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

Energy Sub-Group Discussion #4
Tuesday, March 30th, 2021
Held electronically via WebEx

Fairfax County held a CECAP Working Group Energy Subgroup meeting on March 30th 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 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.

Welcome and Meeting Overview (Michelle Paul Heelan, ICF)

Michelle Paul Heelan reviewed the following meeting objectives:
- Discuss sector-based goals, in preparation for vote with the full Working Group at the next meeting.
- Discuss interim goals, in preparation for vote with the full Working Group at the next meeting.

- Discuss any feedback on the other subgroup's strategies and actions.

Maya Dhavale provided context on the Task 3 timeline, noting that the current step is discussion and prioritization. Upcoming steps include drafting the report and a round of public engagement in May.

Slides are available here: CECAP Energy Subgroup - March 30, 2021 | Office of Environmental and Energy Coordination (fairfaxcounty.gov)

Sector-Based Goals Discussion (Adam Agalloco, ICF)
Adam Agalloco reviewed key terms for goal setting, including reduction goal/target goal/long term goal, interim goal, and sector-specific goal. He also reviewed initial GHG modeling results, providing one potential pathway towards meeting the 80% GHG reduction goal by 2050. He reviewed the potential impact of different sectors, and how much they could contribute to GHG emissions.

Adam reviewed best practices for sector goals, including that they should be specific, measurable, attainable, results-oriented, and time-bound. He also noted that having too many goals can actually dilute the power (less is more), and that sector-based goals should be focused on areas the subgroup wants to emphasize such as energy efficiency, renewable energy, and green building.

Comment: For any goals, you have to have buy-in. The people we need to educate start with our supervisors. For examples, the supervisors can approve new businesses, and recently a new WaWa was approved without any requirement for LEED studies.

Comment: Planning and zoning are linked to energy and infrastructure. Instead of doing all this other stuff, we need to look at how do we build into our planning the energy impacts on the land use side.

Question: Are the plans in other jurisdictions all community-based as well?
- No, it is a mix. Some of the goal presented on this slide are specific to county operations.

Comment: A lot of the policies we are reviewing are so far out of individual control in a lot of ways – how will these things be implemented? These things are urgent, and to give a report to the BOS that talks about a

completely voluntary plan with these very ambitious goals doesn't seem realistic, nor does it seem to reflect the urgency of the issue.

- Yes, the CECAP is oriented towards community action, but we recognize there are actions that require state, local, and federal government. The CECAP will be structured to demonstrate where individuals can have an effect, and where we need local/state/federal action.

Comment: In the case of Arlington, I remember seeing a presentation about an office that advises people building new homes/construction. Having done work in watershed issues, you can have the most beautiful watershed improvement plan but without teeth only volunteers work on it, and they can't possibly fix anything. I recognize people don't want things coming down from above.

- That type of green-homes program is something the County could do, so these are the kinds of solutions and suggestions we are looking at.

Comment: On what basis do we intend to advise the Board on either the probability of the strategies and goals you are asking them to endorse if we have no way to enforce any of this desired progress? We are not providing any pathway or plan of steps to get to these goals.

- This is a first step. This plan is communicating to the Board what the community wants, and what they can do to address climate change.

Comment: There are things the County can do, but the plan doesn't include anything that will be done. That isn't a plan, that is list of options.

- The scope of what Fairfax can do is influenced by things like the CECAP, by advocating for it. By putting this plan together, by engaging the community, by indicating preferences to the Board, by the Board indicating preferences to the state of Virginia, things change. Maybe not at the pace we would like, and we recognize the frustration about that, but it is the avenue we have available right now.

Comment: I think what you are hearing from the community now is that we don't want just voluntary goals, if we spent the past year and a half coming up with a voluntary wish-list I think we have failed. Voluntary is insufficient, and members of the community are saying we also need to have regulation. I think we will also have punted if we don't have sector goals that are GHG specific. Your 2050 chart shows strategy specific reductions. If we are not tracking the actual reductions on some kind of regular basis by sector, then again, we have just a checklist of ideas.

- In terms of GHG specific targets, I think the language we are struggling with is goal setting vs. tracking. We recommend not having

GHG specific goals because they are difficult to come up with and understand, but tracking toward GHG reductions will be done regardless of what type of sector goal is set.

Comment: I think we ought to be reporting every year so we know where we are. As for the word voluntary, I think what you're hearing is we want beyond voluntary. If there is a list of what specific sector goals we are going to have, then we should have a whole list of what can the County do to achieve them. If this report doesn't specify sector goals and the actions the County needs to take, and if the County needs to take action with the state we need to list those too.

Comment: We need to think about what is able to be done by the community and what requires assistance from local, state, and Federal government. There are things the County can do that encourage voluntary actions. The issue is a lot more sophisticated than voluntary vs. not. The Board needs to see in this report that the failure to act will be very expensive for the County. This isn't a wasted exercise; the Board needs to see where actions need to be taken. I wouldn't use the term voluntary, I would say "ways to encourage proper action."
- I want to make sure it is crystal clear that we are absolutely writing out a list of options that can be locally enabled or federally enabled, and that speak to things like incentives and different types of implementation strategies.

Comment: I think rather than say if this happens, then we can make a goal, say if we don't make this number by this date this is the penalty that kicks in to get us to our endpoint. We need to rachet up the actions the County can do if the federal/state governments do not do their part.

Comment: For me, I think of this as a vision that we are giving them, and there are lots of different levers and things that have to happen. I think it is important to prioritize within those, and I would emphasize renewable energy and electric vehicles. I do a lot of GHG reporting and agree that GHG specific targets are the gold standards, but they take an enormous amount of time, and you can learn a tremendous amount from the activity data

itself. If the County has not done some kind of risk assessment, I would recommend it.

Comment: Is there a reason the subsectors don't align with the GHG Inventory? We should avoid creating narrow sectors, which will create more tracking burden.
- Looking at renewable energy and energy efficiency sector-based goals makes sense, I think there is a question of using activity data or GHGs. Tracking sectors using GHGs is different than setting a GHG-based goal.

Comment: One thing that might help move things along with the Board is saying that some of this has to be put into the Comprehensive Plan, and that requires action from numerous actors.

Comment: The County does its development based on the Comprehensive Plan, which includes a policy plan, which goes through a revision cycle. A lot of what we are talking about needs to be translated into the policy plan/sections in the Comprehensive Plan, that's how they get implemented in the County system.
- So the goal would be that the next iteration incorporates and codifies the goals of the CECAP.

Comment: I suggest you have the activity data as the leading indicator, and then follow it up with a comparison between activity data and actual emissions.

Comment: I would be in favor of a renewable energy goal, perhaps for 2030. For the energy efficiency piece, I think focusing on low income housing units could long term address some equity issues. For electric vehicles, a lot of goals are around municipal vehicles and I think that is fine.

Comment: I think charging stations is one piece of the puzzle, but I think a goal would need to state X% of registered vehicles will be electric vehicles (e.g. by 2025, we want 5-10%, and by 2030 15-20% etc. with those numbers just being examples). There have to be changes to the

requirements for developers for sufficient EV charging capabilities at multi-family building.

Comment: One possible goal would be to have 100% renewables by X date.

Interim Goals Discussion (Adam Agalloco, ICF)

Adam Agalloco provided context for interim goals, including the previous consensus to develop a 50% reduction by 2030 (from a 2005 base year) and a 2040 interim goal. Adam explained why the 2030 goal was set (aligns with other jurisdictions and the IPCC Global Warming of 1.5ºC Special Report). Discussion was held to determine whether a 2040 interim goal is still needed, and what percentage reduction should be targeted.

There was a general consensus that the 2040 goal is still useful. Some comments suggested requiring a 2040 goal but setting it in 2030. Adam Agalloco reviewed potential goals, suggesting that somewhere around a 70% reduction from 2005 levels by 2040 would put emissions on track towards carbon neutrality.

There was interest in both 70% and 75% as a target for 2040.

Comment: Is there going to be some way of indicating how difficult strategies will be to implement, as well as what kind of GHG emissions reductions they will have? Can you provide advice on feasibility as well as GHG reduction potential for these strategies?
- Regarding quantification of GHG emissions, we've done some modeling to see what a pathway could look like. We've also tried to understand in the prioritization matrix what can happen in the nearer term, given current technologies and cost effectiveness, and our modeling reflects that prioritization.

Comment: Thus far we've been weak on discussing advancements in technology, and hope when the report is developed that discussion is fleshed out more. For example, hydrogen might become a more viable fuel for transportation.

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

Michelle Paul Heelan reviewed meeting objectives, and requested feedback on communications, meeting length, meeting information, and ability for everybody to participate.

Maya Dhavale reviewed ways to stay informed on the CECAP process, as well as ways to reach out and stay involved.