

Climate Change, Energy, and Environment Commission (C2E2)

Summary of July 22, 2024

Virtual Meeting

Members Virtual: Cindy Lewin, chair; Joan McIntyre, vice chair; Doug Snoeyenbos, Mikaila Milton, Majdi Shomali, Mark Greenwood, Elizabeth Whitney, Joe Trivette, Trevor Montano, Jonathan Morgenstein (joined later)

Members Absent: Eric Gibbs, David Evans, Rob Sandoli, Kevin Vincent

Guests Virtual: Melissa Benn (resident), Jamie Michael Kern (resident), Karen Guevara (Planning Commission), Lily Whitesell (DES), Ty Asfaw Fanta (DES)

Staff Present: Jenna Peabody (DES-AIRE)

Public comment

Jamie Michael Kern made a public comment. He emailed Jenna, who was quick to respond via email. He is a clean energy engineer and Arlington resident in Colonial Village. He will apply to become a commissioner.

Gulf Branch Resiliency Project presentation – Ty Asfaw Fanta, Lily Whitesell

Find the full presentation on the C2E2 website. Project manager Ty Asfaw and Lily Whitesell from Department of Environmental Services, Stormwater team, discussed the 90% completed design of the Gulf Branch Resiliency Project which is set to begin construction next year. The project involved three reaches:

1. The first reach included an open field, Glebe Rd Park, tennis courts, and an eroding stream channel. They planned to repair the channel, raise the stream bed, and add a stormwater capture BMP.
2. The second reach was a smaller, eroding stream fed by an outfall. They planned spot stabilization here.
3. The third reach, near Broyhill Park, involved repairing an eroding stream and exposed sanitary line.

The project aimed to create a stable stream channel, protect infrastructure, reduce sediment and nutrient levels, enhance habitat, and provide educational opportunities. It was identified in the 2014 stormwater master plan.

Lily Whitesell thanked the advisory group and highlighted the engagement process. The project was a high priority due to increased storm intensity and climate change. They incorporated feedback, added more of Reach 2, and included four green streets and a regenerative stormwater conveyance. The project aimed to address erosion early and control runoff in the watershed. Mikaila expressed appreciation for the improvements made by Lily and Ty, particularly the addition of more wood, fewer trees being removed, and the inclusion of RC.

She inquired about the frequency and specifics of project monitoring, including whether boulders are monitored for movement.

Lily explained that project monitoring includes checking stream structures and boulders, especially after storms. Ty added that they plan to conduct surveys every three to five years to document the position of structures, in addition to photo documentation. Mikaila also asked about nutrient monitoring. Lily mentioned that basic nitrate and phosphate monitoring is done three times a year, with data going back over ten years. They follow up on community monitoring results and use site-specific samples for nutrient credit reporting. Lily emphasized that the primary goal of the project is not nutrient credit but addressing high-priority issues identified earlier. Mikaila asked about the frequency and specifics of the monitoring plan. Lily confirmed and asked if her explanation answered the question, to which Mikaila agreed. Doug Snoeyenbos expressed his appreciation for Gulf Branch Park and shared fond memories. He inquired about the pond near the Nature Center. Lily confirmed the pond's health and explained its management as a vernal pool to protect wood frog eggs.

Joan McIntyre asked about managing stormwater runoff from adjoining properties and community engagement. Lily explained that the stream project aims to stabilize the stream and protect infrastructure. They have prioritized capturing stormwater in key locations and are working with the community to plant more trees and build support for the project. Joan McIntyre asked about the number of additional trees saved and the 10-year forecast for tree canopy coverage. Lily Whitesell explained that they would need to get back with specific numbers but emphasized that they aim for good vegetation coverage. Mikaila brought up the importance of a longer tree survival rate, suggesting a five-year requirement instead of two years. Lily acknowledged this and appreciated the reminder. Cindy Lewin thanked Ty and Lily for their information and participation. Ty expressed gratitude for the opportunity to present.

Visioning 2050/Climate Change Resolution

The next topic discussed was the "Visioning 2050" initiative, where residents are invited to envision what Arlington should look like in 2050. Cindy explained that the County Board, led by Libby Garvey, is asking for input in the form of a "postcard from the future," describing what actions taken now will lead to a great future. The Arlington Commissions are tasked with submitting their visions, which will be used for long-term strategic planning.

Mark Greenwood shared ideas on stormwater management and extreme heat, emphasizing the need for both green and gray infrastructure. He highlighted the importance of addressing climate change impacts and ensuring homes can remain habitable without relying solely on air conditioning. Joe Trivette suggested including a carbon tax and questioned the consistency of reducing vehicle ownership while still having many streets. Joan McIntyre clarified that the goal is to reduce vehicle traffic and convert streets to pedestrian access.

Mikaila proposed adding a dark sky ordinance to minimize light pollution. Cindy suggested that enhancing wildlife, bird health, and the ecosystem should be included in their plans. Mikaila added that blue light negatively impacts human health. Cindy humorously acknowledged this, and Joan suggested adding bird-friendly glass to their initiatives. Cindy agreed, noting it was already on their checklist and wouldn't take much to include. Mikaila mentioned a white paper on the Dark Sky ordinance, which Joan had forwarded. Cindy discussed the importance of considering future issues, like carbon capture facilities, even if Arlington might not build one soon. She emphasized the need to address current actions for future benefits.

Cindy then invited further comments and asked Joan to discuss her additions. Joan suggested making the document larger for better readability and explained her approach to adding more detail and context to their plans. Joan discussed the need for transforming the electric grid, acknowledging that while some efforts can be made locally, many changes will require broader efforts. Cindy mentioned the importance of education, noting that today's 10-year-olds will be 35 in 25 years, and investing in education now will lead to informed decision-making in the future. Joan emphasized that many necessary actions must happen within the next five years to achieve long-term goals. Cindy suggested including this urgency in their vision statement. Joan agreed, highlighting the importance of a well-informed constituency.

Doug Snoeyenbos mentioned that by 2050, all vehicles should be electric, and photovoltaic cells should be on every suitable roof. Cindy and Joan discussed the need to clarify the distinction between county government actions and private sector initiatives, ensuring the vision includes both public and private efforts towards full electrification and sustainability. Cindy acknowledged that she avoided using the term "carbon tax" and instead referred to a "tax on negative carbon activity." Joe suggested that Arlington could become a large virtual power plant, integrating solar, battery storage, and demand response. Cindy agreed this was a valuable addition.

Jonathan mentioned community choice aggregation, suggesting it would be necessary for a virtual power plant. Cindy and Joan discussed incorporating this concept, emphasizing the importance of explaining how they achieved their goals. Cindy noted that county board members were planning to introduce a climate change resolution, and while they didn't know the specifics yet, the ideas in their vision document could inform the resolution. Jonathan highlighted the need to address energy equity, ensuring the transition doesn't exacerbate existing inequities. Cindy agreed, noting the importance of structural incentives and regulations over simple subsidies.

Joan McIntyre agreed with Jonathan's points about environmental justice and equity, suggesting that they should ensure the capacity to welcome diverse groups at various income levels. She emphasized adaptive reuse of buildings to avoid displacing residents and highlighted the importance of addressing urban heat island impacts. Mark Greenwood supported Joan's points, stressing that safety issues related to excessive heat disproportionately affect people in affordable housing and the elderly. He emphasized the importance of equity in all aspects of their plans.

Cindy agreed and committed to drafting another version of their document with these considerations. She noted the importance of weaving in equity and safety as guiding principles. Cindy also mentioned that they would discuss their work plan for the year, focusing on comprehensive climate action, climate justice and equity, and climate-related resilience. She highlighted the importance of the Green Building Incentive Plan and the need to update their checklist based on its outcomes. Mark offered to explain the formulas behind their checklist to ensure everyone understands its workings.

C2E2 Work Plan check-in

Cindy reviewed the work plan, highlighting their efforts on the budget and the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). She noted the interest in green banks and financial mechanisms, suggesting the climate change resolution might be an opportunity to push for a green bank.

Trevor Montano offered to lead efforts on green banks and private financing, mentioning recent developments and available funds from the Inflation Reduction Act. Cindy acknowledged Trevor's involvement and moved on to transportation. Joan McIntyre discussed the ongoing pushback on bus needs but emphasized the importance of the upcoming master transportation plan renovation. She stressed the need for the commission to engage in shaping the vision and goals for the plan. Cindy agreed, noting the importance of focusing on impactful areas.

Cindy and Joan discussed the impact of their efforts, emphasizing that their letters and testimonies do influence county decisions. Cindy shared an example where their advocacy led to the reallocation of \$3.5 million in climate change funds, preventing it from being spent on a gas generator. Joan added that their input on the zero waste plan led to significant changes in the resolution, ensuring a focus on environmental impact and reduction strategies. Cindy reviewed the work plan, noting that C2E2 has been active in various areas such as equity, stormwater management, and urban heat island effects. She emphasized the importance of continuing to focus on the green building incentive policy. Joan highlighted the upcoming climate resolution as an opportunity to reinforce our consistent messages and push for a more directive approach from the county.

Joan highlighted the importance of addressing procurement policy and the Barcroft development, emphasizing its potential for equity. She noted that we are not currently involved in the Barcroft project discussions and suggested we need to be included. Cindy clarified that Barcroft is a significant affordable housing development, and we should aim to influence its sustainability standards. Joan suggested using Barcroft as an example to demonstrate strong sustainability practices, including energy efficiency, decarbonization, and community solar. Cindy agreed and mentioned we would follow up on this for the September or October meeting. She also noted other large projects like River House that we should monitor. Cindy then moved on to address items requiring a vote while a quorum was still present.

Deer management plan letter for approval

The next topic discussed was the letter on deer management. Mikaila, who participated in the FNRC and drafted the letter, explained that the county's studies indicated high deer numbers and vegetation impact. The letter suggests moving forward with a deer management plan, including changing the county code to allow for sharpshooting and other necessary actions. Joan commented on the use of the word "preferentially" twice in one sentence, and Doug suggested adding the impact on shrubs and flowers in people's yards to emphasize the county-wide impact. Mikaila preferred to focus on the primary reason for the plan, which is vegetation recovery, without diluting it with other issues. Cindy noted that the letter could include a reference to the county-wide impact. She appreciated Mikaila's work and mentioned that Susan Cunningham, the C2E2 liaison on the County Board, is excited about Mikaila's qualifications. Cindy supported the letter and called for a motion to adopt it, which was seconded and approved.

Review June summary

Reviewed and approved.

Recruitment of commissioners

Cindy discussed the recruitment of new commissioners, noting that David is leaving and highlighting the importance of finding replacements with relevant skills. She mentioned the need for expertise in areas such as solid waste, climate justice, electric vehicles, energy policy, and

green buildings. Cindy emphasized the value of both hard skills and soft skills, such as community involvement and connections with diverse communities. She shared a matrix of desired skills and asked for input on additional skills to consider. Cindy also mentioned the importance of ensuring the commission reflects the diversity of Arlington County. Jenna worked on pulling up the document for review, and Cindy encouraged further discussion on how to recruit individuals with the needed expertise.

Mikaila appreciated the list of skills Cindy created and suggested mentioning these categories during screening interviews and possibly including them on the website. Doug emphasized the importance of building electrification and suggested recruiting someone knowledgeable about construction costs and retrofitting buildings for energy efficiency. Joan noted that while deep expertise in every area isn't realistic, we could invite outside experts to brief C2E2. She highlighted the value of having members with broad backgrounds and public involvement experience. Cindy agreed, acknowledging the diverse skills and opportunities each member brings.

Mark added that while it's good to seek recruits with preexisting knowledge, members could also learn new areas of expertise. He shared his own experience of delving into topics like heat island effects and building performance. Cindy encouraged members to email her with additional skills to include on the list. Cindy agreed, noting that members like Joe had also invested time in specific areas like transportation.

Mikaila suggested including a note that C2E2 is looking for people willing to develop new skills, not just those who already have them. Cindy agreed, proposing that we could mention some of the skills we are particularly interested in without excluding others. Elizabeth added that communication and outreach are important skills to consider. Joe supported the idea of publishing a skills matrix, noting its usefulness for both internal and external purposes. Cindy appreciated the feedback and encouraged members to think about potential recruits, emphasizing the importance of diverse backgrounds and skills. She also thanked Joan and others for their work on the CIP letter and acknowledged Mikaila's updates from various meetings.

Mikaila suggested reaching out to groups that might help identify potential recruits for the commission. Cindy agreed and mentioned that she and Joan had started discussing this. Cindy thanked Majdi for agreeing to be the Melwood representative, noting that the project was starting to move forward.

Updates (e.g., CIP, SPRCs, Energy Committee, more) (8:50 – 9:00)

Doug reported that the Energy Committee had a productive meeting with Cathy Lin and Tanner Prime from Arlington Public Schools, discussing efforts to decarbonize the schools despite various obstacles. Cindy appreciated the update and thanked everyone for their contributions. Cindy proposed holding the June meeting virtually to avoid a three-month gap without meetings. She also mentioned the importance of in-person meetings and noted that the county's approach of combining remote and in-person work was effective. Mikaila brought up the need to ensure C2E2 is included in the Barcroft project briefings, and Cindy agreed to follow up on this.

Next meeting: September 23 (Hybrid)