



The Fairfax County Tree Commission
12055 Government Center Parkway, Suite 518
Fairfax, Virginia 22035
703.324.1770

December 18, 2020

Fairfax County Board of Supervisors
c/o Clerk to the Board of Supervisors
12000 Government Center Parkway, Suite 552
Fairfax, VA 22035

Sent via email to: ClerktotheBOS@fairfaxcounty.gov

Dear Members of the Board of Supervisors:

The Fairfax County Tree Commission has reviewed the October 1, 2020 Joint Environmental Task Force (JET) Final Report. We are pleased to see some actionable and tangible recommendations for the County to implement. With the JET's work complete, we understand that the County Executive will direct Staff to prepare an implementation action plan for your review around March 2021.

Unfortunately, the JET Report largely neglects the important role our natural resources--especially trees--serve in naturally reducing greenhouse gas emissions and mitigating the effects of climate change. Even though the JET's original mission included a land use component, this has regrettably been dropped and excluded from the resulting recommendations. This resulting lack of priority on natural resources, including trees, could undermine other County initiatives such as the Community-wide Energy and Climate Action Plan (CECAP) and the Natural Landscaping Plan Amendment (June 2020), and, is inconsistent with the BOS approved Environmental Vision (June 2017) and Tree Action Plan (October 2019).

Land use, landscaping and land management are highly visible actions taken to preserve, protect and restore our natural environment. When trees and other natural resources on County, BOS, park and school properties are well-managed, they provide a key contribution to the high quality of life that all Fairfax County residents deserve. It is thus important for the County to lead by example with good land and natural resource management. Doing this on County, BOS, park and school properties will also demonstrate to our youth that this is a key priority.

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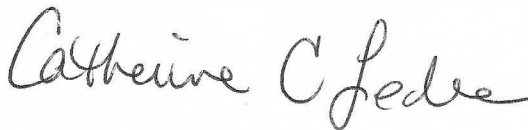
Tree Commission Letter to the Board of Supervisors

with Georgetown University's proposed solar project¹ that would have cleared hundreds of acres of forest to establish solar panels. It will therefore be important to consider the impacts of future climate-related investments on our highly valuable natural resources including trees. Please note that the Tree Commission sent letters to the BOS on May 17, 2019, Solar on County Buildings including schools, and June 24, 2020, Solar in county parking lots. I've attached these here for ease of reference.

Accordingly, the Tree Commission recommends that the Board of Supervisors supplement the JET Final Report and direct Staff to include a focus area on the importance of natural resources, especially trees. This action would help to ensure that unnecessary damage to trees and other natural resources will be avoided, while key County, BOS, park and school lands will have their natural vegetation restored and enhanced.

Fairfax County should continue to demonstrate its leadership in this area. The Tree Commission looks forward to continued work with you on the improved management of trees and other natural resources vital to Fairfax County's high quality of life.

Sincerely,



Catherine C. Ledec
Chairman

Enclosures: 1. May 17, 2020 Tree Commission letter to the BOS regarding Solar on County Buildings including schools.
2. June 24, 2020 Tree Commission letter to the BOS regarding Solar in County Parking Lots.

cc: Karl Frisch, Member of the JET and Board Member Fairfax County Public Schools
Elaine Tholen, Member of the JET and Board Member Fairfax County Public Schools
Bryan Hill, County Executive, Fairfax County

¹ <https://wamu.org/story/19/08/29/georgetown-solar-farm-blocked-over-concerns-about-forest-loss/>



The Fairfax County Tree Commission
12055 Government Center Parkway, Suite 518
Fairfax, Virginia 22035
703.324.1770

May 17, 2019

Fairfax County Board of Supervisors
c/o Clerk to the Board of Supervisors
12000 Government Center Parkway, Suite
Fairfax, VA 22035

Re: Solar Panels at County Government Buildings Including Schools

Dear Members of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors:

The Fairfax County Tree Commission is pleased that the County will soon issue a Request for Proposal for consideration of solar panels at government buildings including schools.

The Fairfax County Tree Commission recommends that County staff fully assess the economic value of on-site tree cover for each site being considered for solar panels. Areas without trees should be a priority for solar panel installation, including rooftops on buildings and parking garages and "brownfields" where land is treeless and not otherwise planned for tree plantings. This assessment should include calculations related to lost carbon storage and uptake if trees are removed, the costs associated with tree removal, the community benefits provided by well-located shade trees, including wildlife benefits, and any related economic and environmental analysis. Not all sites will be appropriate for rooftop or ground-based solar; an assessment of the environmental and economic value of tree cover (including its carbon value) should be an integral part of informed decision-making for each site identified for this and any future program.

We recommend the County include these recommendations in its solar program and look forward to a reduction of the County's carbon footprint.

Sincerely,

Catherine C. Ledec, Chairman
Fairfax County Tree Commission

cc: Environment Quality Advisory Council
Fairfax County Planning Commission



The Fairfax County Tree Commission
12055 Government Center Parkway, Suite 518
Fairfax, Virginia 22035
703.324.1770

June 24, 2020

Fairfax County Board of Supervisors
c/o Clerk to the Board of Supervisors
12000 Government Center Parkway, Suite 552
Fairfax, VA 22035

Re: Solar Panels in Parking Lots

Dear Members of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors:

The Fairfax County Tree Commission is pleased at the progress being made to install solar panels at government buildings including schools. We believe that installing solar panels at government facilities—including parking lots—is an important step towards reducing Fairfax County's carbon footprint.

In this context, the Tree Commission considers solar canopy installations to be most appropriate for parking lots without existing tree cover. We note that trees are important for mitigating climate change (by absorbing and storing carbon) and for adapting to it (by absorbing stormwater and reducing the urban heat island effect). As stated in the 2019 Tree Action Plan, Fairfax County has a key goal of no net loss of tree cover.

For these reasons, the Tree Commission recommends that Fairfax County prioritize the placement of solar canopy installations or similar facilities on those parking lots which currently lack tree cover. If any parking lots with existing trees were to be considered for locating such facilities, it would be important for County staff to carefully consider the economic and ecosystem service values of the existing tree cover, including calculations of lost carbon storage and uptake if trees are removed, the costs associated with tree removal, the community benefits provided by well-located shade trees, and any related economic or environmental analysis. It will be especially important to avoid the removal of healthy, mature trees from parking lots or their edges.

The Tree Commission recommends including these provisions in the County's solar program and looks forward to a successful reduction of the County's carbon footprint.

Sincerely,

Catherine C. Ledec, Chairman
Fairfax County Tree Commission