

MOTION: M JETER

September 28, 2023

SECOND: T BOTTINO

Regular Meeting

Res. No. 23-036

RE: SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION TO BOARD OF COUNTY SUPERVISORS ON COMMUNITY ENERGY AND SUSTAINABILITY MASTER PLAN (CESMP)

ACTION: APPROVED

WHEREAS, on November 17, 2020, the Prince William County Board of Supervisors (Board) adopted Climate Mitigation and Resiliency goals; and

WHEREAS, on December 7, 2021, the Board authorized the creation of the Community Energy and Sustainability Master Plan (CESMP), which will serve as a roadmap for the county to reach its Climate Mitigation and Resiliency goals; authorized the creation of a Sustainability Commission (SC), charged with advising the Board on matters related to the CESMP; and authorized the hiring of an Energy/Environmental Sustainability Officer (ESO) to lead development of the CESMP; and

WHEREAS, the ESO subsequently led the formation of a “Core Team” of county staff and hired AECOM to provide contractor support for the supporting analysis for, and writing of, the CESMP; and

WHEREAS, the SC’s input was limited to serving a purely advisory role in the creation of the CESMP; and

WHEREAS, even though the CESMP provides better information than was previously available on energy, sustainability, and climate change issues in Prince William County, there are many remaining information gaps and simplifying assumptions that should be addressed to reduce uncertainty and improve the assessment of current conditions, to forecast future conditions, and to formulate the best GHG reduction strategies. These include:

- the current and future carbon intensity of the electric grid, accounting for foreseeable market and regulatory conditions;
- current and potential use of low- or zero-carbon electricity in the commercial building sector, particularly for energy-intensive businesses such as data centers;
- the critical role of forest carbon storage in reducing net greenhouse gas emissions; and
- the effectiveness of smart growth development in reducing transportation emissions,

WHEREAS, while striving for reduced uncertainty and heightened accuracy remains crucial, there is an immediate and pressing imperative to proactively address greenhouse gas emissions and bolster climate resilience, and to enable the BOCS to adapt strategies dynamically as further insights emerge in the future.

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NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that

- The SC has focused on near-term priorities that can be addressed by the BOCS.
- The SC recommends that the BOCS approve the CESMP actions endorsed below, and incorporate them into the Comprehensive Plan.
- The SC recommends that the BOCS direct PWC staff to use the implementation plans included in the CESMP as a basis for preparing more detailed budget estimates for these endorsed actions, for consideration by the Board in its development of the FY25 budget. Endorsement of these actions does not imply endorsement of the estimated costs in the CESMP.
- The SC strongly endorses the Adaptive Management framework outlined in the CESMP to assure that
 - Specific actions are carefully monitored and evaluated to assure that they are cost-effective, and a report should be provided by the Sustainability Office to the BOCS annually in time to inform the budget process;
 - The analytic foundation of the Plan is strengthened to address critical information gaps and simplifying assumptions outlined above. An updated version of the CESMP, incorporating these improvements, should be presented to the BOCS by fall 2025 and updated every two years;
 - The actions identified in the CESMP that are not specifically endorsed below for immediate action should be evaluated in more detail to provide recommendations to the BOCS on whether to implement them in the FY26 budget cycle.
- The SC strongly endorses the use of expanded environmental reviews to provide the BOCS with critical information supporting the County's achievement of climate mitigation and resilience goals, in addition to complying with State and Federal laws and regulations regarding environmental compliance, and supporting decision making on specific rezoning and special use permit (SUP) applications, Capital Improvement Program (CIP) projects, and Comprehensive Plan Amendments (CPAs).
- The SC strongly endorses building institutional capacity in the Office of Sustainability to (1) pursue federal, state, and foundation grants that would provide funding for the actions in the CESMP and (2) develop and implement an effective communication/ outreach program to engage stakeholders and to update the plan when compelling and essential facts and perspectives, omitted in earlier stages of decision making, are discovered.
- The SC strongly endorses immediate adoption of all seven adaptation measures designated in the CESMP (A.1-A.7), as these measures are almost exclusively within the

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span of control of local government, and adaptation will be needed regardless of how successful the world is in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

- The SC strongly endorses immediate adoption of five actions designated in the CESMP as having high greenhouse gas reduction potential:
 - E.4: Promote Existing Green Power Products
 - T.1: Improve Pedestrian and Bicycle Infrastructure and Enhance Connectivity
 - T.2: Incentivize high-capacity Transit-Oriented Development (specifically concentrating development in areas with high-capacity transit)
 - T.5: Incentivize Zero-Emission Vehicles and Charging
 - T.6: Expand Public EV Charging Network

In addition to these five actions, the SC strongly recommends that ways to **require** rather than **Incentivize** Renewable Energy Use in Energy Intensive Commercial Buildings (as defined in action E.3) be explored.

The SC strongly endorses action N-1, Adopt Natural Open Space Requirements, with an emphasis on maintaining and expanding forested areas.

- Before investing significant resources in action E.1: Acquire Clean Electricity Sources for the County, further study is needed. This measure has very high greenhouse gas reduction potential, but also has a very high administrative burden for the county and limits to its geographic scope in the county that must be more fully understood before it is considered as a viable action.
- The SC recognizes that the cost estimates provided in the CESMP by the county and its contractor for actions not specifically endorsed above did not estimate life-cycle cost savings, or express costs as an increment with respect to current, business as usual expenditures. To the extent that, when properly analyzed from a life cycle basis, these actions would provide emission reductions and cost savings to the county, the SC strongly endorses incorporating these measures into the county budgeting process.
- The SC recommends that the BOCS consider extending the Commission's current mandate, which was limited to providing recommendations to the BOCS on the first edition of the CESMP. We recommend extending the lifetime and scope of the SC to review any updates to the CESMP, incorporating the improvements outlined earlier, and to provide input and guidance in accord with the adaptive management framework that should be used to assure the timely and cost-effective implementation of the plan. In addition, the SC recommends that the scope of the CESMP be expanded to include other facets of sustainability, including developing goals for other issues, such as how to improve the water quality of the County's streams, wildlife corridors, and other climate, sustainability, and environmental issues.

Votes:

Ayes: Chinaka A Barbour, Warren Beeton, Tiziana Bottino, Dr. Joseph Boutte, Christopher Carroll, J. Randall Freed, Martin Jeter, Elizabeth H Ward

Nays: none

Absent from Vote: none

Absent from Meeting: none

For Information:

Office of Sustainability Director

Salita Gray

ATTEST: _____

Clerk to the Board