

# **BOARD OF SUPERVISORS ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE**

**October 3, 2023**

**1:30 P.M.**

**Government Center Conference Room 11**

## **Board of Supervisors Members Present:**

Board Chair Jeffrey C. McKay  
Committee Chair Daniel G. Storck, Mount Vernon District  
Supervisor Walter L. Alcorn, Hunter Mill District  
Supervisor John W. Foust, Dranesville District  
Supervisor Penelope A. Gross, Mason District  
Supervisor Pat Herrity, Springfield District  
Supervisor Rodney L. Lusk, Franconia District  
Supervisor Dalia A. Palchik, Providence District  
Supervisor Kathy L. Smith, Sully District  
Supervisor James R. Walkinshaw, Braddock District

## **Others Present:**

Bryan J. Hill, County Executive  
Beth Teare, County Attorney

October 3, 2023, Meeting Agenda:

[BOSEC April 25, 2023 Agenda \(fairfaxcounty.gov\)](https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/bosec/agenda/2023/10/03)

October 3, 2023, Meeting Materials:

[Board of Supervisors Environmental Committee Meeting: Oct. 3, 2023 | Board Of Supervisors \(fairfaxcounty.gov\)](https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/bosec/meetings/2023/10/03)

The following is a summary of the discussion from the October 3, 2023, Environmental Committee meeting.

The meeting was called to order at 1:32 P.M.

## **Item I Opening Remarks**

After a brief introduction from Supervisor Storck, Committee Chair, he asked if there were any comments from Board members on the summary from the July 18 Environmental Committee meeting. With no changes, the summary was accepted.

## **Item II County Response to the Bamboo Ordinance on Public Land**

Supervisor Storck welcomed those who had come to present on the bamboo ordinance, and asked Jai Cole, Director, Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA), to begin. Ms. Cole provided an update on the county's response to the Bamboo Ordinance, focusing on county-owned lands. She was joined by representatives of the Facilities Management Department (FMD), and the Department of Code Compliance, (DCC). She added that each department plays a pivotal role in this effort, and their perspectives provide a view of the strategies, successes, and the road ahead in eradicating bamboo in the county.

Gabe Zakkak, Director, DCC, provided an overview of the bamboo ordinance that was passed and became effective on January 1, 2023, by which a landowner must not allow running bamboo to spread from his or her property to any public right-of-way or adjoining property not owned by the landowner. He noted that it is the goal to work with property owners to gain voluntary compliance but that there is a court option through progressive civil penalties sought in General District Court. In preparation of the ordinance, the department worked on public outreach through the creation of two websites, educational videos and podcasts, mailers, and a bamboo management webinar to focus on establishing a dialogue and establishing agreements with landowners. He explained that DCC seeks volunteer compliance within a reasonable timeframe and flexible work with homeowners to assist in determining the best management strategies. DCC conducts investigations to assess progress and effectiveness of management strategies. He mentioned that, based on current volume, there have been 164 running bamboo complaints since January 1, with 66 of those found to be in violation, 58 not in violation, 10 duplicate complaints, and 10 still open and under review. In addition, seven appeals have been made and two cases are headed to court in November.

Tom Fleetwood, Department of Housing and Community Development, then presented information on the Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority (FCRHA) response. He shared that there is a limited presence of bamboo on FCRHA owned and operated properties, with some bamboo at the Kingsley (Providence), Briar Cliff (Providence), Penderbrook (Springfield), and Cedar Ridge (Hunter Mill) properties with elimination and remediation underway. Those will be incorporated into maintenance plans and oversight monitoring moving forward.

Mike Lambert, Assistant Director, FMD, presented next with Shane Flanigan, Environmental Coordinator, FMD. He explained that FMD has identified, removed, and is currently treating 1.8 acres of bamboo across nine sites throughout the county. He said that all nine sites are being monitored and spot treated as necessary to ensure full eradication. He shared that there are 30,973 total acres of land owned by Fairfax County, with the Park Authority holding the majority at 23,636 acres. Consequently, he added, the Park Authority faces the largest challenge in managing invasive species such as bamboo.

Next, John Burke, the Natural Resources Branch Manager for FCPA explained the status of bamboo on parkland. In keeping with their mission of protecting and enriching the quality of life for the community by preserving and enhancing parkland, natural and cultural resources, Mr. Burke explained that they also practice environmental stewardship and conservation to ensure residents have access to well maintained and enriching natural spaces. He said that for this reason, management of bamboo and invasive plants is severely impacting parkland in both ecological and use-based perspectives and must be a priority. He explained that since the initial identification of running bamboo in 2015, they have marked over 185 bamboo patches across FCPA property. He added that this is an expansive challenge that has proliferated across vast stretches of the park system, 250 acres cumulatively. He said that managing this aggressively growing plant, often intersecting parkland and neighboring private property, is going to be a long-term process. Mr. Burke explained that the scope of parkland bamboo management emphasizes the pressing need for a comprehensive strategy, dedicated resources, and sustained funding. He asked that, as FCPA delves deeper into the approach and challenges, Board members keep these numbers in mind, for they form the foundation of our bamboo management narrative on parkland. He stated that the committee members should have individual maps detailing the bamboo in their respective districts.

Mr. Burke noted that, given the rapid spread of bamboo on parkland and the resources available, it's imperative that the county strategically manage its removal. To maximize the funding impact, the Bamboo Project Prioritization Protocol has been formulated, which aims to use the funding as efficiently and impactfully as possible through a holistic approach by considering several key factors. These include site conditions, (some sites are more vulnerable or prone to bamboo invasiveness than others), ease of access, (accessibility can greatly influence the speed and efficiency of bamboo removal efforts), size of bamboo coverage, (larger clusters might need different strategies compared to smaller patches), proximity to rare resources, (protecting our valuable ecosystems and biodiversity is a priority, therefore sites closer to these resources might need quicker interventions), cooperation from neighboring landowners, (the success of our efforts can be significantly bolstered with collaboration from adjacent landholders), the Fairfax County Vulnerability Index, and other relevant factors.

Mr. Burke said that although he highlighted some major considerations, the protocol is adaptive and other factors may be considered as and when they arise. Additionally, educating the public is a cornerstone of this strategy. FCPA actively distributes educational materials on running bamboo to ensure community awareness and involvement. In addition, FCPA has a robust mechanism in place to record and track any complaints or occurrences of bamboo on its property which allows for swift responses and the ability to adjust strategies accordingly.

Mr. Burke stressed that bamboo management on parkland isn't a short-term project; this will be a prolonged commitment to protect our parks. He explained that recognizing the magnitude and longevity of this issue, FCPA has actively sought dedicated funds. He mentioned the strides made in this direction – in the third quarter of FY2023, FCPA was awarded funding for contracted bamboo removal projects, not only supporting the direct efforts to manage bamboo but also funding a dedicated Ecologist position with a budget of \$400,000. However, he said, it is crucial to highlight that the Ecologist position needed to manage this funding and serve as a project manager for these efforts, is currently on the proposed list of potential cuts to meet the seven percent reduction threshold. Mr. Burke said that given the importance and the long-term nature of bamboo management as well as the involved nature of removing bamboo, cutting this position could have detrimental impacts on strategies and efforts. He said he has met with his team and primary invasive plants contractors to gear up for the large amount of work potentially coming their way.

Mr. Burke explained that bamboo management is not just about maintaining the aesthetics of our parklands; it is about preserving the ecosystem, supporting biodiversity, and ensuring the health of our green spaces. He said there is a continued need for support for this and explained that bamboo management will be a long-term issue, especially on parkland. Mr. Burke concluded by saying that FCPA requests recurring funds for dedicated staff and contractor-supported bamboo removal and suppression projects on FCPA property. He estimates it will take 15 years and \$9.25 million to treat FCPA's identified acreage to date.

Ms. Cole thanked her fellow presenters and the committee for their support. She mentioned that they had recently received Carryover funding of \$400,000 for bamboo management. She explained the need for bamboo funding in the baseline budget and reiterated that this will be an ongoing project.

### **Board Discussion**

Supervisor Storck noted that the size of this problem is huge. Guidance and funding from the Board is needed to address and mitigate the issue going forward. He reminded the committee to review their individual district maps to recognize how widespread bamboo is in the county, demonstrating the need for a long-term eradication project. He then asked about other invasives that have the same degree of impact as bamboo is likely to have on parks.

Mr. Burke answered that there were other invasives like bamboo in impact and scale. He gave two examples of grasses that are particularly hard to manage. He concluded by stating that FCPA is thankful to have the ordinance and support to deal with bamboo effectively.

Chairman McKay asked if there is another phase required to remove bamboo on county land managed by FMD. Mr. Lambert answered that there are properties of varying sizes in the inventory; of the 728 parcels, 400 are less than an acre. However, he explained that the large properties with facilities are monitored and that, on these properties, they are not finding any more bamboo. Chairman McKay then asked FCPA about the criteria for removal, given staff and financial capacity issues and challenges with adjacent property owners. Specifically, he asked how FCPA triages which properties to remediate and which can wait until later.

Ms. Cole answered that the main component they consider is habitat impact, meaning areas with high habitat values are prioritized. She explained that access

with adjacent property owners who abut the bamboo is worked out with property owners to access. Approval is required from all property owners involved. Impact to natural areas, access to the area, and approval from property owners are the three considerations. Most of the bamboo is right up against private property because FCPA never planted bamboo so it either came from another source or was there when the property was acquired. She added that eradicating bamboo in more urban environments can create more parkland in areas where there is not as much, for example highly developed parks with limited natural areas.

Chairman McKay inquired about areas where running bamboo is occurring at a high rate and multiplying faster in some areas than others. He asked if those areas were prioritized over others, so progress can be made with a problem of this magnitude. Ms. Cole answered that the county has never done anything of this scope before. She suggested that the group returns to the committee in a year to report on progress to completely eradicate the bamboo. She added that the acreage will decrease because they will tackle the large areas first, however the small pockets will have a higher cost when scaled per acre. She hopes that the district bamboo maps will have shrunk by the time they return to the committee.

Supervisor Walkinshaw asked about the difference between bamboo removal and suppression. He asked if the cost was to remove or suppress? Mr. Burke answered that the cost estimate is conservative based on the work done to date and will be adjusted over time. They have calculated the current amount of acreage multiplied by \$37,000 per acre for removal and suppression.

Supervisor Walkinshaw asked for clarification that the cost is to remove all running bamboo identified, not just to suppress. Ms. Cole explained that suppression means to treat bamboo multiple years, to remove it then return to make sure it is gone. Supervisor Walkinshaw said he appreciated the estimate. Ms. Cole mentioned that suppression in a forest system differs from suppression in a yard. Supervisor Walkinshaw said suppression and eradication will have to be explained to the community. Ms. Cole clarified that eradication is preferable.

Supervisor Smith asked how many complaints have been received and what changes have occurred since the ordinance, and asked if the county is hearing from landowners that they cannot afford the costs of removing the bamboo.

Mr. Zakkak replied that 164 complaints have been received, with half of those in violation. Two cases have been referred and scheduled for court hearings after the

property owners had not responded. The county is hearing from landowners that they cannot afford the costs of removing the bamboo. The county has been offering cutting, herbicidal and trench solutions to those property owners. Supervisor Smith then asked what the cost to homeowners is to eradicate running bamboo in their yards. Mr. Zakkak answered that costs of between \$5,000 and \$15,000 have been reported to him, depending on property size.

Supervisor Storck mentioned a community meeting about trees and spoke about the effectiveness of the meeting. He shared that a similar informational meeting to learn bamboo management tools would be useful.

### **Item III**

#### **A Flood Mitigation Assistance Program to Increase Community Resiliency**

Supervisor Storck introduced the next subject, the Flood Mitigation Assistance Program to increase community resiliency and welcomed Ellie Coddling, Deputy Director for the Department of Public Works and Environmental Services (DPWES) who presented a new program made possible by the Board's September 12, 2023, approval of the amendment to Appendix O in the Fairfax County Code.

Ms. Coddling introduced her team, which included Joni Calmbacher, who will soon be the Stormwater Division Director, Chad Crawford, Director of Maintenance and Stormwater Management Division, Mark Gori, County Attorney's Office, and Willie Woode, Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District (NVSWCD).

Ms. Coddling explained that Appendix O was recently amended to establish a stormwater management fund which has enabled DPWES to provide grants for erosion and sediment control, flood mitigation assistance, and stormwater facility maintenance assistance. It was recommended that staff move forward with the Stormwater Facility Assistance Fund. Ms. Coddling stated that they would provide information on a Flood Mitigation Assistance Fund, a cost-share program, and noted that there could be future programs brought back to the Board. She explained that the reason for a cost-share program is because flooding is not a linear straightforward risk, and the cost-share program allows property owners to become empowered to take action to mitigate flooding risks. Drainage is a shared obligation and a function of a changing natural environment. A cost-share program helps to reduce risk to life and property on private lots. Ms. Coddling stated that

DPWES is seeking the Board's recommendation to allow county technical assistance through the NVSWCD and allow residents to take proactive efforts to increase overall community resiliency and be reimbursed for products and services that will reduce the risk of flood damage to their properties.

Ms. Coddling explained that the program has been designed to be flexible and allows residents to be reimbursed up to \$5,000 as a 50 percent cost-share program. The program is open to individual property owners as well as common interest communities, HOAs, and places of worship. The funding would be through the county's Stormwater Service District with an initial funding of \$250,000 for FY2025 and administered by the NVSWCD. Ms. Coddling then provided examples of approved flood mitigation practices including window wells, flood gates, modified basement areaways, sump pump backup batteries, utility protection, and exterior grading or drains. She mentioned that the grant supports the Resilient Fairfax plan, empowers residents, and that the county cannot achieve meaningful flood mitigation levels without resident participation. Ms. Coddling shared that the next steps, should the committee provide recommendation to move forward, will be a public hearing on the MOU grant program for the FY2025 budget, then incorporation of the Flood Mitigation Assistance Program into the FY2025 budget and initiation of the program on July 1, 2024. Ms. Coddling asked if there were any questions from the committee.

### **Board Discussion**

Supervisor Palchik commended the program then inquired about the \$5,000, specifically if the cost would vary depending on the size and scope of the flood mitigation projects, and asked how outreach and support is being offered to the community through an equity lens. Ms. Coddling replied that the projects thus far have been between \$1,000 and \$10,000. Supervisor Palchik clarified and asked if larger projects would have more variation in the costs. Ms. Coddling answered that the amount would be per project, whether a single dwelling or an HOA/group property. She added that DPWES has taken on community engagement work, especially areas within the Vulnerability Index that have been underrepresented in areas with flood complaints. Supervisor Palchik asked if staff have been tapping into the local non-profit network and Ms. Coddling affirmed that to be the case.

Chairman McKay asked how the county's required equity piece will be included and quantified, given the costs associated with these projects. He asked how a flooding history is established. He also questioned the county's liability should the



projects fail in the future. Ms. Coddling explained that the program is designed to be on a first come, first served basis, thus removing the flooding risk measurement component. She added that NVSWCD has experience with this type of grant award process to make sure the owners know what type of actions are available and best for their property. Chairman McKay asked if NVSWCD is completing the flood risk evaluations and making flood mitigation recommendations. Ms. Coddling answered that it is the practice of NVSWCD to perform site visits, describe the situation to the owners and provide some ideas on actions the property owner can take; assistance after that point would depend on the specific property. Chairman McKay's asked if the program specifically involved the flooding of structures or if the program can also be used by property owners to alleviate an upstream problem. Ms. Coddling explained that because of an owner's land rights, owners must apply for their own properties, however the program is not limited to structural flooding. Chairman McKay asked if a property owner could complete a project to benefit a downstream property and Ms. Coddling confirmed.

Supervisor Foust said he liked the concept of the program but expressed concern that the funding would not be enough to assist property owners. He noted that the county's stormwater fee generates millions of dollars in revenue and stated that the project may not be expansive enough. He said the citizens are not seeing the results of the stormwater fees and that this program is an opportunity to invest in community stormwater management. He suggested larger funding levels to accomplish more.

Supervisor Storck said that part of the committee's goal was to determine if they want to proceed with the funding of the program and if this is the right amount of funding. Supervisor Foust repeated his support of the program and emphasized the community's need for flooding mitigation assistance.

Supervisor Lusk asked about the battery sump pump backup and the quality of sump pumps in homes. He asked if the program intended to give some support in replacing and/or upgrading sump pumps for more reliable flooding mitigation. Ms. Coddling answered that the program will consider any reasonable request and that sump pump replacements could be added to the program's supplemental materials if it is not already included. Supervisor Lusk then asked how the reimbursement is structured. Ms. Coddling answered that all valid expenses are eligible for reimbursement with provided receipts, including materials, design, and construction costs. Supervisor Lusk expressed his support and echoed Supervisor Foust's comments about the funding level.

Supervisor Storck asked about the administrative costs associated with the program and Ms. Coddling confirmed that a portion of the funding would go to NVSWCD for administering the program.

Supervisor Gross said that the time to wait for evaluation assessments can be lengthy in other programs. She recommended starting small to build the program's capacity. She said since NVSWCD does not yet have the capacity, she does not want to set the program up for failure. Supervisor Gross then asked if the improvements would need to be disclosed in real estate documents if the property sold. Ms. Coddling answered that the program has a hold harmless agreement associated with it that is recorded in land records. A buyer would see that with a title search. She added that Virginia does not require disclosure of flooding. Supervisor Gross agreed and reiterated her recommendation to start the program small to assess demand. She also asked that the grant application process be as simple as possible for residents.

Supervisor Walkinshaw mentioned the approved list of practices and asked if property owners apply before or after the flood mitigation work has been completed. Ms. Coddling answered that at any point, if a resident has an assessment done and the problem is validated, they would be eligible to participate in the program. Supervisor Walkinshaw asked about completed projects. Ms. Coddling said that projects completed several years ago could not reasonably be reimbursed under this program. Supervisor Walkinshaw said he did not see this in the program's guidelines and suggested this be resolved. He suggested the program require applications before work is done, rather than retroactively seeking reimbursement. Mr. Woode agreed with Supervisor Walkinshaw's comments. Supervisor Walkinshaw mentioned NVSWCD's existing water quality projects grant program and asked about the terms of reimbursement in that program. Mr. Woode answered that the amount varies depending on the project.

Supervisor Smith asked about the protocol for multiple projects by an owner. Ms. Coddling replied that that would be considered one project, not multiple. Supervisor Smith asked how this funding would be prioritized. Ms. Coddling explained that the rate at which projects can be completed is based on staff and funding. She explained that getting applicants through the grant process will be more impactful than the dollar amounts and confirmed the department's commitment to their own county projects.

Supervisor Foust stated that the program is small, but the problem is much larger. He added that the county needs to be thinking bigger in terms of stormwater management. He believes the program deserves more commitment from the county and that the stormwater fee needs to be returned to the people who are being impacted.

Supervisor Palchik said that this program is one tool to get assistance to the community and added that these larger stormwater issues need to be addressed and asked how the other funds will be proactively used. Ms. Coddling responded that the five-year Capital Improvement Program (CIP) includes \$95 million for flood projects and explained that if there is a county issue, action will be moved forward, but the Flood Mitigation Assistance Program allows property owners with private drainage issues to take protective measures. Supervisor Palchik said trying to understand projects over time or figuring out where flooding issues are coming from, what is causing them, and how to address them is important. Ms. Coddling said that DPWES is planning to return early next year to discuss the updated countywide Flood Risk Reduction Plan.

Supervisor Foust shared that he has tried to assist residents in mitigating some of these flooding issues and it was his understanding that county funds could not be used to repair stormwater drains and prepare site work to deal with runoff on private property.

Ms. Teare, County Attorney, offered to prepare a memo for Supervisor Foust and work through the different scenarios. Supervisor Storck said that a key component was to utilize NVSWCD for flooding and stormwater management. He then thanked Ms. Coddling and moved to the next item.

#### **Item IV**

#### **Energy Conservation Assistance Program Partnership with NVSWCD**

The Office of Environmental and Energy Coordination's Dr. Neely Law and Division Manager, Matt Meyers, and Willie Woode of NVSWCD, presented the Energy Conservation Assistance Program partnership with the NVSWCD. Dr. Law explained that the presentation would provide an overview of climate action planning and goals, explain how the Energy Conservation Assistance Program supports implementation, provide background on the Energy

Conservation Assistance Program, and conclude with next steps to move to a financially sustained energy program for county projects.

Dr. Law explained that Fairfax County has climate plans that address both the cause and the effects of climate change. On the “cause” side, the county is playing their part in the global effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to climate change. She said the Community-Wide Energy and Climate Action Plan, (CECAP), addresses emissions generated within the community and identifies actions to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050, and that the Operational Energy Strategy focuses on county government facilities and operations with a goal to be energy carbon neutral by 2040. She continued that on the “effects” side, Resilient Fairfax is an integrated action plan to address the local impacts of climate change. Resilient Fairfax ensures that the county’s infrastructure, public services, natural resources, and populations can better withstand climatic hazards and conditions before, during and after an event.

Dr. Law stated that the Climate Champions was one of the CECAP programs presented to the Board in December 2022. The Climate Champions program supports and celebrates actions taken by the community to reduce GHG emissions. The Climate Champions Nonprofit Pilot is an initiative with the Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions (FACS). She explained that FACS was an ideal candidate for the pilot as they had campaigns ready to go that addressed building energy efficiency and renewable energy in the faith community. OEEC staff is providing technical support to help FACS build out one of these programs called “Solar Sanctuaries,” a program where a place of worship would become a community-serving facility and provide support services to residents before, during and after emergency events. Key to being a Solar Sanctuary is improving energy efficiency to lower energy consumption and creating energy resilience through clean energy and battery storage installations.

Dr. Law explained that by working with FACS, OEEC wanted to ensure the Solar Sanctuary program helped to remove barriers for places of worship and their congregants to take climate action. She said the key barriers identified were costs for implementation and access to information. Dr. Law mentioned that both FACS and OEEC have been actively pursuing grant opportunities while also identifying available financial incentives through three fronts: grant programs, federal rebates, and tax credits available through the Inflation Reduction Act, and local incentives like the Energy Conservation Assistance Program. She said that at the February 28 and July 18 Environmental Committee meetings, OEEC shared plans to work with

NVSWCD to expand the scope of the Energy Conservation Assistance Program to support community-based installation of projects that reduce GHG emissions. Addressing the cost barrier for implementing climate action will help the pilot meet its target of 10 places of worship committing to or completing an energy audit by December 2023 with implementation to follow in 2024.

Dr. Law explained that the Energy Conservation Assistance Program is an existing reimbursement, cost-share program established in 2015 and is a partnership between OEEC and NVSWCD. She noted that, going forward, NVSWCD will serve as the grant administrator while OEEC provides technical and programmatic support. Since 2015, the program has provided cost-share reimbursement grants to places of worship and HOAs to improve water quality and energy efficiency. Funding has been provided through the county budget, specifically the Environmental Improvement Program from 2015 to present. Startup funds of \$30,000 were provided in FY2015; after that, \$75,000 was provided annually through FY2022 except for FY2021. The current program provides a cost-share match for energy audits and energy efficiency projects. Currently, an applicant may receive 50 percent or up to \$750 for an energy audit and 50 percent reimbursement or up to \$5,000 for energy efficiency projects.

Dr. Law said that the assistance program has supported several projects to improve the energy efficiency of places of worship and community associations throughout the county. The projects have included appliance upgrades, HVAC systems, lighting, weatherstripping, window replacements and energy audits. As of September 2023, \$47,000 in funding has been expended on energy efficiency projects. This has resulted in an investment of over \$400,000 in energy efficiency projects by places of worship and HOAs. These upgrades have provided cost savings of \$6,500 a year or 30 percent total energy savings.

Dr. Law said that, moving forward, the MOU between NVSWCD and OEEC was created to transition the Energy Conservation Assistance Program from a project funded through the Environmental Improvement Program to a more sustainable cost-share program. The program will continue to operate as a partnership with the NVSWCD, where the NVSWCD will serve as the grant administrator - like their role in other cost-share programs provided to county residents. She said that OEEC will take a larger programmatic role with continued technical support to include a new webpage and promotional materials. Dr. Law explained that, following the approval of the MOU, a funding agreement will be established based on funds available in the approved FY2024 budget for CECAP implementation, with a total

of \$250,000 allocated for this program. The updated program will continue to support places of worship and HOAs as well as other common interest communities and nonprofits. The amount of the reimbursement grants, or cost-share, will be updated to better reflect the types of projects and costs to take climate action. Dr. Law then provided an example: An eligible entity may apply for up to two projects per year with a maximum reimbursement of \$15,000. She explained that the types of projects will support energy audits, energy efficiency, renewables, and resilience projects and additional incentives are provided for energy audits along with communities that are historically underserved and more vulnerable to climate impacts. Dr. Law shared that FACS is actively working with places of worship in these communities as part of the Climate Champions project, while OEEC intends to focus outreach and engagement through our existing interagency teams on community services which include representatives from a multitude of organizations working in this realm.

Dr. Law stated that in July 2023, OEEC began working with the Office of the County Attorney and NVSWCD to draft the MOU and funding agreement. In September, the MOU was approved by the NVSWCD Board. She said that OEEC is in the process of updating its webpage following the October 10, 2023, Board meeting and is seeking approval to launch the updated program by way of an MOU signed by the Director of OEEC. In preparation of the FY2025 budget, Dr. Law continued, OEEC plans to evaluate the program and how receptive the new incentives have been for qualifying organizations to take climate action and look for opportunities to expand to businesses. Dr. Law then requested that the Board support and help promote the Energy Conservation Assistance Program and authorize the Director of OEEC to enter into an agreement via the MOU with NVSWCD.

### **Board Discussion**

Supervisor Storck said that he wanted to bring this to the committee, so his colleagues are aware of the upcoming item coming to the Board at its next meeting.

Supervisor Walkinshaw asked about the reimbursement amounts. Dr. Law explained that the reimbursement amounts are up to \$750 for an energy audit and up to \$5,000 for energy efficiency projects. Supervisor Walkinshaw confirmed that OEEC will be coming to the Board with higher proposed reimbursement amounts and Dr. Law shared the proposed increases, which include a reimbursement of up

to \$5,000 for an energy audit to better reflect the costs of energy audits, as well as increasing the maximum amount for any energy efficiency or renewable energy project to \$10,000. The cost-share reimbursement for projects is 50 percent, unless projects are located in a designated equity area; such projects are eligible for 75 percent cost-share reimbursement.

Supervisor Smith asked about the places of worship that have expressed interest in the program. She asked if it was known which these were and where they were in the county. Dr. Law explained that FACS is leading that engagement effort given their relationships with these places of worship and stated that they were engaged in the areas of greatest need. Supervisor Smith asked if naming the places of worship was part of the process and Dr. Law confirmed her willingness to provide that information to the Board.

Supervisor Stork thanked Dr. Law and Mr. Meyers and moved to the next item.

### **Item V**

#### **Interactive Tool for Resident Climate Action Reporting and Competition**

John Morrill, Acting Director, OEEC, presented on an interactive tool for resident climate action reporting and competition. He began by stating that at the last Environmental Committee meeting on July 18, OEEC summarized the latest material for outreach and engagement with the community on energy and climate action. He explained that in Supervisor Storck's continuing efforts to broaden community activity he wondered aloud whether a competition of sorts, perhaps between Supervisor districts, might raise the visibility of climate action. Mr. Morrill said that OEEC staff considered this challenge and have a plan to make it happen. He explained that when the county engages with the community, it can be difficult to establish cause-and-effect from outreach. He mentioned an example that while staff knows that over 500 people have viewed videos on solar and electric vehicles, there is no information on who they are, where they are, or if they took any action. He explained that one aspect of such a challenge or competition is in establishing a baseline and noted that this is difficult to establish as energy data by individual customers is held to high privacy standards. Mr. Morrill said the energy use data in aggregate for the county is available, but there is not much granularity by geography. For some specific items such as solar installations or electric vehicle registrations, the county may be able to quantify them by zip code, but in both of those cases the more affluent are much more likely to own those

amenities and therefore they aren't so useful in a competitive sense. But one of the most effective motivators for people to act is to know that their neighbors have acted. In fact, he added, the use of friendly competition, making something into a game, has been shown to work in many fields to increase awareness and participation in an activity and there are web-based platforms that allow individuals to use checklists and even report their actual energy use data to compare themselves to others. He explained that individuals can identify themselves by location, safely and securely while protecting their privacy, yet be part of a larger group and be part of a friendly competition with other locations and affinity groups.

Mr. Morrill then shared an image of an example landing page for one web application that was established specifically to allow that kind of engagement. He explained that the page features a drop-down menu where a user can select the locality in which they live to register and get involved. Mr. Morrill registered and completed his own profile, and this application calculated an estimate of his carbon footprint including transportation. It compares his household to the average in Northern Virginia and the U.S. as well as households in other countries. The application has recommendations and a checklist of actions to reduce his household carbon footprint. Elsewhere within the application, the web platform allows for easy tracking of participation and activity between localities and affinity groups. For example, on this platform there is an active faith community leader board in addition to a ranking of towns and cities. As we move through the procurement process to enter into an agreement with a vendor, we will collaborate with the vendor to obtain data on participation and results on an aggregated basis to establish a sense of where community activity is strong and where it needs to be bolstered. The goal of this effort is to generate community buzz surrounding personal climate action. OEEC will work closely with other agencies that engage our communities in our most vulnerable neighborhoods to ensure as broad participation as possible. This work complements our existing, ongoing outreach and programming for energy efficiency, renewable energy, electrification, waste reduction, and more. OEEC will provide further news updates on this effort as we proceed. He asked if there were any questions from the committee.

## **Board Discussion**

Supervisor Storck explained that this could be a tool to achieve the county's climate action goals.



Supervisor Smith said she was skeptical and wonders how this attracts people who are not already interested in energy efficiency. She noted that she is not sure if this is the way to engage people who do not have time to participate. She then asked if there was a cost estimate for the program.

Mr. Morrill replied that the cost will be nominal. He added that getting people excited and talking could generate curiosity and, subsequently, action.

Supervisor Alcorn stated his support for the idea and suggested a geographic designation over magisterial districts. He added that high school students may be interested in the competition.

Supervisor Palchik also offered her support for the effort.

Supervisor Storck thanked Mr. Morrill for his presentation.

#### **Item VI**

#### **Fairfax County Green Bank Ordinance Framework and Budget Estimates**

This item was skipped due to time constraints.

#### **Item V**

#### **Review of Staff Reports**

With no items to report, Supervisor Storck adjourned the meeting at 2:58 P.M.