

# **BOARD OF SUPERVISORS ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE**

**February 2, 2021**

**11:00 A.M.  
Electronic Meeting**

## **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 Foust, Dranesville District  
Supervisor Penelope A. Gross, Mason District  
Supervisor Pat Herrity, Springfield District  
Supervisor Rodney L. Lusk, Lee District  
Supervisor Dalia A. Palchik, Providence District  
Supervisor Kathy L. Smith, Sully District  
Supervisor James R. Walkinshaw, Braddock District

## **Others Present:**

Bryan Hill, County Executive  
Joe Mondoro, Chief Financial Officer  
Elizabeth D. Teare, County Attorney  
Kambiz Agazi, Director, Office of Environmental and Energy Coordination (OEEC)

February 2, 2021 Meeting Agenda:

[feb02-environmental-agenda.pdf \(fairfaxcounty.gov\)](#)

February 2, 2021 Meeting Materials:

[Board of Supervisors Environmental Committee Meeting: Feb. 2, 2021 | Board of Supervisors \(fairfaxcounty.gov\)](#)

The following is a summary of the highlights of the discussion from the February 2, 2021 meeting.

The meeting was called to order at 11:15 A.M.

## **Item I Opening Remarks**

After a brief introduction from Supervisor Storck, Committee Chair, the Environmental Committee accepted the minutes of the December 8, 2020 meeting. With no further changes, the meeting minutes were accepted into the record.

## **Item II CECAP Update**

The second topic on the agenda was an update on the Community-wide Energy and Climate Action Plan (CECAP) by Aline Althen, Public Information Officer, OEEC.

Ms. Althen began by discussing the public education and engagement goals for the CECAP, which include raising public awareness about the CECAP planning process, making the case for climate action, developing and nurturing a network of partners and supporters, and collecting information and input from the public.

Public education is needed to close the gap in public knowledge and to establish a baseline of understanding. The public education campaign is based on evidence-based best practices in climate change communications. Messaging is being delivered via a variety of media to reach a broad audience.

The success of community outreach efforts throughout the remainder of the CECAP planning process depends on the goodwill and partnership of dozens of individuals and organizations. The OEEC is building support from the ground up with partners and champions of the CECAP. This network will be critically important to the implementation phase.

In August and September of 2020, the CECAP team hosted three public meetings, identical in content and format. In the current round of engagement, there will be two public meetings; one will be dedicated to energy issues and the other will be dedicated to waste, development and transportation issues. The CECAP team will also be hosting two virtual roundtable meetings with targeted audiences to collect feedback on steps the county can take to support voluntary engagement with the CECAP. These two audiences include senior management and executive-level leadership from companies headquartered or based in Fairfax County, and

decision-makers from the community serving low-income and underrepresented populations in the county.

To share pertinent, topical information in a format that is accessible, the OEEC will be hosting a series of 30-minute community briefings. Topics will include creating connective communities, energy generation and supply, transportation issues, and waste management issues. The videos of the briefings will be posted online and will be available on-demand for public viewing and sharing.

A series of five online surveys, to be released in late February 2021, will be used to capture public opinion. These include a public survey on energy-related issues, a public survey on transportation, development, and waste-related issues, and an open-ended public survey. These first three surveys will be available in English, Spanish, and Korean. Targeted surveys will also be available for the business community and frontline communities in Fairfax County.

The current public education and outreach campaign is unfolding in three phases, with the final public engagement phase ending in mid- to late-March 2021. Another round of community engagement is planned for May 2021.

#### Board Discussion:

Supervisor Gross commented that she was really pleased with how CECAP has been moving forward. She asked that staff inform the Board Offices when the surveys go live so that they can inform their constituents.

Ms. Althen confirmed that she will share the links when they become available.

Supervisor Lusk appreciated the broad representation base for this process. He offered that it would be beneficial to include the trailer parks in his district. They have a lot of impervious surfaces that need to be addressed. He offered to help staff reach out to these communities, specifically.

Ms. Althen confirmed that staff would include communications with those communities.

Supervisor Palchik asked in what languages the surveys would be distributed.

Ms. Althen reiterated that the surveys will be available in English, Spanish, and Korean.

Supervisor Palchik asked if they can translate the surveys into other languages.

Ms. Althen asked if the Board had suggestions of other languages that would require translation.

Supervisor Palchik commented that her district has a large population of Vietnamese constituents and she would be following up with Ms. Althen about translation services.

### **Item III**

#### **Use of Stormwater Funds for Stormwater System Improvements Within VDOT Right-of-Ways**

The third item on the agenda was a presentation on The Use of Stormwater Funds for Stormwater System Improvements Within Existing Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) Right-of-Way, given by Craig Carinci, Director, Stormwater Planning, Department of Public Works and Environmental Services (DPWES).

Mr. Carinci stated that his presentation is a follow-up to an October 2019 presentation to the Environmental Committee on flood response strategies. He presented on the Board's 1997 and 2006 policies on stormwater management. The 2006 policy mandates that road projects that are not related to the protection of stream beds or banks or water quality cannot be funded out of the stormwater or watershed budget. In the October 2019 presentation to the Board, a strategy to upgrade existing road culverts to meet or exceed current design standards was identified. As mentioned at that meeting, as this includes enhancing VDOT-maintained infrastructure with stormwater funds, a change to the 2006 policy would be required.

Over the last several years, intense rainfall events have resulted in numerous complaints and concerns about safety issues associated with flooded roadways in county communities. Staff have determined that undersized culverts have resulted in house flooding, as well as severe road and yard flooding. Undersized culverts

and conveyances can result in safety hazards, for both vehicular traffic and property owners, and can damage public infrastructure and private property.

Currently, there is a lack of transportation funding available for drainage improvements within the existing VDOT right-of-way. Many state and federal funds are limited as to their use; they are limited to increasing transportation capacity or mitigating congestion. VDOT has two major sources of funding for culvert and bridge repair and replacement: The State of Good Repair Fund and the VDOT Bridge Maintenance Fund. Both applications of these funds are very prescriptive. VDOT also has a County Safety and Operational Improvement Fund, but it is only sufficient to address maintenance-level work, such as improving drainage ditches and replacing small culverts. County staff coordinate regularly with VDOT on drainage complaints to prioritize projects that utilize this funding. Since 2015, VDOT has completed roughly 70 projects from this fund, totaling about \$4.5 million. County transportation bond referendums seem to have the most flexibility for these projects.

Due to VDOT funding limitations and public safety concerns, staff recommend that the 2006 policy be updated to allow the use of stormwater funds to improve stormwater facilities in the right-of-way. Staff are not proposing that a new program be created to address roadway drainage problems, but a revision to the policy would give staff another tool to help reduce flood safety hazards and address structural flooding. If approved, it would also improve collaboration efforts between staff and VDOT on stormwater system improvements and flood mitigation in the county. With the committee's support, staff will present the recommendation at an upcoming Board of Supervisors meeting.

Projects for stormwater improvements in the right-of-way would be prioritized annually with other flood mitigation projects based on the frequency and extent of flooding, or other criteria established by the Board. The proposed projects would be vetted each spring by Board members through the development of the annual Stormwater Capital Improvement Program (CIP). All proposed flood mitigation projects that involve improvements in the right-of-way could be presented to the Board as an information item. A couple of caveats would be implemented as part of the policy update: Stormwater funds will not be used for pedestrian, streetlighting, or vehicular improvements unless they will be replacing existing facilities that are damaged or must be removed in order to implement the flood mitigation project. Stormwater Funds will not be used for maintenance needs or to fund other roadway or transportation improvements.

Board Discussion:

Supervisor Gross provided context for the 2006 policy that was mentioned, specifically the responsibilities of VDOT at the time. Since that time, the county has had more intense and frequent flooding events. She whole-heartedly supports the staff recommendation to update the policy, keeping in mind that there could be a potential backlog of projects resulting from this update.

Chairman McKay concurred with Supervisor Gross. He thinks the Board should support staff efforts to address issues in the communities. However, he is also concerned about the state's responsibility if they do so. He stated that we have a lot of needs for stormwater in the county, but we do not want to be taking over the responsibilities of the state. Commenting on the restriction on the use of stormwater funds for pedestrian and streetlighting improvements, he asked if there is an opportunity to prioritize projects that might combine stormwater and pedestrian needs, utilizing different funds for different components of the projects, as needed.

Tom Biesiadny, Director, Fairfax County Department of Transportation (FCDOT), responded that when the General Assembly implemented the Smart Scale competition for state transportation funding, VDOT agreed that they would put aside monies for small improvements like drainage and traffic signals that would not compete with large transportation projects. VDOT does carve out money that is allocated based on population. The county gets about \$1.6-1.8 million a year. Because it is based on population, the county gets the largest share of that pot of money that is allocated for small projects. It is allocated in an equitable way.

In response to Chairman McKay's question on combining funds for improvement projects, Mr. Biesiadny highlighted a project on Chesterbrook Road where transportation funds are being used for pedestrian improvements, stormwater funds are being used for a DPWES stream restoration project, and VDOT is funding additional maintenance. The recommended policy change would allow more of such collaboration in the future.

Chairman McKay asked, if the improvements are made, how does liability change for property damages, if at all, as a result of the county going into VDOT right-of-way and doing an improvement versus damage claims that can come from a drainage failure within the right-of-way.

Mark Gori, Office of the County Attorney, responded that the improvements will be made according to VDOT standards and future maintenance will be overseen by VDOT. He does not expect that the liability to the county will change for making those amendments.

Supervisor Foust commented that many stormwater challenges arise from development that the Board has approved, therefore he supports the use of county resources to address these issues. He is supportive of additional funding being allocated for pedestrian as well as stormwater projects. He asked that the Board not overly restrict the use of the funds with the policy change.

Supervisor Alcorn asked if there has been any consideration of a matching strategy with state funding.

Mr. Carinci answered that yes, staff do try to partner with VDOT on work in the right-of-way, and FCDOT as well. They try to use the funding equitably and get others to participate in the project either through grants or through another state or county agency.

Supervisor Alcorn suggested that this be incorporated into the policy.

Supervisor Lusk commented that he is supportive of the policy change. He asked how many right-of-way projects may be impacted by the policy change and if there is a cost associated with these projects.

Mr. Carinci responded that there are roughly 60 roadway crossings or areas that typically flood during major events that have been identified by the Office of Emergency Management and Public Safety. There are also roughly 50 stormwater projects DPWES is working on right now, some of which would involve work in the right-of-way to alleviate structural flooding. He would have to research costs, as it is still early in the assessment phase for some of those projects.

Supervisor Lusk directed staff to report to the Board at a later time on the cost of these projects.

Mr. Carinci agreed to come back to the Board with the costs of these projects.

Chairman Storck asked Mr. Carinci to elaborate on how the Board would approve those projects.

Mr. Carinci responded that some of the criteria for flood mitigation projects include the frequency of flooding, cost of the project, how many people are affected and the impact on vulnerable communities. Staff coordinate with the Board offices on flood complaints in each district.

Chairman Storck asked Mr. Carinci to further explain how the Board could be involved in the process to approve these projects.

Mr. Carinci responded that, as part of the development of the annual Stormwater CIP, staff could vet all of the potential projects with each Board member and bring the projects to the Board as an information item.

Chairman Storck commented that this would be helpful to inform the Board on how stormwater tax dollars are being spent. He is concerned about the use of county funds for VDOT responsibilities and problems. When we have these issues, it is a way to involve state legislators, who often do not involve themselves in these projects and tend to pass constituent concerns on to the Board of Supervisors.

Mr. Carinci commented that DPWES will begin to prepare the Board items for the March 9, 2021 Board of Supervisors meeting for the recommended policy change.

#### **Item IV Compost Pilot Program Update**

The fourth item on the agenda was an update on the Compost Pilot Program, given by Eric Forbes, Director, Engineering and Environmental Compliance, Solid Waste Management Program, DPWES.

Mr. Forbes began his presentation with a reminder that, last summer, the Fairfax Green Initiatives #2 Board Matter directed staff to research and report back to the Board on the prospect of composting and diverting food scraps from the community away from municipal solid waste or trash.

He presented figures on waste and recycling tonnage from 2019. Thirty percent of the county's solid waste stream included food waste or food scraps. Staff

researched model composting programs at the national and regional levels, as well as private sector models and programs at farmers markets. Staff found that the three most common composting programs include event-specific drop-offs, permanent drop-off locations, and curbside collection.

In Fairfax County, several composting pilot programs have been in existence for a number of years. Compost companies operating in the county (of which there are now four) offer curbside collection for residents. The county now offers two food scrap drop-off locations at the I-66 Transfer Station and I-95 Landfill. Finally, there are two internal efforts, including the Fairfax Employees for Environmental Excellence (FEEE) composting pilot program, and compost collection at county-sponsored events.

In regards to the county's food scraps drop-off program, staff have developed outreach and education materials. The collection services are currently supported by an outside vendor but could be transferred in-house at a later time.

Mr. Forbes identified two opportunities that could drive composting efforts. As staff have analyzed what it would take to adopt the Joint Environmental Task Force (JET) Zero Waste by 2030 goal, they have learned a lot about food scraps and organics diversion. In addition, farmers markets provide opportunities to offer food scraps and organics collection.

Next steps will involve continuing existing pilot programs and working with partners to pilot institutional programs through the JET Zero Waste Plan. Staff are looking for the Board's endorsement in expanding the Compost Pilot Program to farmers markets and are evaluating a curbside collection pilot.

#### Board Discussion:

Supervisor Walkinshaw thanked staff for their work on the Compost Pilot Program. His office participated in the FEEE pilot program with the Kings Park Library. He commented that the Board should aggressively pursue backyard composting. He suggested a public education campaign. He is enthusiastic about curbside compost collection but would like to see data from the greenhouse gas emissions that would result from the program.

Chairman McKay agreed with Supervisor Walkinshaw that there are a lot of misconceptions on backyard composting and suggested educating the homeowners.

Mr. Forbes responded that the greenhouse gas emissions will be investigated in curbside collection. In terms of education, in discussions with the community, staff discuss forced reduction to reduce waste, e.g., buying food that will actually be consumed, as a first step. Information has also been provided on backyard composting on the DPWES website. The Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District also provides information to the community, which can be incorporated into staff outreach.

Supervisor Gross highlighted the November 2020 ribbon-cutting for the food scraps drop-off program at the I-66 Transfer Station. She pointed out that people brought their own small bins; individuals were not bringing a lot of food scraps. Collection may require a smaller vehicle. George Mason University (GMU) had a pilot program for composting, and she asked for more information on how that was going.

Mr. Forbes responded that he is familiar with the GMU program efforts and he will look into how it has been working for them.

Supervisor Gross commented that there could be great potential in schools for the composting program, possibly post-pandemic. She also pointed out that children often encourage their parents to adopt new practices, if implemented in schools.

Supervisor Palchik echoed that children and teens are a good source of social change. She asked staff to consider community centers and more sites for collection. She also pointed out that many homeowners in her district do not have backyards for compost collection, specifically those that live in multi-family buildings, and will need a different model to make composting accessible to them. Finally, she suggested that staff look into partnering with Real Food for Kids, looking at equity for this issue and removing barriers to composting. She supports the next steps in the pilot program.

Mr. Forbes echoed that they would consider equity in the composting program.

Supervisor Smith commented that she composts at home and would like the county to share information on how to do that with the community. Her district does not have any sanitary districts for collection; therefore, she is concerned about cost and emissions, since the sanitary districts are only in certain parts of the county.

Supervisor Alcorn built on Supervisor Palchik's comment that not everyone has a backyard. He directed staff to measure or estimate the amount of actual composting that is going on in the community, including backyard, community collection, and commercial collection. Food waste, paper, and cardboard are fighting each other out for which is the biggest part of the municipal solid waste stream.

Chairman Storck echoed that food waste is 30% of solid waste and it would be helpful if it were eliminated from the solid waste stream.

Chairman McKay commented about the popularity of the glass recycling program and asked what it would take to also have compost collection at those sites.

Mr. Forbes responded that the Fairfax Green Initiatives #2 Board Matter directed staff to look into co-locating the compost collection with the glass collection sites. Staff would like to learn more about the existing drop-off locations for food scraps before expanding collection sites.

Supervisor Herrity also talked about the co-location of compost and glass collection sites and brought up the opportunity of collecting plastic bags at these same sites. He is concerned about animals around compost collection sites as well as illegal dumping.

Mr. Forbes is aware of illegal dumping and the challenges at collection sites and plans to continue to look into opportunities for plastic bag collection.

Chairman Storck asked Mr. Forbes to identify funding, going forward.

Mr. Forbes responded that the small-scale operation of the food scraps drop-off site is currently at a premium cost because it is being done through a vendor. If these programs are brought under county services, the cost would be reduced.

## **Item V**

### **Quarterly Review of Environment and Energy Not in Board Packages (NIPs)**

The fifth item on the agenda was a presentation on Quarterly Review of Environment and Energy Not in Board Packages (NIPs), given by Chairman Storck.

Chairman Storck referred to an upcoming memorandum to the Board regarding the JET recommendations, which will be presented on and discussed at the March 16, 2021 Environmental Committee meeting.

Board Discussion:

None.

The meeting adjourned at 12:30 P.M.