vince P.
- Kip Malinosky has applied to be an EC member. Jonathan will bring forward his application to the C2E2 for consideration.

#### 2. Review/approve agenda and December meeting summary (7:35)

- The January meeting agenda and the December meeting summary were both approved

#### 3. Public Comment on General Topics (7:40)

- Kip Malinosky noted his interest in an Energy Committee (EC) member and provided his background.
- Jonathan and Claire explained the proposed 2022 EC meeting schedule.
  - Regarding the 2022 meeting schedule, Scott Sklar has Wednesday night Civic Association meetings, and he teaches at night, so he might not be able to make it to some of the evening EC meetings being proposed.
  - John Bloom noted how night meetings led to reduced EC meeting attendance in the past, and that EC meeting attendance picked up once we moved to AM meetings.

#### 4. State legislative issues and Solar PV issues (7:40)

Demetra provided an update on State and solar:

- There's a wave of legislation to take apart the VCEA and take us out of RGGI
- The County's Legislative Liaison has been in frequent conversations with Demetra
- There are also market disruptions in the solar industry
  - The Lubber Run Community Center solar project / PPA is being affected by the disruptions. The vendor under contract (Suntribe) is stating that tariffs on Chinese PV modules that were supposed to expire (according to the vendor) relied on those tariffs to expire. [However, the issue is being debated](#) within the U.S. International Trade Commission and elsewhere
  - There are new trade sanctions being levied on the vendor's primary supplier; related to slave labor issues.
  - Suntribe is proposing the County provide Suntribe the RECs to allow Suntribe to proceed.
    - We do not need to accept any proposals they submit as contract amendments
  - Vince suggests to not give a timeline accommodation, so the County will have to either choose a different vendor, change the costs, etc. The industry issues are not slated to go away within the next six months, at earliest.
  - Scott Sklar noted some suppliers have warehouses full of solar PV panels. The question is about the eventual costs of those panels to Suntribe.

- Demetra noted that on-site PPA solar is a small percentage of our RE goals for County operations by 2025.
- Relatedly, the AIRE Team is also planning on putting out by the end of February a Master RFP to give us access to contractors for energy services such as we have been doing for the past few years under our Energy Services Contract.
- There is also the option of pursuing CCAs.
- Demetra will be available at future EC meetings to answer questions, and she will provide overall AIRE Team activity updates at the monthly C2E2 meetings.

**5. Arlington County biosolids upgrade continued discussion (7:55) – Claire Noakes**

**a. Letter to County Manager/Board (via C2E2) – Claire Noakes**

- Recap: There is a current proposal and a consultants report
  - The consultants analyzed three possible courses of action for local Water Pollution Control Plant (WPCP). Bottom line issues are what to do with biosolids produced and how to use those resources locally. Currently, they are shipped offsite and used on land. The three options under consideration include:
    1. Process solids in a minimal way to generate heat that can be re-used for WPCP heat needs. This also produces biogases that would be flared / not used.
    2. Do more mechanically to produce electricity and heat. Both heat and electricity could be used by the WPCP. That biogas refinement is still not a high-quality biogas, but WPCP could still use it.
    3. Producing renewable natural gas that would be sold on the market, e.g., sold to Washington Gas (WGL). This would require a more expensive system to meet higher quality standards to inject the gas into the WGL system, or to be used in ART buses.
  - The consultant (who is also willing to build these facilities) concluded that option #3 is preferred. It is also the most expensive in terms of capital outlay; it is also the highest non-economic score, lowest carbon footprint.
  - In response, Claire expressed concerns at previous EC meetings:
    - The report does not provide an apples to apples comparison for all 3 options. It also does not take into account emissions being created offsite; the consultants only look at onsite emissions
    - Failed to take market risk into account. Transportation-specific subsidies are being relied on in the analysis, whose pricing could vary widely.
    - They were silent on the future biogas prices. Supply of renewable biogas is very interesting to many, so the supply of that type of gas could possibly outpace demand.
    - Does not address adherence to the CEP; Option #2 addresses resiliency, for instance.
  - In December, the C2E2 asked staff a lot of questions.
  - What about adding an option #4, that is, do not further refine the solids? One goal is to talk about that option today. If we conclude option #2 is not superior to Option #4, then we would update our draft letter and send that to C2E2 for consideration.
  - Option #4 discussion
    - Claire did research on the biosolids issue.
    - In the biosolids are in an anaerobic environment (which would happen in options 1-3) then methane would be produced. Option #4 would not create methane.
    - Scott S. – it is odd that the most expensive capital option is the best long-term cost option.
    - John B. – Sees serious drawbacks from all of the options. He and Claire are waiting for answers from staff from the questions raised and sent to staff per the C2E2

meeting. Also, John noted that staff told him the consultant working on the report is not eligible to pursue the build-out of the eventual project that is chosen.

- **ACTION:** Demetra will check to see if a Design-Build contract is being used for the current consultant and let the EC know if the current consultant is eligible to build the eventually approved option.
- The WPCP Engineers are working on answering the C2E2 questions, with a goal of getting those answers to C2E2 a week in advance of the C2E2 meeting (Jan 17).
  - Without those answers, the EC has limited information to provide input to C2E2.
  - C2E2 was expecting answers back by December.
- Kevin V. – we should count methane and carbon dioxide emissions from trucking. It is critical that we do not export our emissions and make others suffer from those offsite emissions.
- Claire N. asked Kevin V. about electric vehicle options for heavy-duty vehicles to truck the biosolids offsite (Option #4). Kevin V. noted distance was key; only short-term routes are viable as of now.
- Tim E. – The EC can still provide an update to the C2E2 based on today’s conversation. There seems to be a conflation of issues:
  - How we think the solids plan upgrade should be done regarding emissions?
  - What do we think the County should do with the biosolids?
    - These should be separate issues to be addressed by the EC/C2E2.
  - Questions the scalability of creating renewable natural gas on this small scale - doesn’t seem to make sense – makes more sense to do this on a larger scale.
- Jonathan M – wondering what other jurisdictions are doing when it comes to dealing with its biosolids. Benchmarking?
- Claire
  - Hears from the group that a letter should be modified to include concerns discussed today.
  - The letter does not prefer or select any specific option.
  - **PROPOSAL:** The EC will send that letter to C2E2 later this week. Claire will circulate a draft.
  - Vote on that proposal: **Ayes:** All            **Nays:** None
    - The EC members passed the proposal unanimously.
  - Tim E. wondered whether a letter was needed as opposed to simply a verbal update during the C2E2 meeting. Does C2E2 need to approve the letter?
    - Claire advocated for the letter given the complexity of the topic and she thought a C2E2 meeting presentation was also possible.
    - Claire noted that past EC practice is to send C2E2 as our audience a letter helping to inform C2E2 on technical energy matters.
    - John B. suggested it could be a “memo” and not a “letter” to manage C2E2 expectations as to what C2E2 members need to do with the information
  - **ACTION:** Claire will draft a “memo” and send it out to the EC for review

6. Whole-of-government/potential Chief Sustainability Officer role (8:35) – Jonathan Morgenstein
  - a. Letter to County Manager — Jonathan Morgenstein

- Jonathan noted that the WPCP project discussion today is an example why a whole-of-government approach is needed regarding climate change and CEP issues.
- A draft letter regarding whole-of-government issues and a potential Chief Sustainability Officer was sent out to EC members for review/comment prior to today's meeting.
  - Jonathan noted that the need for this letter has not been unanimously approved by EC members in the past
- C2E2 last year submitted to the County Board a letter requesting a CMO Climate Change & Sustainability Officer (CCO).
  - CMO did put in FY22 budget language that noted that in FY22 the County Manager could show how a whole-of-gov't approach was being handled, and the CB would review the idea of a CMO Officer again at the time of FY23 budget deliberations
  - The plan is to have EC send this letter directly to the CMO

#### Q&A:

- John B. – Having such a position in the CMO is becoming common practice in the private and public sectors. In addition, the paragraph on the Roadmap might not serve its purpose.
- Tim E. – Supportive of the letter's intent. Concern with the letter is that we have already sent this request to the County, but we have lost. Instead, we could ask whether the County has done all of the things that it said it would do in reply to the original request for a CCO.
- Jonathan noted conversations he has had with CB members on this topic.
- Rick K. – Thinks the \$180,000 to be spent on a CCO could be better spent on implementing the CEP. He thinks the entrenched County way of doing business would limit a CCO's ability to make progress and inhibit the person's ability to mandate activities from various departments.
- Scott S. – Thinks one of the problems we face is that some departments do not think climate change will affect them. So, a CCO is needed to showcase how climate change affects all departments and manages actions to address those threats.
- Claire – Will likely not approve the letter if put to a vote
- Scott D – Proposes a modified letter to concisely refer to what we sent before regarding the CCO, and then pivot the letter to what projects and CEP implementation progress we want to see.
- Tim E. – CCO should not be powerless – thanked Rick k. for his perspective.
  - Letter submitted in 2-3 months could point out examples where not having a CCO has proven to be detrimental to addressing climate change.
  - Jonathan noted that this letter was timed to coincide with the County Manager's budget presentation to happen in the coming weeks, not months later.
- Kevin V. – The CCO should have an independent reporting function to ensure the CCO and the CMO is accountable for actual actions.
- Demetra noted that a draft interdepartmental staff group is being planned, proposed
- **PROPOSAL 1:** Take no action on this letter at this time
  - Vote – 12 members present – **Ayes:** None    **Nays:** All
  - Unanimous vote to not approve proposal
- **PROPOSAL 2:** Edit and send the letter to the CMO – ask the CMO to report to the EC how the CMO plans to address the CB mandate
  - Vote – 12 members present:
    - **Ayes:** Claire, Rick, Tim, Stephanie G., Greg B., Stephanie B., Scott D.
    - **Nays:** Scott S., Doug S., John B., Kevin V., Jonathan M.
  - 7-5 vote to approve the proposal

#### 7. On-bill financing (9:00)—Scott Sklar

- Time ran out in today's meeting, so we ask that this presentation be presented at a future meeting

- It is up to the new EC leadership coming in after this meeting to schedule the presentation

**8. EC Chair hand-off (9:20) – Jonathan Morgenstein/Tim Effio**

- Jonathan thanked multiple people and appreciated all of the help, guidance, and support
- Proud of the progress that has been made, e.g., getting EV sedans transitioned into the County fleet
- Hopes the diversity of the EC membership can continue to be advanced
- Handed off the EC Chair role to Tim Effio for the rest of 2022
- Tim will reach out to all EC members and would like to talk with each member between now and the February meeting.
  - Wants to hear what each member would like to see accomplished in 2022.
  - Will work with Claire to map out 2022 areas of focus.
  - Goal for February meeting – to present draft areas of focus and get feedback from the EC members.

**9. Adjourn (9:30)**

- Next meeting is Feb. 9<sup>th</sup> from 7:30 – 9:30 am
- Meeting adjourned at 9:30 am