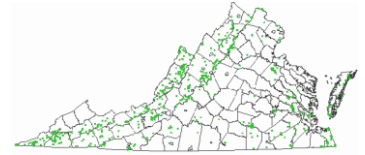




GREAT FALLS AND MOUNT VERNON GROUPS VIRGINIA CHAPTER



Chairman Jeffrey McKay
Fairfax County Board of Supervisors
12000 Government Center Parkway
Fairfax, VA 22030

November 12, 2020

Chairman McKay and members of the Board,

The Great Falls and Mount Vernon Groups of the Virginia Chapter of the Sierra Club are submitting comments regarding the Interim Agreement with Alpine-X LLC for the Fairfax Peak Development at I-95 Lorton Landfill. Our over 3,000 Fairfax County members have many questions and concerns regarding the proposal and agreement, and we seek answers before this project moves forward. Our comments are broken down into four main areas; land use, water and air quality, infrastructure, and energy usage.

Land Use

The most evident question is why this option for using the land? In other parts of the U.S., reclaimed landfills have been used to increase parkland and as natural areas. As Fairfax County grows this type of land usage has become more important to the quality of life of residents. Currently, meadows and grassland cover the landfill, creating bird and other wildlife habitat. The developer's plans also seem to include part of a forested area. This is important habitat and a natural recreation area for residents. What else has been considered? Did you survey residents to provide feedback on other options for the use of that County land? What is the County's long-range plan for the larger area within which the landfill resides? How does the use of this space fit into the overall space usage plans in the County?

Water and Air Quality

The size and operations of the Alpine-X facility potentially will have major impacts on the water and air quality in the region, as well as on the current natural habitat. The impermeable surface in the area will greatly increase. Stormwater runoff will increase, requiring mitigation in order for Fairfax County to meet state and Federal standards. Groundwater will also be impacted. The additional impact of the disturbance of the landfill on that groundwater must also be carefully studied as that is Fairfax County's responsibility to address. Just as importantly, what will be the impact on local streams? Is a study being planned? The area will be subjected to increased traffic and its associated pollution. There need to be robust air quality mitigation plans and those plans must be examined by the public at the earliest possible time. It is estimated that 375,000 people will visit the facility in its first year. The current roads and transit options will not support that increase, and use is expected to grow over the years. Mass transit in the area is lacking and needs to be evaluated. Consideration of not only the volume of traffic, but also how that traffic moves, or sits in idle, must be considered. Individual car emissions are going down, but it will be some years before we are free of those emissions.

Infrastructure

The roads, electrical grid, and sewer system will be impacted by the development. While we assume Alpine-X will be expected to fund much, if not all, of the improvements, it is once again an element that require consideration of the area, not just the facility. Increasing sewage capacity for Alpine-X will do little if another facility is built and the system needs further updating.

Energy Usage

The Alpine-X proposal is for a large facility that will require year-round energy usage. The developers plan to make snow rather than to use a synthetic surface. Depending on the final design, the question is what energy sources will be used and how sustainable will the facility be in the long-term? Coordination with Dominion is necessary, but so is meeting anticipated County goals for renewable energy. Initiatives such as the Community-wide Energy and Climate Action Plan (CECAP) require development plans to be held to high standards such as net-zero energy ready or climate neutral over the life of the facility.

One last consideration is the issue of equity and how this project will meet the goals of One Fairfax. Fairfax County is a wealthy community with a population that can easily support an indoor ski facility. What access will lower-income communities have to this facility? Are other options for those residents being considered? Will access to Occoquan Regional Park, used by all members of the community, be impacted in any negative way?

Since the actual design of the facility is still in draft form, there are ways its environmental impact can be reduced. Any special environmental considerations need to be detailed before any final agreement is reached. Over a dozen studies are listed in documentation referencing the project. We request that the county make the results of those studies available for public review. We also would like the county to provide open and transparent information sessions so that County residents may have input into plans going forward.

Please let us know if you have any questions.

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