

Environmental Sustainability Council/Energy Transition Subcommittee Meeting Agenda

June 15th, 2023 ❖ 7:30pm

300 Park Ave, Dogwood Room, Falls Church, Virginia 22046

- **Attendees: ESC Members:** Joseph Schiarizzi, (Chair), Jon Ward (Vice-Chair, ETS Chair), John Ferris, Jennifer Tabola, Sarah Bayldon, Amy Crumpton (Chair-HRTG)
Planning Commission Liaison: Tim Stevens, **Student Representatives:** Gia Kahn, Lilja Anderson, Wendy Abstone, Clementine Kim, Ally Campbell, Katherine Holt
City Staff: Andrew Young (ESC Staff Liaison).
- **Introduction of New Student Representatives**
 - ESC welcomed 6 student representatives from Meridien High School.
 - Joseph took the opportunity to identify various projects being done including composting, increasing the number of bike lanes, and transitioning to renewable energy.
 - Students identified their interests: these include enhancing the connection between the community and the school, energy policy including simplifying the sustainability message, apply knowledge in renewable energy reduce carbon footprint, improving green spaces, getting the community more involved in high school projects (e.g. community garden), how new construction in town is implementing renewable energy programs, and the installation of solar panels on the high school during the summer.
- **Public Comment Period**
 - No public comments were received.
- **Approval of May 18th, 2023 ESC Meeting Minutes**
 - John Ferris moved to approve the minutes, as edited by Jon Ward. Jennifer Tabola second the proposal. The May 18, 2023 minutes of the ESC as amended by Jon Ward were approved unanimously.
- **Government Operations Energy Action Plan Update – Andy Young**
 - Draft report will be circulated with city and school staff next week.
 - ESC will be invited to a joint meeting City Council work session on Monday July 10. Draft will come out on July 5.
 - Intent to have City Council adoption at the meeting on July 17.
 - Transition plan for electric vehicles, energy efficiency in government buildings, including adding solar.
 - Draft plan is projecting a 48% reduction based on 2022, does not include Renewable Energy Credits (RECs) or energy purchase agreements.
 - 44% reduction in fleet vehicle reduction
 - 44% in building reduction
 - 4% reduction in solar.
 - This mirrors what ESC recommended for the Capital Improvement Plan.
 - This draft report does not include offsite renewable purchases
 - Scale of the projects are approximately \$800K with 30% reduction from the federal government.
 - Progress to date includes the City has been purchasing renewable credits to offset 25% of our municipal usage since 2013. Next steps are around three pieces,

including 1) purchasing energy credits, looking to buy them from a broker that can get certificates from wind and solar. (Prior purchases could not be identified as solar or wind), 2) identifying facilities best suited for solar installation, 3) work in conjunction with other jurisdiction and companies on a power purchase agreement to support renewable energy.

- The proposal includes an estimate of 84% reduction in emissions from government operations by 2030
- Joseph questions how we identify a broker. Andy responded that the ESC should identify the attributes we would want in a broker as the city considers the REC broker. For example, Green-E certified credits from wind or solar.
- Andy participates on a working group with a number of other Virginia communities. The plan has identified the work that is necessary and is looking for a jurisdiction to lead the project. If this plan is implemented, Falls Church would then work with this lead jurisdiction through a Memorandum of Understanding and Request for Proposal process.
- Tim noted that the Northern Virginia Regional Commission started down the path of a virtual power network about 5 years ago. Andy was not aware of any work of this group in this matter.
- Andy noted the challenges with Mary Ellen Henderson the challenge was the age of the roof. Needs to be planned after the new roof is installed.
- Andy noted that this plan includes 10 buildings controlled by the City of Falls Church, including 5 schools, 5 community buildings (property yard, city hall, community center, City library, and Aurora House.)
- Under Virginia state rules, Falls Church can not require developers to install solar. Working with the new buildings to make them solar ready, but it is up to the building owner to install solar panels.
- It is possible for the City to provide funding for incentives to homeowners to reduce emissions. The ESC could recommend to the City Council for such funding.
- Jon Ward noted that the Founders Row 2 developer has agreed to install 50KW of solar panels on its roof.
- **Community Energy Action Plan (CEAP) Update – Andy Young**
 - Andy provided a briefing on the status of the Community Energy Action Plan. Andy is briefing other City commissions on the Energy Action Plans to get buy in and identify co-benefits of emission reductions.
 - ESC comments on transportation opportunities:
 - Joseph shared his perspective that electric vehicles aren't a real solution and the only way forward is to get people out of cars; he would like to see the promotion of density and mixed use development as part of the plan. Without addressing those components, he doesn't feel it would be a serious plan.
 - Jennifer Tabola inquired about whether we've been able to score each of the potential strategy elements in terms of impact and cost to help build a matrix for prioritization and focus; those are only two lenses, and there are others; are there some of these that would be considered long-hanging fruit? Andy responded that there's a spectrum of how far to take each of

these strategies that make estimations difficult; to get to a 50% reduction from 2005 levels by 2030 we will have to do all of these to some degree; what else can other groups get excited about and be willing to support? Jennifer added that we need some sort of framework for the ESC to be helpful on the next step.

- John Ferris shared that transportation is difficult to measure. Is there any data that can give us better insight into what's happening, so we can identify some low-hanging fruit steps to take? Andy responded that data we have at the community level is a subset of Fairfax County, which doesn't provide the granularity you'd like to see. If we did have that data, would it help us influence residents and businesses in the City to take different actions? John provided an example of counting bikes outside Meridian High School as an indirect measure. Maybe our CEAP needs to make recommendations on transportation measurement.
- Tim Stevens would like to see a footnote included in the CEAP report that documents the issues and challenges with the transportation data for the City. Tim also shared that you may want to reference the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project.
- Jon Ward shared that local transportation within the City only accounts for a portion of car use, so walkable and bikeable infrastructure as a sole focus won't reduced our transportation emissions sufficiently to meet our goal. Last mile connections for commuters needs to be a really important consideration for the CEAP. We need to do a combination of lots of things to meet our goal.
- Amy Crumpton brought up the concern about idling vehicles associated with construction and schools. New York City has done a lot to address this challenge. We could promote a behavior change to address this.
- Jennifer asked the students about their thoughts on the transportation challenge.
 - Idea floating around about a bike bus for elementary kids to reduce parents driving kids to school.
 - Bike lanes on Park Avenue would have a big impact. Cut through car traffic makes biking there a challenge. Building more sidewalks where there aren't any currently would be helpful as well. One student referenced almost being hit by a car there.
 - Transportation from after-school activities would help reduce car usage. There isn't a great route to take for biking home when attending afterschool activities (paths and lighting are a challenge).
- John Ferris inquired about telework – could the City do something to promote telework? Joseph responded that we need to focus on what the City can do, and this may not be an area we can influence.
- ESC comments on opportunities with buildings:
 - Amy asked where the landscape issues come into play here, gas-powered lawn equipment specifically? Maybe an incentive program for residents and businesses to transition. We unfortunately can't ban gas-powered leaf blowers like DC has done.

- Tim shared that Arlington put their energy plan into their Comprehensive Plan to give it some added importance.
 - Jennifer suggested that students might be able to help with an info graphic for residents to better explain opportunities available to them from the federal government. How do we make the point of entry a lot easier? She also suggested looking into community sheds to share lawn equipment on a check-out basis.
- Subcommittee/Liaison Report-Outs

o Planning Commission – Tim Stevens

Planning commission has a speaker series. Last meeting had Christin Jolicoeur presentation on the Arlington Green Streets program. Go to June 7 planning committee to view her presentation

o Habitat Restoration Task Group – UFC Chair Amy Crumpton

Amy noted that there is a beaver in in Herman park, impacting water level and has taken down trees. Members voiced concerns and asked if it would be possible to safely relocate the beaver.

Amy also noted the problems the Urban Forestry program had, including the impacts on operations due to equipment problems.

o Education Task Group – Sarah Bayldon

Operation Earthwatch concluded successfully. Tina will lead for next two years. The group is looking for ways to increase participation.

o Energy Transition Subcommittee – Jon Ward

Jon Ward discussed the “Electrify Falls Church” event to be held on July 15. The event will highlight ways residents can take steps to reduce their use of fossil fuels.

Adjourn