



Clean Energy in Arlington: Community Energy Plan Update

by Rick Keller

On September 21st the Arlington County Board will vote to adopt a revised [Community Energy Plan](#) (CEP). First adopted in 2013, the CEP outlines six overall goals for Arlington to secure economic competitiveness, community resilience, and a level of sustainability.

The Mount Vernon Group has been a constant supporter of the CEP and the actions needed to meet the goals. Arlington has made excellent progress, exceeding benchmarks for reducing community level greenhouse gas (GHG) goals. The proposed revision takes further steps to reduce and then eliminate Arlington's carbon footprint.

The updated CEP includes three critical elements: a target of 100% renewable energy for County operations by 2025; a community-wide target of 100% renewable energy for electricity by 2035; and a community level target of net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.

Arlington faces challenges in that we cannot require actions beyond what the General Assembly has granted us the authority to do (we are a "[Dillon Rule](#)" state). That impacts building codes and emission restrictions and limits Arlington to incentive programs rather than setting standards. We can incentivize LEED building standards for new buildings, for example, but we cannot require them. We can establish a tree canopy fund to promote tree planting but cannot tell homeowners they cannot cut down mature tree on their property. We can publicize solar cooperatives, but not incorporate solar into local building standards.

In order to achieve the necessary goals, it will take not only the concerted effort and commitment of every Arlingtonian but also some changes in Richmond that will allow more effective environmental policy to be enacted at both the state and local level.

We continue our support of Arlington's Community Energy Plan and will continue to work with the Board, staff and the community to achieve the new goals that have been set.

Sierra Club members should let the Board know that the objectives outlined above are indeed the direction Arlington needs to commit to; email CountyBoard@arlingtonva.us. Additionally, we are planning a rally around noon on September 21st to voice our support. Rally information will be posted on our website <https://www.sierraclub.org/virginia/mount-vernon> a week before

and on our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/MVGSC>. We hope to see you there. For more information on the rally email Alice Redhead, Community Outreach Coordinator, at alice.redhead@sierraclub.org.

More information:

Draft updated CEP:

<https://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/13/2019/07/Draft-CEP-Update-post-CB-Work-Session-CLEAN-for-July-RTA.pdf>

Comparative chart of changes:

<https://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/13/2019/07/CB-RTA-report-Attachment-2-only-1.pdf>

Net Zero Carbon defined (Green Building Council):

<https://www.worldgbc.org/advancing-net-zero/what-net-zero>

This content originally appeared in the September 2019 issue of the Mount Vernon Sierran, the Mount Vernon Group's quarterly newsletter. For more information about the Mount Vernon Group, please visit virginia.sierraclub.org/mvg/.