



County of Fairfax, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 18, 2024

TO: Fairfax County Board of Supervisors

FROM: Larry J Zaragoza, DEnv, Chair *Larry J Zaragoza*
Environmental Quality Advisory Council (EQAC)

SUBJECT: FY2025 County Budget Recommendations

This memorandum provides EQAC's recommendations on the County Executive's proposed FY2025 budget. EQAC recommends:

1. FULLY FUND CLIMATE PLANS THROUGH THE REGULAR BUDGET, WHILE PRIORITIZING PROGRAMS WITH THE GREATEST CLIMATE IMPACT.

The resources needed to fully fund implementation of the county's three climate plans (the Operational Energy Strategy (OES), the Community-wide Energy and Climate Action Plan (CECAP) and Resilient Fairfax) have not been adequately established. While there have been significant investments in some areas (e.g., Energy Efficient Retrofits, Solar and EV infrastructure at county facilities), these efforts have been primarily funded through the carryover budget process. EQAC urges that the Board provide dedicated funding through the regular appropriation process be established.

At the same time, prioritization among the projects is needed. Many of the community facing programs are in an early, pilot phase and efforts are underway to develop these pilots into sustainable programs. EQAC recommends that the county provide information on the potential greenhouse gas emissions reductions that can be achieved by different programs on the county climate dashboard as soon as possible along with estimate of the cost of implementation. EQAC urges the county to place a priority on funding those projects that will have the greatest benefits in helping to meet the county's greenhouse gas emissions goals and build resilience to climate change and provide local benefits. The available funding should be directed to the projects that provide local benefits and are most important to meeting the County's climate goals.

2. THE PROPOSAL TO CONSOLIDATE ANIMAL SERVICES INTO THE DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL SHELTERING NEEDS FURTHER STUDY.

We are concerned that the proposal to consolidate the Animal Protection Police Officers (APPO) program into the Department of Animal Sheltering (DAS) lacks sufficient

justification. It appears to us that it is being made without adequate outreach with the community to make an informed decision on the costs and benefits of such a change from the status quo.

The current partnership of the APPO and Wildlife Biologist program under the Fairfax County Police Department (FCPD) has received praise from state agencies, stakeholders, and community members for its effectiveness to enforce state and local wildlife regulations and policies. Consolidation with the DAS jeopardizes the success of the programs and more importantly the mission of the wildlife management programs. It is not clear how this reorganization would support One Fairfax, result in better outcomes for wildlife in the county, maintain safety for residents, reduce the budget, or provide greater efficiency.

Recommendations for the 2026 Fiscal Year

1. PARKS: EQAC APPRECIATES THE FUNDING FOR THE FAIRFAX COUNTY PARK AUTHORITY (FCPA). In the face of a tough budget year, EQAC appreciates the commitment to One Fairfax through full annual funding of a Mobile Nature Center, support of the county's Zero Waste initiative through funding of a pilot program (in part through the General Fund), and funding for natural resources including continued investments in forestry, bamboo removal, and restoration. EQAC further appreciates an increase in funding for the Invasive Management Area program through the Environmental and Energy Program. While EQAC continues to advocate for a more sustainable funding model for the Park Authority, the Board's support this year of FCPA initiatives is greatly appreciated.

2. INCREASE THE STORMWATER RATE.

EQAC recommends a quarter penny increase in the stormwater rate, which would increase the rate to 0.035 per \$100 of assessed value. The advertised stormwater rate will not meet needs, which include maintaining the existing stormwater infrastructure, flood control, stream restoration and possibly work on Lake Accotink. EQAC has recommended for several years that a quarter penny be added to the stormwater tax annually until the stormwater needs are met. However, this has not happened.

3. INCREMENTAL FUNDING DOES NOT FULLY FUND SOME COUNTY PROGRAMS.

a. Solid Waste Collection: The advertised rate increases for solid waste collection and leaf collection do not provide sufficient revenue to meet the expected need. In order to fully fund the cost of the program, EQAC recommends that the Board of Supervisors advertise an annual waste collection fee of \$578/yr for each household.

b. Leaf Pile Collection: To fully fund the cost of this program, EQAC recommends an annual leaf collection fee of 0.024 per \$100 of assessed value. Moreover, given the high carbon footprint associated with the leaf collection program, and that the vast majority of county residents do not have curbside leaf pile collection, EQAC supports at least encouraging residents to compost leaves.

Board of Supervisors
Recommendations for the FY2025 Budget
Page 3

We also support the County Executive's proposed increase in the wastewater treatment rate, which is needed to maintain those critical facilities.

We thank you for your consideration of these recommendations and welcome any questions.

cc: Rachel Flynn, Deputy County Executive
Tom Arnold, Deputy County Executive
John Morrill, Director, Office of Environmental and Energy Coordination (OEEC)
Christopher Herrington, Director, Department of Public Works and Environmental Services (DPWES)
Chief Kevin Davis, Chief of Police, FCPD
Bob Blakley, Deputy Chief of Police, FCPD
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