



Montgomery County Group

April 8, 2019

Good afternoon. My name is Michal Freedman and I am here on behalf of the Montgomery County Sierra Club.

About 16 months ago the County declared a climate emergency and resolved to dramatically reduce emissions over the next several years.

What will that entail? According to the County's Climate Mobilization Workgroup, it means dramatically increasing reliance of clean energy, not coal, natural gas, or oil; it means dramatically increasing the energy efficiency of our homes and workplaces; and it means dramatically increasing zero emission vehicles, to name some key elements of the transition.

How do we know where to start – what to prioritize? The Climate Mobilization Workgroup Report listed dozens of possible programs, policies, and financial incentives. Among the many, many choices which ones produce the greatest reduction in carbon emissions per dollar? What are the relative benefits and costs of say providing property tax incentives for old buildings that are energy inefficient vs developing electric car buying cooperatives or coaching residents in energy conservation or expanding tree canopies?

We understand that the Administration is considering establishing working groups to develop priorities and recognizes the need for technical expertise in this effort. There is currently no funding in the proposed budget designated for such technical assistance. The Administration has committed to look for parts of the budget that could be "repurposed" to fund these consulting services. If they are successful, that will be all to the good. But Sierra Club urges you, the Council, to make an independent judgment to ensure adequate funds for consulting services. In the long run, successfully identifying the highest priority programs represents the most prudent approach to decarbonizing.

Our review of the budget also shows no additional funds over last year's budget for the Office of Sustainability. As priorities programs are identified, new funds will be needed by the Office of Sustainability to implement those programs. We know that these are tough budgetary times. But we are facing an emergency and the County has committed to addressing that emergency aggressively. The budget needs to include funds that can be used to develop those programs. The County must not place itself in a situation where it needs to wait another budget cycle to confront the emergency.

I want to close by saying our written testimony includes an addendum with some specific requests.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Michal Freedman, Sierra Club Montgomery County, Maryland, Vice Chair