Fairfax County Community-Wide Energy and Climate Action Plan (CECAP) Energy Sub-Group Meeting Meeting Notes

Energy Strategy Discussion #3
Wednesday, March 24, 2021
Held electronically via WebEx and Mural

Fairfax County held a CECAP Working Group Energy Subgroup meeting on March 24th from 6:00-8:00pm. The meeting was held electronically via WebEx and included a prioritization of strategies using Mural, an online whiteboard.

Recordings of the meeting and meeting materials, including the full WebEx chat transcript, are available online.

These meeting notes capture the general activities conducted and discussions that occurred during the meeting. These notes should be viewed in conjunction with the presentation and meeting materials, found at the link above.

Welcome and Overview (Michelle Paul Heelan, ICF and Maya Dhavale, FFX)

Legal requirements: A script was read to cover several legal requirements for holding electronic meetings. The script included conducting a roll call identifying all CECAP working group members in attendance and where they were attending from. It was noted that to conduct this meeting electronically, the meeting needs to be clearly audible, publicly accessible, and compelled by emergency circumstances. It was established that this meeting could not be held in person due to the COVID-19 emergency, and that therefore it could instead be held electronically via audio-conferencing. It was also established that this meeting is necessary to move forward the CECAP Working Group's functions.

The meeting purpose was reviewed, focusing on the following goals:
- Review key takeaways from the Mural Brainstorming Matrix.
- Review of Impacts Discussion Starter & Prioritization Matrix.
- Prioritize and discuss strategies and actions to inform their level of emphasis and their narrative in the CECAP report.
- Discuss sector-based and interim goals.

- Decide on whether a March meeting Part II is needed on March 30.

Michelle Paul Heelan then reviewed tips for using the WebEx chat function.

Finally, Maya Dhavale reviewed the CECAP timeline, including progress so far and where we are now in March, which is the discussion and prioritization stage. She noted that in the next step will be drafting the report and continuing public engagement. She reviewed information gathered at the February Public Feedback Sessions and noted that review of the latest survey information is in progress.

Slides are available here: https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/environment-energy-coordination/cecap-energy-subgroup-march-24-2021

Key Takeaways from Brainstorming Comments Matrix (Adam Agalloco, ICF)
Adam provided a description of the Brainstorming Comments Matrix, which provides a summary of every comment made in Mural at the previous meetings, frequency counts to help understand level of interest in different topics, and recategorization to ensure ideas were aligned with the correct strategies.

The top 3 commented actions/technologies within each sector included the following:
- Building & Energy Efficiency – Stricter building code adoption & enforcement, green infrastructure, combined heat and power/district energy
- Energy Supply – Solar (photovoltaic & community solar), geothermal, wind
- Transportation – Expanding transit routes & trails/connectivity, improving safety, density/walkability
- Waste –Waste reduction (reduce, reuse, repair), recycling, composting
- Forestry – Tree planting, conservation, urban greenspace

Adam noted that the takeaways are not meant to reflect the Working Group's priorities, which were discussed later on in the meeting.

Adam provided a review of key terms including sector, strategy, action, implementation, and impacts. He noted that based on the Mural brainstorming sessions, there was a strong interest in incentive programs, county programs, and education/outreach as implementation methods. Impacts with high interest include health and environmental justice, social and racial equity, cost, economic opportunity, and GHG reductions.

Review of Prioritization Discussion Starter & Prioritization Matrix (ICF)

Adam Agalloco reviewed the Strategy Framework document, with a focus on the six strategies within the category of Buildings and Energy Efficiency and Energy Supply. He reviewed goal-related terminology, including reduction goal/target goal/long term goal, interim goal, and sector-specific goals.

He noted that the current long-term goal is carbon neutrality by 2050, with at least 87% coming from emissions reductions from a 2005 base year. He reviewed initial results of GHG modeling, and a potential pathway to an 87% emissions reduction by 2050 from a 2005 base year.

Prioritization of Strategies and Actions (Michelle Paul Heelan and Adam Agalloco, ICF)

Adam Agalloco reviewed the prioritization process of emphasizing and/or deemphasizing strategies using Mural, and Michelle Paul Heelan led an exercise to practice the process in Mural.

Please click here to view the Mural board from this meeting. Please note that this board is locked for editing. Any comments added to the board were not recorded or considered after March 24, 2021.

Each participant was given 6 votes to indicate a preference for emphasizing a strategy and a separate 6 votes to indicate a preference for de-emphasizing a strategy. The Mural platform uses the term "vote", but this exercise was meant to indicate preferences rather than serve as a formal vote of the Working Group.

The exercise results are below. Please note that some "votes" were accidentally cast on items on the Mural board other than strategies, so these votes are not included in the vote counts below.

- Vote counts to emphasize the strategy, in order of most votes to least.
  - 46 votes - Strategy #1: Increase energy efficiency and conservation in existing buildings
  - 17 votes - Strategy #4: Increase renewable energy in grid mix
  - 16 votes - Strategy #3: Implement green building standards for new buildings
  - 15 votes each –Strategy #2: Pursue beneficial electrification in existing buildings, Strategy #5: Increase production of onsite renewable energy, and Strategy #6: Increase energy supply from renewable natural gas (RNG), hydrogen, and power-to-gas

- Vote counts to de-emphasize the strategy, in order of most votes to least.
  - 35 votes - Strategy #6: Increase energy supply from renewable natural gas (RNG), hydrogen, and power-to-gas
  - 19 votes - Strategy #5: Increase production of onsite renewable energy.
  - 17 votes - Strategy #3: Implement green building standards for new buildings
  - 10 votes - Strategy #2: Pursue beneficial electrification in existing buildings
  - 7 votes - Strategy #4: Increase renewable energy in grid mix
  - 1 vote - Strategy #1: Increase energy efficiency and conservation in existing buildings

A summary of comments of the emphasis/de-emphasis exercise from the verbal discussion as well as from the WebEx chat are provided below. [Please click here to view the full WebEx chat transcript.](#)

Comment: I did vote for #1, but only once as COVID has had a big impact on energy efficiencies and conservation with regard to operation of building HVAC systems

Comment: I tried to mirror the level of impact in terms of reductions (i.e., the higher the reduction, the more votes I gave).

Comment: Green buildings can do so much more than just energy efficiency. If we look at this in a one-dimensional way, then we miss out on so many other climate benefits, like stormwater retention via green roofs, for example.

Comment: I deemphasized technologies that are more appropriate for use in the future, and emphasized what was most ready to implement now (e.g., energy efficiency).

Comment: For Strategy #6, a reason to de-emphasize it is that it is beyond the influence of the county.

Comment: I was surprised by how Strategy #3 ranked fairly low for de-emphasis, even though it contributes only 1.5% to modeled reductions.

Comment: Given it is a low emission reductions in the model, how would we be able to adjust the model to reflect the emphasis on Strategy #3? For

example, would it look like making building codes even stronger which would increase costs?

- All of these strategies require a pretty heavy lift to meet the aggressive goal we have set, but we need to be thoughtful and emphasize cost effectiveness as critical. This is particularly relevant for green buildings, which can be costly.

Comment: On-site renewable is challenging for those with lots of equipment on our roofs. We may also need incentives for more expensive solar canopies. for our parking areas.

Comment: I don't know if there is a way to separate out the green buildings on residential from commercial, but would favor that.

Comment: We need to think about justice as well; we cannot put an undue cost burden on those who can least afford it.

Comment: What is the opportunity for more funding to come into play here?

- There are potential funding opportunities coming up, even looking at greenhouse gas trading schemes can inform what could be available for us.
- [VA has already gotten $43 million so far through RGGI](), half of which went towards low income residents for energy efficiency. Extrapolating out for the year, that's about $80 million for low income energy efficiency.

Comment: Residential and commercial are completely different animals. The lift is a lot easier on the commercial side simply because it is fewer people to influence. One thing that was not on here at all but is important to pursue and mention in the narrative, is lobbying at the state level to give the county more authority. Everything we can talk about as a county is voluntary because we cannot compel businesses to do anything. Policies to require benchmarking, and then building performance standards for commercial buildings, are what can make big change at the scale that we need.

- The idea that commercial decision makers are fewer is key. You could convince 2,000 commercial owners to take an action or convince 600,000 residential homeowners.
- Level of authority and who is able to do this work are really important as well. We have talked a lot about category 1, 2, and 3, category 2 being things that might be done with state-enabling legislation. This is something we need to articulate in the written report.

Comment: I fear that voters are choosing S3 "green buildings" because it sounds achievable. However, if the modeled impact of effects in this sector contributes only 1.5% to GHG emission reductions, overemphasis in this area could incur high costs for builders with negligible reduction in emissions.

Comment: Review of the priority table shows that S6 is costly and not likely to be re realized early, so not a good selection for early results as I previously indicated

Comment: Building efficiency standards like in NY are good because they can ONLY be achieved with landlords and tenants working together - and so often that doesn't happen.

Comment: It is hard for tenants to get that data sometimes, and that helps in decision making

Sector-Based & Interim Goals Discussion (Adam Agalloco, ICF)

Adam Agalloco provided a review of the GHG inventory and GHG modeling results to provide context for sector-based and interim goal setting. The purpose of this discussion was to prepare the group for a formal vote on sector-based goals at the next meeting of the full Working Group.

The first question up for discussion was whether or not the group wanted to set sector-based goals. The general consensus was that yes sector-based goals are desirable, as they help make it easier to measure and adjust actions as needed.

Comment: When we looked at the chart with strategy reduction benefits, to some degree are those our goals?
- Those are not necessarily goals; they represent a modeling pathway to reach an 87% reduction but not the way to reach that goal.

Wrap Up & Provide Meeting Feedback (Michelle Paul Heelan, ICF and Maya Dhavale, FFX)

Michelle Paul Heelan suggested meeting times for the setting of sector-based and interim goals, with a tentative date of March 30th.
- There was a consensus that yes, a second meeting should be held on March 30th.

Michelle Paul Heelan reviewed meeting objectives, and requested feedback on communications, meeting length, meeting information, and ability for everybody to participate. Finally, Maya Dhavale reviewed ways to stay informed on the CECAP process, as well as ways to reach out and stay involved.