

ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY CONSERVATION COMMISSION

c/o Department of Environmental Services

2100 Clarendon Blvd., Suite 705

Arlington, VA 22201

July 6, 2016

The Honorable Libby Garvey, Chairman
Arlington County Board
2100 Clarendon Blvd., Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22201

Re: Arlington's Legislative Priorities for 2017 (Energy and Environmental)

Dear Ms. Garvey:

The Environment and Energy Conservation Commission (E2C2) welcomes this opportunity to respond to the questions raised in your letter of May 9, 2016. Our responses are provided below:

Question 1: If the Governor and the Legislature could take 1-3 actions that would affect the work of your group, what would most benefit Arlington? The Environmental Protection Agency's Clean Power Plan (CPP) is the nation's first effort to deal with carbon pollution. The Governor should continue to work with Arlington County to include features in Virginia's compliance plan that will benefit Arlington's economy and the environment. There will be opportunities to steer jobs in energy efficiency and renewables (particularly solar) to Arlington, clean and diversify energy supplies to Arlington, mitigate GHG emissions from Arlington, and maximize overlap between VA Compliance Plan and Arlington County's Community Energy Plan goals. We also recommend that Arlington and the Northern Virginia legislative delegation continue to oppose efforts to weaken the federal Clean Power Plan, through legislation that seeks to delay or prohibit the Department of Environmental Quality from submitting Virginia's implementation plan.

Question 2: Given the state budget cuts over the last eight years, what are the most important to restore? Are there any areas of the budget that should be expanded? Are there any areas where funding could be cut? Stormwater represents one of local government's most pressing infrastructure needs with costs estimated in Arlington's Stormwater Master Plan to range from \$50 million to \$150 million. The Stormwater Local Assistance Fund, administered by the Department of Environmental Quality, supports the efforts of local jurisdictions to reduce runoff by providing funding for matching grants. It also provides an effective path forward to improve water quality by fostering a strong relationship between the Commonwealth and local governments. We urge Arlington to work with local jurisdictions to support increased funding necessary to meet increasingly stringent state and federal water quality standards.

Question 3: From your involvement in Arlington and the Commonwealth, what legislation do you anticipate in 2017 that might affect Arlington positively or negatively? In other words, is there anything we should anticipate and develop a strategy to address? Legislation proposed in the 2015 and 2016 sessions (Virginia Coastal Protection Act) would have required the Governor to join the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative that established a regional carbon dioxide electric power sector cap and trade program. At the same time, it would have established the Commonwealth Resilience Fund, a revolving fund to serve as a consistent stream of revenue to assist counties, cities and towns in southwest Virginia address sea level rise and recurrent flooding. If enacted, the law would both cut greenhouse gas emissions and generate revenue to address the effects of climate change. Legislation did not pass in 2015

or 2016. If reintroduced in the 2017 legislation session, E2C2 recommends that Arlington develop a strategy to support this legislation.

Question 4: Among businesses, other local governments, or interest groups, who would be our natural allies, if any, in our community and around the Commonwealth on any of these issues? On regional issues, our allies would likely be such groups as the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, members of which would likely support legislation protecting the Chesapeake Bay. On specific issues, groups such as the Washington Area Bicyclist Association (bicycle safety proposals), the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (stormwater), the Sierra Club (endangered species and general environmental), and The Nature Conservancy (land conservation) would likely be natural allies.

Question 5: Is there anything else that you would like to suggest to help us best develop our 2017 legislative priorities? Yes, E2C2's areas of interest are numerous and we offer the list below to help develop 2017 legislative priorities. E2C2 supports legislation that promotes a sustainable Arlington and addresses environmental issues most affecting urban jurisdictions such as ours: energy conservation; storm water management; land conservation; invasive species; multi-modal transportation; and recycling. We recognize that some of our recommendations may prove unattainable because of resource limitations, political opposition, and/or technical matters.

- A. **Energy & Climate Legislation:** Arlington should continue its efforts to reduce the County's greenhouse gas emissions, reduce demand for energy, and increase use of energy from renewable sources. Global warming represents one of today's most significant environmental threats facing the Commonwealth today and E2C2 would support legislation that acknowledges the threat and takes action to mitigate it.
 - a. Support state compliance with the EPA Clean Power Plan – Refer to our answer to Question 1 above for details.
 - b. Join the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative: Refer to our answer to Question 3 above for details.
 - c. Promote renewable energy legislation that will grow the solar industry in VA: Some excellent legislation was introduced last session that is worthy of continued support, particularly with regards to expanding net meter (including community net metering legislation), lifting the cap on net metering programs, reducing stand-by net meter charges, and supporting permanent and improved third-party Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) regulations.
 - d. Implement a Mandatory Virginia-Wide Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard (RPS): Although most states — including Virginia's neighboring states — have adopted mandatory RPSs, Virginia is among the few states with voluntary goals. The Commonwealth has set an RPS goal to generate 15% of the state's electricity from renewable sources by 2025, one of the least ambitious goals in the nation. E2C2 supports a mandatory RPS with more ambitious goals for renewable energy.
 - e. Promote Energy Efficiency: E2C2 encourages additional state legislation requiring more aggressive energy efficiency targets and enforcement of regulations such that energy reduction goals are mandatory rather than voluntary.
- B. **Land Conservation:** Arlington is a small jurisdiction with very limited natural green space. We would recommend, therefore, the enactment of laws that promote land conservation efforts, including increased funding of the Virginia Land Preservation Tax Credit to encourage preservation of private land for public use. The Virginia Land Preservation Tax Credit is an efficient and effective way to encourage private voluntary land conservation by providing taxpayers who make gifts of land or conservation easements tax credits equal to 40% of the value

of the donated interest. The preservation of such land in Arlington can help to enhance storm water management and reduce nutrient and sediment pollution in the Chesapeake Bay.

- C. **Recycling:** To help attain Arlington's Zero Waste Resolution adopted on November 19, 2015 E2C2 recommends supporting legislation that would encourage the use of reusable shopping bags. Legislation proposing a tax on disposable bags, with funds to be deposited into the Virginia Water Quality Improvement Fund, has been proposed in recent sessions, but has not been enacted. Consistent with the County's efforts to promote water quality and to discourage products and materials that become trash after their use the County should continue to support such measures. Moreover, the County should also advocate for a ban on the use of single-use styrofoam containers, consistent with laws recently enacted in the District of Columbia and Montgomery County, and Prince George's County. These laws generally require food service providers to use compostable or recyclable food service products. Reducing the use of polystyrene products, which cannot be composted or recycled, will help clean up the Chesapeake Bay and other waterways of polystyrene trash. This would help meet the Zero Waste Resolution goal of reusing or recycling 90 percent of discarded materials.

Conclusion: We appreciate this opportunity to help the County prioritize its legislative initiatives for 2017 and express our willingness to work with the staff and County Board to further Arlington's energy and environmental goals.

Sincerely,



Scott Dicke
E2C2 Chairman