

Draft Resolution Outline: SC's Recommendation on CESMP

R Freed, draft 2, 9/23/2023

MOTION: September 28, 2023, Regular Meeting

SECOND: Res. No. 2023-X

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

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, 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 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 immediately and 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.

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 in 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.

- The SC strongly endorses the Adaptive Management framework outlined in the CESMP to assure that
 - individual actions are carefully monitored and re-evaluated to assure that they are cost-effective, and a report should be provided to by the Sustainability Office to the BOCS annually in time to inform the budget process;
 - the analytic foundation of the Plan s 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 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 Board’s 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 resources for the actions in the CESMP and (2) develop and implement an effective communication/ outreach program to engage stakeholders.
- 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 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 all six measures designated in the CESMP as having high greenhouse gas reduction potential:
 - E.3: Incentivize Renewable Energy Use in Energy-Intensive Commercial Buildings
 - E.4: Promote Existing Green Power Products
 - T.1: Improve Pedestrian and Bicycle Infrastructure and Enhance Connectivity
 - T.2: Incentivize Transit-Oriented Development (specifically high-capacity transit)
 - T.5: Incentivize Zero-Emission Vehicles and Charging ¹
 - T.6: Expand Public EV Charging Network

In addition to these six, the SC strongly endorses action N-1, Adopt Natural Open Space Requirements, with an emphasis on maintaining and expanding forested areas.

- The SC strongly endorses forging robust alliances, notably with the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG), to evaluate regional solutions for an approach for action E.1: Acquire Clean Electricity Sources for the County. This measure has very high greenhouse gas reduction potential, but also has a very high administrative burden for the county that would be mitigated if the burden could be shared with other counties with similar goals.

¹ NOTE TO SC [this footnote is to be deleted in the final resolution]: the current price tag of \$25-50M includes a parenthetical note that “Federal grant funding is expected to be available for the County to pursue”; to make the price more realistic, we should only include the costs that would be attributable to the county. Having 2 full-time grant acquisition specialists would help drastically reduce the county’s actual cost for this measure.

- 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 extend 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
 - Continue providing input to the BOCS and the Energy/ Environment Sustainability Officer on the design and implementation of the CESMP
 - Provide policy guidance to the BOCS on related sustainability issues including but not limited to bringing PWC’s streams into compliance with water quality standards (i.e., removing them from the EPA “Impaired Waters List” under Clean Water Act section 303(d)), expanding wildlife corridors (which help with resilience of ecosystems), and improving habitat.