

**Draft Meeting Summary**  
**COG Climate Energy and Environment Policy Committee (CEEPC)**  
**March 20, 2013**

**Members and Alternates Present**

Hon. Roger Berliner, Montgomery County  
Hon. Jonathan Way, Manassas  
Hon. Jay Fiset, Arlington County  
Hon. Mary Cheh, District of Columbia  
Hon. Leta Mach, Greenbelt  
Hon. Del Pepper, Alexandria  
Hon. Konrad Herling, Greenbelt

Laine Cidlowski, District of Columbia  
James Flynn, Bladensburg  
Sam Moki, Prince George's County  
Kambiz Agazi, Fairfax County  
Devan Willemsen, Maryland Energy Administration  
Austina Casey, District Department of Transportation  
Lyn Ericson, Maryland Department of Transportation  
Kanti Srikanth, Virginia Department of Transportation  
Rachel Healy, WMATA  
Chris Randolph, GSA  
Chris O'Brien, American University  
Steve Walz, NVRC  
Mark Busciano, Casey Trees  
Bob Grow, Greater Washington Board of Trade  
Ray Bourland, Pepco  
Bryan Moorhouse, Pepco  
Caroline Petti, ACPAC Chair  
John Andreoni, Institute for Market Transformation  
John Lord, Loudoun County Public Schools  
Cara Reeve, National Wildlife Foundation  
Daniel White, DDOE  
Melissa Adams, Washington Gas (teleconference)  
Lisa Robles, Greenbelt (teleconference)  
Dyan Backe, Gaithersburg (teleconference)

**Staff Present:**

Julia Allman, COG DEP  
Leah Boggs, COG DEP  
Amanda Campbell, COG DEP  
Maia Davis, COG DEP  
Stuart Freudberg, COG DEP  
Jeff King, COG DEP  
Joan Rohlfs, COG DEP

## **1. Call to Order/Introductions/Chair Remarks**

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The meeting was called to order at 10:00 am.

## **2. Agenda Changes**

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The state legislative update was moved to the beginning of the agenda.

## **3. State Legislative Update**

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The Virginia legislative session closed February 23. CEEPC submitted five letters commenting on energy-related legislation:

- Supporting a bill that adds solar thermal energy as an eligible source under the state's RPS (Passed and awaiting the governor's signature),
- Supporting a bill that establishes a Power Purchase Agreement pilot program (Passed and signed into law),
- Supporting a suite of changes to the RPS, including creating a top tier of the cleanest renewables and encouraging in-state development of renewable energy sources (Failed),
- Opposing a bill that would restrictions on utilities' deployment of advance metering infrastructure (Failed), and
- Opposing a bill that would allow utilities to supersede local zoning authority to install large renewable energy projects (Failed).

The Maryland session is ongoing, and closes April 8. Eight letters supporting the following legislation:

- Creating an On Bill Finance Program for commercial efficiency retrofits,
- Establishing of a Sustainable Energy Contract Program for residential energy retrofits,
- Requiring the disclosure of energy use information in the home sale process,
- Enabling local governments to purchase street lighting equipment at a fair market value from the local utility, should they choose to do so (Failed),
- Creating Offshore Wind incentives (Passed)
- Requiring the inclusion of solar design evaluation in documents for school renovations and new construction (Passed)
- Creating a Community Net Metering pilot program, and
- Allowing condos and housing associations to apply for solar energy grants (Failed).

#### **4. Climate Goals: Where are we now?**

Moderator: Hon. Mary Cheh, District of Columbia

Panel: Vicki Arroyo, Georgetown Climate Center; Mayor William Eulle, City of Alexandria; Katherine Sierra, Brookings Institution

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Hon. Mary Cheh provided introductory comments to the panel. CEEPC has adopted a regional plan to meet climate change goals, and staff is evaluating our progress this month. This panel will look at international climate change agreements, the Obama Administration's actions, and the Mayor's Climate Protection Agreement, which was established five years ago. Panelists will answer questions on these issues and where climate protection programs are heading.

Vicki Arroyo:

- Ms. Arroyo discussed current state and federal initiatives to mitigate and adapt to climate change, emphasizing that existing legal authority is sufficient to meet the US' stated GHG emission reduction goals.
- The Georgetown Climate Center is a resource center to state and local governments for adaptation and mitigation; we inform federal government on local and state action. Many states are acting to mitigate and adapt to climate change, but across the country action is not uniform. More needs to be done, particularly in the face of impacts such as Hurricane Sandy and nationwide droughts.
- Recent studies by Resources for the Future and the World Resources Institute show that if our existing legal authority is aggressively pursued along with state and local activity the US could meet the president's stated goal to reduce GHG emissions 17% below 2005 levels by 2020.
- At the state level, the National Governor's Association established a task force for global warming 25 years ago, with bipartisan support. RGGI states have re-evaluated their targets. Twelve jurisdictions are working together in the Transportation and Climate Initiative to reduce emission in that sector. California is going forward with Cap and Trade and joining with other northwest states and British Columbia in the Pacific Coast Collaborative. Additionally, regions including the Washington region are promoting Electric Vehicles.
- At the federal level, the government has recognized climate change as an important issue since 1970. The Nixon and Carter administrations launched initial studies and encouraged action rather than a wait-and-see approach. The Clean Air Act already offers the opportunity to reduce emission at power plants, and CAFE standards will produce a 5% reduction in GHG emissions annually. Forty one agencies have released adaptation and sustainability plans, which are now available for comment. For example, DHS is looking across critical missions for potential impacts including border security from mass migration; FEMA is evaluating impacts for emergency response; the Coast Guard faces patrolling more coastline as the arctic melts.

- More NGOs and think tanks are asked to respond to impacts of climate change. The Georgetown Climate Center is working with DDOE on combating urban heat issues; Helped VA and MD with a sea level rise toolkit and model ordinances.
- Congressional action is not necessary to meet the US' stated goal of reducing emissions by 17% by 2020, but more action and better coordination at the state level is needed. A key issue is financing adaptation, particularly in the current budget environment. Mechanisms such as plastic bag taxes and financing programs that run with the land, such as PACE financing/tax assessments can leverage private funds toward mitigation and adaptation.

#### Mayor William Euille:

- Mayor Euille discussed local action against climate change through the Mayor's Climate Protection Agreement, and highlighted the City of Alexandria's sustainability efforts.
- The Mayor's Climate Protection Agreement is a multi-year grassroots campaign to meet or exceed Kyoto Protocol goals by reducing carbon emissions in city operations and in communities. Established in 2005, it has been signed by 1,060 mayors representing communities totaling 90 million in population.
- The Agreement doesn't prescribe specific actions but encourages communities to decide what works for them. The Agreement encourages policies in a number of areas, including conducting GHG inventories and setting reduction targets, creating action plans, reducing sprawl and preserving open space, increase transportation options, increase the use of clean alternative energy, increase efficiency through efficient equipment and sustainable building practices, increase fleet vehicle efficiency, maintain healthy urban tree canopy and provide education to the community. The Conference of Mayors is currently conducting a survey to take stock of progress on these goals.
- Mayors entered the agreement knowing the goal is ambitious, and they expect action from federal and state governments. The Kyoto goals are intended for nations, which can leverage greater resources and have stronger authority for coordinated change. Cities and counties do not have sufficient resources to achieve this goal on their own—they receive a small portion of total taxes, and in states like Virginia, have limited authority. Future actions should be more focused on adaptation. The emphasis has been on reducing emissions, but impacts of climate change are being seen now.
- Many actions against climate change have been taken within the DC region. Mayor Adrian Fenty, 12 VA mayors and 13 MD mayors signed the Mayor's Climate Protection Agreement. DC is among top in terms of its commitment to reducing GHGs. Counties in the region have joined the nationwide Cool Counties Initiative, and 9 jurisdiction members of the Virginia Municipal League – including Arlington, Loudoun and Alexandria – were certified at the Platinum level in a Green Government challenge.

- Climate change may have serious impacts on cities like Alexandria. We face short term challenges and capital constraints; the key is to integrate environmental planning into existing plans and projects. The city established the EcoCity charter in 2008, making Alexandria a place where people can live healthier and economically productive lives while reducing environmental impact. The Environmental Action plan in 2009 recommended 353 actions to achieve this goal. The effort is a partnership between the city, its citizens, the environmental policy commission, and Virginia Tech's Alexandria campus.
- 20 Key environmental indicators have been established, and outcomes include: reducing the city operations' energy use by over 20% from 2006 to 2011; converting traffic lights to LEDs; shutting down the local coal-fired power plant, the single largest polluter in NoVa; Implementing a transportation master plan to reduce dependence on private automobiles; increasing recycling from 29 to 48%; establishing green building policies for city, multifamily, and commercial buildings; preserving open space and managing urban forests.
- It is important to examine best practices locally, nationally, and internationally, and bring those findings back to our communities.

Hon. Mary Cheh:

- This highlights how local communities are leading the way much more than the federal government. It's vital that we continue to push this on the local level because we can measure, manage, and implement plans to combat climate change.

Katherine Sierra:

- Ms. Sierra gave an overview of international negotiations on climate action, how national and local jurisdictions are trying to attack this problem, and provided a forecast on how international negotiations might develop.
- International climate agreements began with the Kyoto Protocol in 1997. The treaty required countries to make GHG reduction pledges and establish market mechanisms. The U.S. is not a signatory but resolved to push forward through national action. In 2007 it became clear that Kyoto was expiring and wasn't very successful. In 2009, the Copenhagen summit did not produce another treaty, but instead an Accord that establishes voluntary goals at the country level. The US pledged a 17% reduction in emissions from 2005 levels by 2020. By 2015, a new regime with "legal force" is expected to be put in place.
- Emission reductions thus far are significant, but don't add up to what's needed to keep warming under 2-3 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. In the future we'll need to see a much stronger push toward reductions. The US is on track to achieve a 17% reduction in emissions, in part because of the recession and also the switch to natural gas.

- Reduction plans are in place across the globe. Mexico plans to reduce GHG emissions by 30%. At least 35 jurisdictions, including Europe, Australia, Australia, China, Korea, and Chile have put in place or are testing carbon markets.
- Cities are critical to achieving emissions reduction targets. The Conference of Mayors and the C40 (the top 40 international cities on climate action) are important mechanisms for driving change. However motivations to act on climate change are not purely global. Climate actions can enhance local competitiveness by creating jobs, building innovation, linking with local universities, and increasing quality of life.
- In terms of future negotiations, there is unlikely to be another Kyoto-style, top-down treaty. Congress is unlikely to enact a treaty, though nations are looking for an alternative system that is measurable and enforceable. It is unclear whether there will be a target-based agreement or sectoral-based actions. Eventually we will see stronger requirements for deep emission cuts. At this point everyone should be doing more.

## DISCUSSION

- Ms. Cheh: You mentioned that instead of a top-down agreement, might we make progress on subsidiary/sector agreements or local initiatives and competitiveness. Are those strategies just concepts, or are they being actively pursued?
  - Ms. Sierra: There are lots of activities going on in cities and in trade agreements between countries. Whether or not those will get bulked up so that they can report emission reductions is the question. The jury is out. US negotiators are trying to get sectoral agreements going through coalitions such as the world economic forum.
- Mr. Grow: Given the world's current financial challenges, I'd like to hear thoughts from the panelists on any shifts on how to deal with GHGs. Are emissions reductions constraining?
  - Ms. Sierra: The developed world has pledged to provide resources for adaptation and mitigation in developing countries; in the past that has come from public money. There is recognition today that it is a very heavy lift to direct that money. There are discussions on how to use smaller parts of public money and to leverage private investment.
  - Mr. Euille: Municipal governments are experiencing financial challenges, and it behooves us to look at value engineering and take advantage of cost-saving opportunities without compromising on environmental commitments. If we fail to do this now, we're prolonging the agony, and we'll never reach our goals. The commitment to pay for it now is of utmost importance.
  - Ms. Arroyo: The federal conversation was set back during the recession, and we saw priorities shift. However we're also moving toward a decoupling of economic growth and emissions. The private sector (particularly the

insurance industry) is showing that there is a cost of inaction. Investments are showing to be win-wins in terms of health and other cost savings.

- Ms. Cheh – Does COG keep a list of programmatic and financial initiatives that have been taken around the region? Is there something readily available and accessible?
  - Mr. Berliner: Yes.
- Ms. Cheh: Decoupling is an important concept. The notion that we will have ill effects from mitigation efforts has been shown wrong by current programs. DC Water is building anaerobic digesters to produce methane energy, equivalent to the energy used by 43,000 homes. The leftovers can be used as fertilizer, and they are pursuing markets for that product to create an additional revenue stream. The investment is giving a big return for the environment through energy savings, and is creating a business opportunity as well.
- Mr. Fiset: Economic competitiveness is a big issue. It's frustrating that people are talking about "all-of-the above" energy policy, including coal and fracking. What can be done to bring a greater awareness to the urgency of climate change, since you don't see the impacts day-to-day? How can we better value the cost of not taking action?
  - Ms. Arroyo: We struggle with this. It's important to learn from conversations like this panel about what messages resonate. What's the best way to communicate about this crisis? Picturing it through narratives or visual representations showing the risks AND opportunities. Green roofs can help envision something that's beneficial in the micro level, producing efficiency and positive health impacts.
- Mr. Berliner: I have begun to lose faith in the federal government's ability to act on these issues. As we look at federal and international difficulties, it seems more important that local governments team up. We need to move beyond goal-setting to find ways in which local jurisdictions can join together in a cap-in-trade or something of that nature. Local initiatives drive federal government action. When locals and states drive the initiatives, the feds are more likely to bring it together and scale up.

## **5. CEEPC Action Plan : 2012 Progress, 2016 Plan Revisions, and Resource Guide,** Maia Davis, COG DEP

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- Mr. Berliner opened the discussion, noting that this presentation is intended to make sure that all committee members understand the content of the new regional climate action plan, and have the information to make an informed vote on adopting it. The committee will vote on this plan at the May meeting.
- Ms. Davis provided a brief report on progress toward the 2012 goals, which serves as a baseline for the next plan.

- Three-quarters of the region's jurisdictions have conducted GHG inventories for government operations, and 68% have implemented or are in progress on creating community-wide inventories. The goal for 2012 was to reach 100 percent, so additional resources and technical assistance may be needed to reach the goal.
- Under energy efficiency, 91% of local governments are tracking and benchmarking building energy use, and 68% have streetlight replacement strategies in place. In terms of renewables, the region is 32% of the way to its goal of having 5,000 renewable energy systems in place by 2012. 500 systems have been installed in the last two years, so progress is being made on this ambitious goal. Three quarters of jurisdictions have implemented green fleets, and many are pursuing sustainability outreach programs to engage the public on these issues.
- The Resource Guide is a new document, developed over the last two months, which provides background information for each goal in the proposed 2016 plan. For each goal, key terms are defined, more information is given on the intention of the goal, and local best practices and links to national resources are provided.
- Recent changes to the proposed 2016 plan include combining actions, and revising some goals.

#### DISCUSSION:

- Mr. Lord: Entities in Virginia have had issues with local authority and the inability to require certain actions. I see that this new plan shifts toward encouragement, which is a positive step. I would love to see COG sponsor a Green Government challenge or Green Schools challenge to engage in friendly competition that spurs progress.
- Mr. Grow: I congratulate staff on working toward these goals. It's often difficult to get all the region's jurisdictions going in the right direction. I'd like to see not just what jurisdictions are doing but how we are doing in terms of overall emissions reductions.
- Mr. Busciano: Across the country and particularly in the Chesapeake Bay region, we're seeing goal setting but not a lot of benchmarking and tracking on the level of tree canopy. Do you foresee plans to achieve the tree canopy goals being put in place?
  - Mr. Berliner: Indeed, it is hard to quantitatively value trees for their economic and environmental impacts.
  - Ms. Rohlfs: The July CEEPC meeting will include a report from the Tree Canopy Workgroup, which should address these questions.
- Mr. O'Brien: I recently attended a conference on valuing natural capital. I wonder if it would be good to include this concept in the 2016 plan, where we place a quantitative value on natural resources, and when we deplete them we go into the "red." These natural capital balance sheets can work in lieu of a carbon tax to track our progress.



- Mr. Busciano: Science is beginning to tell us about the benefits of trees and natural resources—not just in reducing particulates and improving air quality, but bringing about human health benefits and general wellness.
- Mr. Agazi: In a future plan, we should take a closer look at the built environment, including building codes and other local policies. LEED policies are helpful but in Virginia they are not requirements, and we can only enforce them through zoning regulations.

## **6. Adjournment**

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The meeting was adjourned at 11:45am. The next meeting will be held May 22.