



Citizen Input Needed Now for Arlington County's Update to the Community Energy Plan

By John Bloom, Rick Keller, and Dean Amel

Arlington County released the draft update of its 2013 Community Energy Plan (CEP) on May 24, and community input is now being sought in response. The CEP focuses on reducing greenhouse gas emissions and acts as Arlington's unofficial climate action plan.

The update adopts only one of the five major recommendations made by the Sierra Club's Mount Vernon Group (MVG) in written comments submitted in November 2018. (For more detail on what the MVG recommended vs. what was actually included by County staff, see below.) In those comments, MVG urged the County to heed the call of the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which found that it is necessary for the global economy to reach net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 in order to avoid a high risk of catastrophic harm from climate change.

The Draft Plan is scheduled to be adopted by the County Board at its September 21 meeting. **Your input is needed now to strengthen the CEP.** Email can be sent to all 5 County Board members at countyboard@arlingtonva.us

It is also possible to talk directly to County Board members at their public appearances and "Open Door Monday" events. A different County Board member appears each Monday to speak with any constituents who attend. No reservation is needed. The schedule and location of Open Door Mondays is listed on the County Board website at <https://countyboard.arlingtonva.us/open-door-mondays/>.

How to learn more about Arlington's update to the Community Energy Plan:

1. See the County's Website devoted to the CEP, which includes a link to the Draft Plan: <https://environment.arlingtonva.us/energy/community-energy-plan-cep/>. Please note that while this website provides opportunity to submit comments to County staff, your feedback will not go directly to the County Board, which will make the final decisions about the CEP.

2. June 11, 12-1 pm: Attend the CEP Virtual Forum, a webinar through which County staff will speak about the CEP and ask questions. Online registration at <https://www.anymeeting.com/AccountManager/RegEv.aspx?PIID=ED59DA82814A30>.
3. June 18, 7:30-9:30 am: The County's Environment and Energy Conservation Commission (E2C2) will meet and the CEP update will be on the agenda. For more information on the Energy Committee, see <https://environment.arlingtonva.us/energy/energy-committee/>.
4. June 24, 7 – 10 pm: The County's E2C2 Commission will meet again and the CEP update will be on the agenda. For more information on E2C2, see <https://commissions.arlingtonva.us/environment-energy-conservation-commission-e2c2/>.
5. June 25, 3 pm, County Board Room: The County Board is scheduled to hold a work session focused on the Draft CEP update. There will not be an opportunity for public testimony, but it will be an opportunity to learn about the CEP by watching the Board and staff discuss it.
6. July 13, 8:30 am, County Board Room: The CEP is expected to be on the agenda for a decision about whether it should be "advertised" as an item for consideration at the Board's September 21 meeting.

What the Mount Vernon Group (MVG) called for and what Arlington County has proposed in its Draft Community Energy Plan update:

MVG Recommendation: Net 100% renewable energy across all sectors of Arlington's economy by 2050

Arlington Draft CEP: 88% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions (from 2007 baseline) by 2050

MVG Recommendation: Net 100% renewable electricity by 2035

Arlington Draft CEP: No 2035 or 2050 renewable electricity goal is proposed beyond a milestone set in 2013 of 160 MW (less than 10% of Arlington's current usage) of locally produced solar electricity by 2050; the County also says its "model assumes" that 95% of Arlington's electricity can be met by renewable electricity by 2050, though this is not set as a milestone.

MVG Recommendation: Net 100% renewable electricity for County Government operations by 2023

Arlington Draft CEP: Sets no goal for renewable electricity in County Government operations. Sets a goal of gradually reducing overall greenhouse gas emissions by the County Government

by 88% by 2050. This is the same as the overall community-wide goal, suggesting no leadership by Arlington County Government in greenhouse gas reductions. Alexandria has committed to achieving net zero electricity for City Government operations by 2023.

MVG Recommendation: Develop a comprehensive plan within two years for the electrification of transportation in Arlington

Arlington Draft CEP: Sets a goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions from transportation by 88% by 2050. Sets no goals for electrifying Arlington County vehicle fleets (cars, school buses, transit buses, etc.) Sets no goals for establishing plans to electrify fleets or for electric vehicle charging infrastructure.

MVG Recommendation: Net zero or net zero ready status for newly constructed or renovated Arlington County government and school buildings

Arlington Draft CEP: References a newly adopted County regulation that calls for new and renovated County Government facilities to be “net zero ready” where economically feasible. While this policy allows for waivers, and needs to be evaluated in operation, it appears to be equivalent to the MVG recommendation.

This content originally appeared in the June 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/.