



Climate, Energy and Environment Policy Committee (CEEPC)

MEETING SUMMARY: NOVEMBER 14, 2018

CEEPC MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

*Indicates participation by phone

- Hon. Mary Lehman, Prince George's County (CEEPC Chair)
- Hon. Dan Sze, City of Falls Church (CEEPC Vice Chair)
- Hon. Cindy Dyballa, City of Takoma Park
- Hon. Penelope Gross, Fairfax County
- Hon. Erik Gutshall, Arlington County
- Hon. Pamela Sebesky, City of Manassas*
- Dr. Kambiz Agazi, Fairfax County
- Erica Bannerman, Prince George's County*
- James Bradbury, Georgetown University
- Gretchen Goldman, ACPAC
- Kate Johnson, DOEE
- Gina Mathias, City of Takoma Park
- Dale Medearis, NVRC*
- Andrea Nunez representing Tom Hucker, Montgomery County
- Ana ReWalt, City of Laurel*
- Erica Shingara, City of Rockville
- Dr. Dann Sklarew, George Mason University
- Tim Stevens, Sierra Club
- Luke Wisniewski, MDE*

- Wendell Rawlings, Constellation Energy
- Stephanie Riddick, Sierra Club
- Rodney Sobin, ACPAC
- Susan Stillman, Town of Vienna*

COG STAFF IN ATTENDANCE:

- Sulaiman Almaroof, COG Environmental Programs
- Leah Boggs, COG Environmental Programs
- Amanda Campbell, COG Environmental Programs
- Maia Davis, COG Environmental Programs
- Jeff King, COG Environmental Programs
- Tim Masters, COG Environmental Programs
- Lindsay Smith, COG Environmental Programs
- Steve Walz, COG Environmental Programs (Director)

ADDITIONAL ATTENDEES

- Hon. Roger Berliner, Montgomery County
- Jay Fisette
- Kate Daley, Sierra Club
- Michal Freedman, Sierra Club
- Bill Goddard, City of Laurel
- Eric Goplerud, Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions
- Deborah Harris, ICF International
- Cameron Herbolsheimer, NARC
- John Howes, ACPAC
- Debra Jacobson, George Washington University
- Jim Kinter, George Mason University
- Saul Kinter, DC Water
- Walter McLeod, Global Energy and Innovation Institute
- Regina Moore, VDOT*



1. CALL TO ORDER, INTRODUCTIONS, CHAIR'S REMARKS, APPROVE MINUTES

Mary Lehman, CEEPC Chair

Chair Mary Lehman called the meeting to order. Vice Chair Dan Sze will be the new CEEPC Chair starting January 2019. Chair Lehman hopes to continue her support of CEEPC in her new role as a state delegate in the Maryland General Assembly. The September Joint MWAQC/CEEPC meeting summary was approved.

2. RETROSPECTIVE ROUNDTABLE: CELEBRATING STATE, REGIONAL, LOCAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Jeff King, COG Climate and Energy Team (Chief)

COG has a long history of addressing air quality challenges. In 1964, a report on air quality for the region was published by COG and this is testament to how long COG has been working on these issues. COG has been involved in several initiatives over the decades such as air quality monitoring, tree planting, ride sharing, commuter connections, and others.

This work led to the establishment of COG's climate change program. In January 2007, a climate change staff roundtable was hosted in the COG Board Room, which led to the Board Resolution to establish the Climate Change Steering Committee. That committee was charged with providing an approach for the region to address climate change. Ultimately, their work led to the adoption of the NCR Climate Change Report by the COG Board in 2008. The goals that were adopted included the greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reduction goals of a return to 2005 levels by 2012, a 20 percent reduction below 2005 levels by 2020, and an 80 percent reduction below 2005 levels by 2050. The COG Board created CEEPC to work toward meeting these goals.

CEEPC had its first meeting in July 2009, with Jay Fisette as its inaugural Chair. The committee stressed the importance of near-term goals to start working towards the larger regional goals. COG began publishing 3-year action plans and have done so ever since. The Multi-Sector Working Group was established in 2015, which brought together various industry leaders and leaders from COG's member jurisdictions to focus on actions that could be taken in the region that were consistent with achieving the regional plan's goals. COG set goals for high performance buildings and this region is leading the country on this. Grid-connected renewables in the region have grown to over 30,000 systems. The region also met its 10 percent renewable energy target. Per capita Vehicle Mile Traveled (VMT) has gone down in the region, while EV ownership has grown. The leadership of CEEPC members and partnerships across the region support the region in meeting goals.

Discussion:

- Where has the effort of localities made an impact that would not have happened at the regional scale? This is a question to think about and highlight for future initiatives.
- Data capture is important. Without data, identifying these achievements might not have been possible.
- EnergyStar has changed their benchmark. As buildings have become more efficient, it has become more difficult to be in the top 25 percent. May need discussion on how the region can stay ahead of the curve.

3. METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON AT RISK: PREDICTING AND PREPARING FOR THE NEW NORMAL

Professor Jim Kinter, Director, Center for Ocean-Land-Atmosphere Studies; Chair, Department of Atmospheric, Oceanic & Earth Sciences; Professor, Climate Dynamics

Information is now available from observations, models and theory that prove that the climate is changing at an unprecedented rate, and that humans are responsible for most of the changes that have occurred within the last century. There are two primary sources of carbon dioxide; burning fossil fuels and land use change (deforestation). Combined, these two sources produce about 40 billion tons of carbon dioxide annually. Global average temperature has increased by about 1°C (1.8°F) since pre-industrial times. Scientists attribute almost all this change to human activity over the past century and it will increase the frequency of extreme weather events and high temperature records.

Humans have pushed the planet out of equilibrium. The oceans are expanding as they warm. More frequent extreme precipitation events will be a result of this warming. In the Northeast and in the Metropolitan Washington region, the frequency of these events has increased by 49 percent. This region is experiencing sea level rise more acutely than many other places on earth and this has profound implications for the region's tidal real estate. Also, rising ocean acidity has large repercussions up the food chain, which will affect the local seafood industry. According to the last National Climate Assessment, the high temperature (above 90°F) of the day in DC will occur 40 to 50 more times per year in the next 40 years. Flooding events will be more severe and more frequent. Tropical cyclones are reaching farther and farther north over time. They are also slowing down, which means they spend more time over a particular spot causing increased flooding. Building resiliency in the region is crucial to sustainability.

There are a number of possible projections for the future. Business as usual will mean a dramatic increase in emissions. If all the countries that have signed the 2015 Paris Agreement keep their promises, emissions will stabilize. There would be an 8 percent chance of keeping warming below 2°C. Above 2°C, the climate becomes very dangerous for humans. If the negotiators can implement "increased ambitions", then emissions will begin to drop. Many are beginning to believe keeping warming below 1.5°C should be the new goal, which would pose a considerable challenge. Achieving this would require achieving net zero emissions by 2050. So, the regional goal of an 80 percent reduction below 2005 levels by 2050 does not go far enough.

Daniel Kahneman, winner of the 2002 Nobel Prize for Economic Sciences, described what he called "perfect problems". Climate change is in this category of problem because it is a slow process, it requires sacrifice now to avoid uncertain losses in the future, it does not present deadlines, there is no geographic location (i.e., it is a global problem), there is no single cause and no single solution, and the estimates of the effects are contested. The planet, the country, and this metropolitan area all face unprecedented challenges associated with climate change. There is no global government that can solve this global problem. Only local governments, like the members of COG, that can make this effort.

Discussion:

- The insurance industry's knowledge of the costs of climate change could be used to raise awareness for these issues, as they can calculate the economic consequences of acting versus not acting. Additionally, changes in infrastructure can also be used in a similar way with green buildings, building adaptations to climate change, infrastructure that protects from sea level rise, etc.
- Incentives can be used to create markets for commercial players to get involved (e.g. carbon trading programs and carbon taxes). Policy needs to be put in place to make this happen.

- Toxic and hazardous waste is another issue that should be linked to climate change adaptation. Transitioning from fossil fuels to renewables presents a link that also focuses on healthcare issues. Nuclear, while renewable, has waste implications. Also, the EPA has declared carbon dioxide a pollutant, which means it needs to be regulated as a pollutant. This is being rolled back by the current administration, but it is still law. There is an expectation that this will also be linked to these issues.
- There is an opportunity for education institutions like the universities to take an active role in the training of local community leaders. George Mason University (GMU) is involved with modelling climate impacts and solutions and hopes to help in this area. GMU is working with the Northern Virginia Regional Commission (NVRC) on a small project related to future infrastructure requirements. Math training can also be very useful. Probability training is a focus area in this regard.

4. VISIONING FOR THE NEXT 10 YEARS: GOALS AND STRATEGIES TO GUIDE FUTURE ACTIONS

Hon. Roger Berliner, Montgomery County

Local governments have a crucial role to play in climate change issues. At the Federal government level there is a lack of leadership, which may change in time. However, each CEEPC local jurisdiction has made commitments to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and these jurisdictions do not face many of the barriers that others around the country do.

There is progress being made. Montgomery County government, for example, is carbon neutral. One hundred percent of energy consumed comes from renewables, and the County is saving money. There is nothing stopping other jurisdictions from doing this. The new focus for Montgomery County is building standards. The hope is that the County will move towards net zero energy buildings, like California has. The County has programs that don't use government financing, but private financing. Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy (C-PACE) financing is being used to make energy efficient changes in many buildings. Twelve county buildings have already gone through this program. Accomplishing the region's goals is possible through focusing on policy.

Jay Fiset

Climate change is a fundamentally important issue. This region has the capacity, the sophistication, the financing, and the vision to lead the nation and act on this issue. This region has the potential and it is most realized collectively. Sometimes this requires one or two local jurisdictions to step up and pull the others along. COG can pull everyone together. The region cannot always look at the obstacles but should look at the opportunities. Future leadership should focus on doing the things in the plan and find ways to do them faster and better. COG does not have the authority to force anyone to do anything, but it does provide the means for localities to convene and find ways to work together to achieve goals.

In the next few years, every jurisdiction should be pushing for net zero energy public buildings. This can be done. It should be set as a policy by local leaders. The same is true of solar PPAs for public buildings. Pushing for electric municipal and school buses is also an opportunity. There are federal and local funds to buy those buses and charging infrastructure. The PACE program is another key opportunity and should be adopted throughout the region. Every jurisdiction should have an inventory and a plan.

The grid can be shifted to renewable sources of energy. Businesses are starting to demand renewable energy, and in Virginia, Dominion Energy is stepping up. COG can take a much more active role than it does now in promoting riding contracts and developing joint procurement packages. COG could pursue foundation funds to move the region forward in a variety of ways.

COG's Transportation Planning Board should officially integrate GHG reduction goals into its regional transportation plan and incorporate the distribution of federal funds to meet those goals. They track GHG emissions, but if they officially included GHG reduction goals/requirements into funding streams, then things would be moving a lot quicker.

Hon. Penny Gross, Fairfax County

COG identified climate change to be an important issue. CEEPC is unique in that there are many different representatives from different sectors that engage with the committee, which brings a broader perspective to COG. Water resources are not often included in CEEPC. The Chesapeake Bay Policy Committee (CBPC) was established for this, but it is a crucial piece of the conversation and it should have a bigger role in CEEPC. All these issues are connected.

All the different jurisdictions with different legal structures have come together and accomplished so much. Water quality, the tree canopy, and recycling issues pose huge challenges to the region, and these are issues to prepare for. So far, this committee has achieved a lot through collaboration. The Climate Leadership Awards are a great opportunity to engage with the community and really show what is happening in the region.

Discussion:

- 2050 is over 30 years away, but the region has no established interim goals after 2020. CBPC had a ten-year goal at one point, which it did not meet, and they found switching to a system with two-year interim goals was very useful in reaching their goals. It is important to have interim goals (does not matter if its 2 years, 3 years, or 5 years), but a lot more time should be spent on identifying and doing the practical things to achieve goals. This work has to be accelerated.
- Montgomery County changed its 80 percent GHG reduction goal to be achieved by 2027. That provides the motivation to start doing the difficult, but necessary actions. A lot of these actions are good for the economy. The barriers to action are diminishing.
- COG saw the need and put out an RFP for contractor support (from Cadmus Group and ICF International) for GHG inventories, action plans, support for implementation and mitigation options, and resiliency. These are task order-driven contracts that have a rider clause.
- The GHG reductions goals themselves are great as high-level goals, but some thought into other indicators outside of GHG emissions should be considered (e.g. activity indicators like number of projects, VMT reduction, etc.). These are understandable metrics that are actionable.
- The geothermal industry got the federal tax credit reinstated by Congress. More time needs to be spent talking about geothermal solutions. This is a great strategy for achieving net zero buildings. A great example is in Falls Church where COG provided technical assistance to laying the groundwork for geothermal at a new school building in the City.
- Land use planning can be a useful tool in achieving goals and should be addressed when working on jurisdiction plans.
- Net zero schools and net zero public buildings – to achieve this, it is crucial to start getting school board members to participate in CEEPC. Loudoun County Public Schools is looking into net zero energy buildings, but they are not there yet.

5. ADJOURN, NETWORK, AND CELEBRATE

The meeting was adjourned. The next CEEPC meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, January 23, 2019 at 10am.