Board of Supervisors Environmental Committee
Meeting Summary

December 10, 2024, at 1:30 P.M.
Government Center Conference Room 11

Board of Supervisors Members Present:
Chairman Jeffrey C. McKay
Supervisor Walter L. Alcorn, Hunter Mill District
Supervisor James N. Bierman, Jr., Dranesville District
Supervisor Patrick S. Herrity, Springfield District
Supervisor Andres F. Jimenez, Mason District (Committee Vice-Chairman)
Supervisor Rodney L. Lusk, Franconia District
Supervisor Dalia A. Palchik, Providence District
Supervisor Daniel G. Storck, Mount Vernon District
Supervisor James R. Walkinshaw, Braddock District (Committee Chairman, participated remotely)

Others Present:
Elizabeth Teare, County Attorney

Link to agenda and meeting materials: Board of Supervisors Environmental Committee Meeting: Dec. 10, 2024 | Board Of Supervisors

Item I: Opening Remarks

The meeting was called to order at 1:31 P.M. by Supervisor Jimenez, Committee Vice-Chairman. The Committee passed a motion to approve Supervisor Walkinshaw's remote participation in the meeting. The October 29, 2024, meeting summary was accepted.

Item II: 20-Year Solid Waste Management Plan Update

Matthew Adams, Division Director, Department of Public Works and Environmental Services (DPWES), presented the proposed timelines and strategies critical to the community Zero Waste Plan; this plan is being decoupled from the 20-Year Solid Waste Management Plan to allow for greater flexibility of program implementation. Mr. Adams shared timelines and resource needs for the creation of unified sanitation districts (USD) and a countywide organics collection program and processing facility. He discussed the proposed pay-as-you-throw program and options available to community members for the collection of solid waste, recycling, yard waste and food scraps. He also highlighted the creation of Zero Waste Centers and events. These strategies would be funded through a phased Zero Waste fee, with an implementation date of FY 2027 for residential. Mr. Adams noted that a comprehensive outreach and engagement campaign will be conducted in early 2025 on the creation of the USD. Notification for displacement of single-family collectors is expected to be issued in spring 2025; a public hearing will follow in early summer as well as a Zero Waste implementation policy document for Board consideration.

The Committee expressed support for the creation of the USD and robust public engagement to be conducted throughout implementation. Supervisor Herrity requested additional information on the impact on the small haulers.

The Committee discussed the generation of revenue from the organics processing facility through a tip fee and the sale of compost to individuals and organizations in the region. It also discussed that the staff and resource needs identified in Mr. Adams presentation would be met by the proposed Zero Waste fee. On the organics facility, Supervisor Herrity requested more information on the facility operating in Prince George's County, the cost to operate it and the estimated cost to collect organics in Fairfax County.

The Committee discussed the proposed pay-as-you-throw program and expressed an interest in making sure the rate structures and enforcement mechanisms meet the needs of townhome and multi-family communities as well as single-family detached communities. Staff noted that the details of the program would be worked out over the course of the five-year displacement process required to create the USD and confirmed that staff would work closely with the Board on outreach and engagement on this and other components of the Zero Waste Plan.

Item III: Residential Clean Energy Solutions

John Silcox, Public Information Officer, Office of Environmental and Energy Coordination (OEEC), presented on the county's three-pronged strategy to boost residential clean energy through market development, community challenge, and technical and financial assistance, and highlighted three residential programs launching in early 2025. Under the market development strategy, OEEC has engaged with marketing vendor Identika on a campaign called Sustain Fairfax. The campaign is intended to raise awareness and increase participation in energy efficiency and resiliency practices and programs through digital advertising and engagement with community partners. On the community challenge strategy, the county is launching a third-party web-based application, BrightAction, to encourage friendly competition on climate action. The app will allow community members to learn about resources and incentives to help them take action, receive personalized estimates on the greenhouse gas emission reductions and cost savings of certain actions, and track their collective impact and success. On the technical and financial assistance side, the county is launching a residential energy concierge pilot program to connect residents to incentives, contractors and other resources they might need to implement energy efficiency, renewable energy and electrification projects in their home. The program will complement Virginia Energy's "One Stop Shop" program, also launching in early 2025.

The Committee expressed support for these programs and noted that they would make it easier for residents to take climate action. The Committee discussed how community members could form teams on the BrightAction app and staff noted that it would be generating user-guidance documents and working with the community to see what additional support might be needed. On the Sustain Fairfax campaign, it was suggested that the county engage with management companies of multi-family housing communities, local institutions of higher learning and environmental groups.

Item IV: Fleet Transition and Community EV Readiness Plan

John Morrill, Director, and Julie Gurnee, Climate Mitigation Specialist, OEEC, presented on the county's Electric Vehicle (EV) Readiness Strategy; the county has engaged with a consultant to look at both the transition of the county's general fleet and availability of EV charging infrastructure in the community. The transition of the county fleet is underway, but additional planning is needed to meet the fleet electrification goals in the Operational Energy Strategy. In particular, the consultant is working with county staff to examine fleet needs, future availability of vehicles by type, and to develop a framework and timeline for the overall fleet transition to include study of costs and benefits to the county. The analysis will be completed in summer 2025 and will inform future vehicle purchasing decisions. On the community side, the consultant is evaluating approaches to meet the vehicle electrification goals included in the Community-wide Energy and Climate Action Plan (CECAP) by forecasting growth in EVs in the community, identifying gaps in charging infrastructure, and outlining strategies to increase charging infrastructure where needed. Stakeholder engagement will be conducted with members of EV interest groups, staff from neighboring jurisdictions, and Fairfax County residents, including members of historically underserved communities. The final report is expected in July 2025.

On the Community EV Readiness Strategy, the Committee noted that many residents, especially those living in single-family homes, can readily charge EVs at home; this needs to be highlighted in messaging and outreach that the county conducts. For those that live in multi-family and townhome communities, the Committee highlighted the work of Charge Up Fairfax to expand community charging opportunities.

On the fleet transition, Supervisors Walkinshaw and Storck requested additional information on vehicle purchasing decisions made by the county and the processes and standards involved. Supervisor Walkinshaw was especially interested in the justification process for the purchase of pickup trucks and SUVs. He noted that the default choice should be the least expensive, least polluting sedan that we can purchase. Chairman McKay asked about the new vehicles that were purchased over the period of time we accumulated our 224 hybrid- and all-electric vehicles, and what percentage of those are hybrid or electric. Supervisor Alcorn asked for an update on the challenges bus manufacturers are facing with fleet electrification and what the industry is doing to address those.

Item V: Review of Staff Reports and NIPs

Supervisor Walkinshaw highlighted a NIP that was included in the Board package with an update on Fairfax County's plastic bag tax revenue. He noted the reduction of 2 million plastic bags used between January - July 2024 and January - July 2023. The Committee discussed the success of the plastic bag tax in reducing plastic bag use in the county. Supervisor Herrity requested an update from staff on the reduction of plastic bag pollution found in county streams and how that relates to data collected by Clean Fairfax.

The meeting adjourned at 3:02 P.M.