

Environment and Energy Conservation Commission
Draft

Summary of October 23, 2017 Meeting
2100 Clarendon Blvd, Azalea Conference Room

Members Present: James O'Connell, Sarah Meservey, Virginia Castro, Mike Mesmer, Gabriel Thoumi, Kimberley Fedinatz, John Seymour, John Bloom, Mike Hanna, Claire O'Dea, Christine Ng

Members Absent: Jessica Skerritt

Guests: Tyler Orton, Eva Smith-Perry, Leah Edgar, Kelsey Watts-FitzGerald, Leonard Pradela

Staff Present: Adam Segel-Moss (DES), Joan Kelsch (DES), John Morrill (DES), Greg Emanuel (DES)

1. Public Comment

None

2. Budget Update – Greg Emanuel

Greg Emanuel, DES Director, gave an update to the Commission on the FY 2019 budget. Mr. Emanuel encouraged the Commission to read the [Manager's message](#). The Board gave the Manager direction to deliver a budget without a tax increase while filling a \$20 Million budget gap. The direction was also to maintain the County's commitment to delivering priority core services efficiently and effectively will be challenging over the near term. Over the next few years, the County will need to:

- provide competitive compensation for our County employees in order to maintain a talented and effective team of public servants;
- maintain our financial support to sustain Metro;
- work with Arlington Public Schools to address substantial student enrollment growth;
- maintain our core infrastructure; and
- address housing affordability.

Mr. Emanuel noted that a difficult balancing act is occurring to fund AIRE program needs while also funding schools, transit, and all other critical community needs.

Mr. Emanuel detailed the budget pressures at work. Specifically, ongoing commercial vacancy rates of nearly 20%, lower commercial real estate assessments mean fewer funds are available to budget. In addition, increased Metro funding and Arlington Public Schools are expenses that must be covered.

The Commission and Mr. Emanuel discussed the difficulty of achieving Community Energy Plan Goals with fewer resources. Mr. Emanuel noted that the AIRE team are high performing staff and will need to find ways to reach the goal in the short

term with creative staff ideas, but without rebates, contractors, or facility retrofit funding.

This is a significant tightening of the belt, but it retains staff.

To meet affordable housing goal, the residential utility tax will be focused on affordable housing.

Greg detailed the specific AIRE program cuts that include \$554,000 reduction within contractors, services, rebates, and facility retrofit funding.

The Board discussed a modest advertised real estate tax but ultimately voted 3-2 not to increase the tax rate.

It was noted that this year foreshadows future years if the combined assessment doesn't keep pace with expenses. It is also anticipated that future expenses will increase given APS capacity needs, new facilities coming online, and other cost increases.

Going forward, the AIRE program will now be a part of the general fund, not a dedicated fund. Greg encouraged this group to take the long view for the AIRE program.

The Commission asked if other jurisdictions mandate the utility taxes be put toward sustainability and energy efficiency efforts. It was clarified that there isn't a statutory requirement. There is no state stipulation on where the utility tax is directed.

Mike Hanna asked how affordable housing goals can be entwined in energy efficiency and sustainability with the redirected AIRE funds. Staff clarified that they are looking into this. Much of the affordable housing already requires them to achieve Earth Craft certification in order to garner tax credits. Increasingly there is a focus on affordable living, not just housing.

Mike Hanna noted that the tone in the Manager's budget indicated that AIRE had been fully integrated into all departments and reached maturity. John B. noted that this seemed incorrect. Mike noted that there needs to be a strong message back with a longer term vision to regain funds.

Greg also noted that free shredding is also on the chopping block. He also indicated that the revenue gaps may delay household solid waste goals such as food scrap composting.

A couple other sustainability takeaways. The free shredding will be removed.

Greg noted that the stormwater and tree planting costs went up. John S. asked about the stormwater fund and why it is not currently a fund shared with the general fund. Greg noted that it is a utility fund, it is 1.3 cents that is fenced to achieve specific statutory requirements.

Greg noted that stormwater has had a significant ramping up of the program and funding. The projects are delivering; the stormwater funding is being used and lowered. The stormwater fund may need to be increased in subsequent years.

Greg noted that he has tried to reduce the burden on the general fund. Greg noted that the Board is very interested in hearing the Commissions voice and input on all of these issues.

3. Environmental Justice Letter

Approved unanimously

4. Workplan review

The Commission discussed the Workplan and made edits based on Commission interests.

5. Meeting Summary Review – Dec / Jan

Approved unanimously

6. Old/New Business

Claire gave an update on POPS. She noted that an item to track on budget stuff related to POPS is the Urban Forestry Master Plan and the Natural Resources Master Plan. She noted the importance to advocate for funding to link and fund both of the items.

James O'Connell gave an update on the Four Mile Run Valley Working Group. He noted that the Master Plan has been delayed because staff had been working to incorporate recent input on transportation analysis and segmenting the area for angled parking, a road diet, and other actions. He noted that the Working Group voted down all recommendations by staff. Overwhelmingly they voted against staff recommendations. The Board is not making a decision at this time. The April framework will provide more finality to the Plan and the Board is expected to adopt it in May.

Sarah gave an update on Reed School. They had 6 designs, there is one design called the 'integrated' which was the most favorable. It is compact, four stories, and closest to Washington Boulevard. The energy targets for the school are unclear.

Virginia went to the Long Bridge Park meeting. Williams Coakley is the architect that has aggregated feedback to build an aquatic facility that will break ground in 2018. Operating costs will be \$4.2 million dollars per year based on current estimates. Net tax support is expected of approximately \$1.1 million dollars. The project has committed to an energy efficient design that achieves LEED Silver. There will also be a bike connection from the aquatics center to the Mount Vernon trail. The parking lot is designed to provide 220 parking spaces and EV charging stations. Cost total is about \$67.5 million dollars. Funding occurred through bonds.

Mike Mesmer noted that he would draft a letter to the Board on the budget. He will provide comments to the Board on budget issues at an upcoming work session. March 31st is ECARE is at Yorktown High School. APS is improving recycling rates. A waste audit of all county facilities was recently completed and that report will come out soon. New waste

diversion rates include: 34.8% for County buildings, 22.8% for APS, 57% for multifamily compliance.

John Bloom provided a few updates from the EC. Working through the EC methodically to provide comments and questions as staff are doing their work on the CEP updates. In terms of interacting with E2C2, there was a consensus to keep the group small and action oriented. Approval was granted for one additional member, Rick Keller. He is on the ACE Board and Sierra Club, and is a great energy and environment advocate. John brought up a possible joint meeting between the EC and E2C2. John also noted a March 6 Civic Federation discussion and resolution on 100% renewable electricity.

Mike H attended the Bike Committee meeting. The County manager sent out a letter disbanding the committee. He then reversed course. The original committee is back, the group is trying to improve diversity and productive approaches to issues.

Christine Ng noted that the Career Center Working Group kicked off. Concerns from the community center around if it will be a full high school with 3,500 students on the site (retaining most of the existing programs). At the same time, she noted that folks were supportive of building up not out. There was discussion of 6 stories or more for the high school. It is going to be a large project. Someone from E2C2 will be on the PFRC.