A regular meeting of the Board of Supervisors of Albemarle County, Virginia, was held on April 23, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. in Lane Auditorium, Second Floor, Albemarle County Office Building, 401 McIntire Road, Charlottesville, Virginia, 22902.

PRESENT: Mr. Jim H. Andrews, Mr. Ned Gallaway, Ms. Beatrice (Bea) J.S. LaPisto-Kirtley, Ms. Ann H. Mallek, Ms. Diantha H. McKeel, and Mr. Mike O. D. Pruitt.

ABSENT: none.

OFFICERS PRESENT: County Executive, Jeffrey B. Richardson; County Attorney, Andy Herrick; Clerk, Claudette K. Borgersen; and Senior Deputy Clerk, Travis O. Morris.

Agenda Item No. 1. Call to Order. The meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m., by the Chair, Mr. Jim Andrews.

Mr. Andrews introduced the Albemarle County Police Department Officers present to provide their services at the meeting, Lieutenant Angela Jamerson and Master Police Officer Dana Reeves.

Agenda Item No. 2. **Public Hearing: <u>Public Hearing on the Board of Supervisors FY 2026 Proposed Budget.</u>** To receive comments on the Proposed FY 26 Operating and Capital Budgets.

Mr. Andy Bowman, Assistant Chief Financial Officer, stated that before they began the public hearing, he would like to provide a brief summary of the proposed Fiscal Year 2026 budget. He said that if one had attended one of their community town halls or the initial budget work session where the County Executive presented the budget, it took approximately 45 minutes to detail the budget's components, investments, and rationale, but he would give an abbreviated presentation tonight. He noted that this was a public hearing, and there was no action being requested by the Board of Supervisors at this meeting; that action would occur on May 7.

Mr. Jacob Sumner, Chief Financial Officer, stated that for those joining them today for the public hearing, a one-page overview of the budget was available at the sign-up sheet. He said that if they would like to have a copy, it was available to the public.

Mr. Bowman said that he wanted to begin by examining the path behind them and the path ahead. He explained that over the last two months, the Board had invested a significant amount of time into this budget. This marked the start of the 34th hour of public meetings that had included town halls and work sessions, and it was evident that the Board of Supervisors had also invested a tremendous amount of their own time in the budget, as reflected in the depth and breadth of their questions. He noted that for transparency, they had posted on their website the Board’s questions and staff’s answers about budget information.

Mr. Bowman stated that tonight was a public hearing on the budget. He said that next week there would be a public hearing on property tax rates, which were required to be held at two separate times under Virginia code. He said that on May 7, staff would request the Board to approve and appropriate the budget. He said that as he walked through the highlights of the budget and where those investments were, he would orient a lot of this around the Board's strategic plan adopted in the fall of 2022. He said that Fiscal Year 26 would be the third year of the Board's five-year strategic plan, which ran through Fiscal Year 28.

Mr. Bowman said that most of his comments tonight would focus on the three strategic goals on the left of the screen, safety and well-being, workforce and customer service, and education and learning, as these were the largest budget drivers and the primary sources of new revenues. While there were efforts to implement existing plans and utilize existing funding, the first three goals on the left would be the primary focus of his comments.

Mr. Bowman said that before they examined the expenditure side, it was appropriate to review the revenue side. The budget was balanced as required by law for Counties of Virginia, and it was achieved based on these proposed rates. He said that the real property rate was an increase of $0.04, bringing the rate to $0.894 per $100 in assessed value. He said that he would discuss the implications of this $0.04 increase in a subsequent section.

Mr. Bowman said that the personal property tax was recommended to be set at $4.28 per $100 of valuation. He noted that the Board and public may recall that during the pandemic, there was a surge in vehicle prices, particularly used car values. He said that at that time, the Board of Supervisors had significantly reduced the personal property rate by $0.86, and over the last two years, it had been phasing in that increase back to the pre-pandemic rate. He said that food and beverage and transit occupancy taxes remained unchanged.

Mr. Bowman said that examining the real property rate of $0.04, which was dedicated to various areas, it was worth noting that this rate had a significant impact on the quality of life and well-being. He said that specifically, it supported public safety initiatives. He said that as they looked at the impact of supporting existing Fire Rescue services, now that Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) grants were being phased out, the County had leveraged additional funding to add police officers and provide support for their partners in public safety.

Mr. Bowman said that there was also additional funding provided for the public schools, with 54% of new revenues going towards them. Furthermore, for the first time, the proposed budget included ongoing funding for affordable housing, amounting to $1.2 million, equivalent to $0.004 on the real estate tax rate. Additionally, there was one-time funding that would be discussed in subsequent slides, highlighting the total investment in housing.

Mr. Bowman stated that provided on the next slide was a general overview of the General Fund revenues. While the overall County budget exceeded $600 million, the Board's discussion and public presentations primarily focused on the General Fund for three reasons: it was where all tax revenue was received, it was the primary funding source for the public schools, the capital and debt program, and local government services, and it was where the Board of Supervisors had the most policy discretion. Notably, about two-thirds of the revenues came from general property taxes, primarily real estate and personal property.

Mr. Bowman highlighted that the federal revenue, which accounted for approximately 2% of the total, was something they closely monitored due to the changing federal landscape. The proposed budget was approximately $9 million, primarily contributing to the fund for the Department of Social Services. He said that next, he would examine the balanced budget of the General Fund, which stood at $480.6 million. He said that the largest cost was the transfer to schools, accounting for 45%. Public safety was the next largest category, with a 16% allocation.

Mr. Bowman said that while these functional areas were significant, he would like to explain the highlights of this investment in action. He said that the County was committed to providing fire and police services that met the community's expectations. He said that in recent years, they had successfully leveraged federal grant funding from FEMA, known as the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grants.

Mr. Bowman explained that this program had secured $12.7 million in federal funding, which was being used to provide staff across the entire system, including rural areas and development zones. He said that this funding was crucial in addressing the critical challenges they faced, including volunteer shortages and increasing demands for services. He said that his comment about volunteer shortages was not intended to criticize the volunteers themselves, but rather to acknowledge the new difficulties they faced, including increased training requirements, a limited volunteer population, and other factors. He noted that nationwide, this was a trend they were seeing.

Mr. Bowman said that as a result, the County had sought to supplement staffing more quickly through this FEMA grant strategy. He said that as these grants came to an end, they must be prepared to cover these costs to maintain essential services as call volumes grew. He said that moving forward to the Police Department, the proposed budget included six additional officers, the highest increase since Fiscal Year 16. He said that these officers would be assigned to patrol duties, augmenting existing officers and ensuring comprehensive coverage across all shifts. He said that they were also examining ways to optimize their operations.

Mr. Bowman said that in partnership with the Police Department and the Fire Rescue Department, they were undertaking a comprehensive staffing study to assess whether they were effectively providing a public safety response, reviewing industry standards, best practices, and making recommendations on the best way to assign personnel to achieve optimal performance in the field, similar to their previous evaluations of other departments. He said that he would move on to community services. He said that the County viewed its community partners, both with other localities and the University, as a significant force multiplier in what they could achieve.

Mr. Bowman said that there were 55 programs totaling $36 million, including large partnerships such as the Emergency Communications Center (ECC) between the City, the County, and UVA, the Jefferson-Madison Regional Library (JMRL), and the Albemarle County Charlottesville Regional Jail (ACRJ), as well as smaller nonprofits. He said that for example, he had a picture here of Loaves and Fishes, which received $1.6 million in funding through the Human Services process, an increase of $360,000 year to year to leverage the knowledge, expertise, and funding of community partners to support their regional social safety net.

Mr. Bowman stated that this increased funding was also directed towards their highest priority needs, based on their Human Services Needs Assessment and the process changes supported by the Board over the past two years. He said that next he would like to spend a moment discussing public schools. He said that the ongoing operational funding was increasing by 7.3% or $14.3 million, building on the last two years of approximately $27 million in operational funding. He said that this continued operational support would help address various school needs.

Mr. Bowman said that it was recommended to include $6.2 million in one-time costs to support the public-school share of employee health care costs. In the capital plan, he would highlight three new schools, two of which had broken ground, including the new Southern Elementary School and Center 2, located at the Albemarle, Journey, and Greer Campus. He said that in the plan, although not included in construction and design until Fiscal Years 27 and 28, a new elementary school was proposed in the northern feeding pattern, and the CIP addressed this, as well as the School Board's request to expand the student capacity from 500 to 600, based on demographic changes in projected enrollment.

Mr. Bowman said that next, he would like to highlight affordable housing, an area supported by the increased tax rate. He said that this was the first time dedicated revenue was allocated to the Affordable Housing Investment Fund, in addition to ongoing funding. Furthermore, an additional $4 million of one-time investment was included in the budget. He said that for context, over the last five years, there had been approximately $17 million in local funding and American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding leveraged in this area. Additionally, the County had also leveraged federal pass-through funding, Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), and other supports.

Mr. Bowman said that next, he would discuss climate action and environmental sustainability. He said that the Department of Facilities and Environmental Services had an operating budget of around half a million dollars to execute the Climate Action Plan, in partnership with departments. This effort not only focused on climate action but also environmental sustainability, including water resources efforts, septic to sewer program funding, and other partnerships. He said that there was approximately $200,000 remaining in the Climate Reserve, which would be recommended to carry forward if unused in the current year.

Mr. Bowman said that next, he would address economic development. He clarified that the numbers in the upper right corner supported the strategic plan goal they were most closely aligned with. He said that there was approximately $1 million in one-time funding to add to the Economic Development Fund. He said that the Economic Development Strategic Plan was in the early stages of an update for the second Economic Development Strategic Plan. He said that a significant portion of their economic development project was focused on the defense industry, which was the second-largest contributor to their local economy.

Mr. Bowman said that they had partnerships with workforce development, Piedmont Virginia Community College (PVCC), University of Virginia (UVA), and other community partners, as well as exploring redevelopment opportunities, such as the Home Depot project at Fashion Square Mall.

Mr. Bowman said when examining workforce and service delivery, the budget included a 3% cost of living adjustment (COLA) for classified staff, which also covered the employer share for healthcare rates. This represented a 24% increase, consistent with their County's experience in this fund. He acknowledged that the County had recently opened its second employee health clinic, a strategy that not only improved access and care but also helped reduce healthcare costs by treating issues earlier and more cost-effectively.

Mr. Bowman said another part of workforce and service delivery was that they continually assessed their operations to identify areas for improvement. He said that as a result, they had included 11.7 full-time equivalent positions that would be eliminated. This was part of their reengineering efforts, which had led to the implementation of new systems, process improvements, and the elimination of vacant positions.

Mr. Bowman explained that they had already realized $1 million in savings in the current fiscal year and anticipated an additional $500,000 in Fiscal Year 26. He said that this was a tangible aspect of the budget process, aimed at achieving balance. He said that the net change in positions would be a decrease of 5.7 full-time equivalents, after accounting for the additional six officers.

Mr. Bowman said that the five-year Capital Improvement Plan was a key component of their goals, and he would highlight some of the new projects, including the green bar in the middle of the slide. He said that there were continued phases of Biscuit Run, including the fields and other improvements at that park, which had opened this year. He said that the Darden Towe athletic field rebuild was also ongoing, with two fields currently underway. The remaining two fields were scheduled for Fiscal Years 2026 and 2027, and an urban pocket park was scheduled for FY26. Additionally, the School Board's request for school buses had been addressed and fully funded, and there was an increase in school renovation funding provided in the Capital Improvement Plan.

Mr. Bowman said that to recap, since the budget was originally recommended on February 24, there had been several changes. On March 19, the Board of Supervisors endorsed the technical updates on the screen. He said that he would not go into detail, but he would classify these updates as changes that would have already been incorporated into the budget if they had been known in early February. He said that the main difference was a timing issue, with information becoming available later.

Mr. Bowman stated that on April 7, the Board of Supervisors made a more substantial update, allocating one-time funding from its Advancing Strategic Priorities Reserve taking 1.2 million from that amount and allocating that to the Albemarle Housing Investment Fund (AHIF) and $200,000 to the General Fund for the Emergency Relief Program (ACERP) through the Department of Social Services. He said that these allocations were made at the direction of the Board and were current as of the date. The Board could continue to make amendments until the adopted budget on May 7.

Mr. Bowman said that this was a brief summary of a 300-page document and the 33 hours of public meetings. He said that he hoped those who read the two-pager during his presentation had gained some context. He said that the most important part of tonight's discussion was for the public and the Board to state and listen to any questions or concerns, and for staff to support the Board in addressing any issues that may arise before the May 7 adoption date.

Mr. Andrews said that they did have many of the public meeting hours recorded and available for the public to view at any time. He said that before they proceeded with the public hearing, he would like to ask the Board if they had any questions for staff at this time.

Mr. Pruitt said that he believed he had one question at this time, but it may be a bit complex. He said that he would like for staff to walk the Board and the public through the unassigned funds. He said that specifically, he would like to discuss the Advancing Strategic Priorities Reserve, as well as his concerns regarding the Operating Reserves and the additional 2% reserves. He requested that staff provide an update on the remaining balance in each of these funds, rounded to the nearest millionth or hundred thousandth as appropriate.

Mr. Bowman said that he could address this topic through a couple of different categories. He said that the first is the unassigned general fund balance where under Board's financial management policies, the County holds 10% of its funds to meet cash flow needs and also as a precautionary measure in the event of an acute economic or natural catastrophe that would allow the County to pay its bills, continue operations, and avoid short-term borrowing. He said that the current balance was approximately $50 million, although he would need to confirm the exact amount with his colleagues. He said that this 10% was considered largely untouchable.

Mr. Bowman said, in addition to this, the Board's financial management policies also included a 2% reserve, which was approximately $10 to $11 million, providing a bit more flexibility in case of a one-time circumstance or emergency. He said that furthermore, as part of the Capital Improvement Plan, there was a $700,000 one-time Advancing Strategic Priorities reserve awaiting Board direction on how to apply it.

Mr. Bowman said that their Operating Budget and General Fund included ongoing and one-time contingency funds, known as the Reserve for Contingencies, which were available to manage unexpected expenses throughout the year. He said that these funds totaled approximately $200,000 in ongoing amounts and $300,000 in one-time amounts, although he would need to verify this information to ensure accuracy.

Mr. Bowman said that the reason he was being so specific in his clarification of ongoing versus one-time expenses was that the Board was well aware that with its financial management policies, if one-time funds were used to cover an ongoing expense, it would create a significant fiscal challenge the following year when those funds were no longer available.

Mr. Pruitt said that he had a quick clarifying question to follow up on that. He said that when they were considering the Reserve for Contingencies, he would like to clarify if one part of the other was, or if they were separate funds. He asked if the $200,000 was part of the total $300,000, or if they were separate funds.

Mr. Bowman clarified that these were separate funds. He said that the total was approximately $500,000, with around $200,000 ongoing and $300,000 one-time. He reiterated that these were approximate numbers.

Ms. Mallek said that Mr. Bowman had mentioned that there were three new schools as well as the increase in operations, but there was no operational increase in staffing in the Fiscal Year 26 budget for the buildings that were still in the planning stages.

Mr. Bowman confirmed that Ms. Mallek was correct; the southern feeder pattern elementary school and Center 2 were anticipated to open in Fiscal Year 27. He said that the estimated operating cost from the public schools at that time was approximately $2.4 million, which would be reflected in the Fiscal Year 27 budget.

Ms. LaPisto-Kirtley asked if Mr. Bowman could clarify his mention of $700,000 as a specific allocation.

Mr. Bowman clarified that on April 7, there was approximately $1.9 million remaining in the Capital Improvement Plan's Advancing Strategic Priorities Reserve. He said that at that time, the Board directed staff to move $1.2 million of that amount to the two items shown on the screen. He said that as a result, about $700,000 still existed and was available for the Board to use in the future, whenever that may be.

Mr. Gallaway said that he had a similar question, as he had missed the note. He asked what the one-time and ongoing funding for contingencies were.

Mr. Bowman said that approximately $200,000 was ongoing, and one-time funding was around $300,000. He asked if Mr. Davidson could provide more accurate numbers.

Mr. Ryan Davidson, Deputy Chief of Budget, stated that regarding the Reserve for Contingencies for FY26, the ongoing amount was approximately $200,000, while the one-time amount was approximately $600,000. He said that after applying the recommended changes, the total was approximately $880,000 total, with $200,000 for ongoing expenses and approximately $600,000 for one-time expenses.

Mr. Andrews said that that was very helpful. He noted that as he was reviewing their budget book to see how they had utilized this in the past, it had been important to have it in place, but it was also valuable to understand the planning process. He said that he was sure that he would have additional comments after the public hearing, and he would like to review these numbers again.

Mr. Andrews opened the public hearing.

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Ms. Carolyn Crutchfield, White Hall District, said that she had lived in the Crozet Meadows Apartments for 10 years. She said that during her time there, she had witnessed many changes, but unfortunately, most of them had been driven by the property managers rather than the residents. She said that she would like to request that the County monitor the situation to ensure the property managers were more attuned to their needs and not overly controlling.

Ms. Crutchfield said that she had had 26-27 different property managers in the past 10 years, and she believed this lack of continuity in policies was a significant issue. She said that the arbitrary changes in policies could be frustrating, and she feared it was often due to a lack of understanding of their concerns as low-income residents. They were an older community, with residents 62 and above, and their needs were distinct from those of a typical multifamily community. She said that it was essential to acknowledge both their strengths and weaknesses. Recently, she attended a meeting where the property managers stated that the residents were treated the same as everyone else.

Ms. Crutchfield said that she would like to see that equality in practice, so she would like to see more control over the communities they built in this County, particularly low-income communities. This would allow them to make informed choices about where they lived and decide to leave a place if it did not suit them. As someone who could not afford to seek out alternative options, she believed this was crucial. It was beneficial for her situation, and she thought it was essential for everyone's well-being.

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Reverend Susan Karlson, White Hall District, stated that she was a member of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Charlottesville, as well one of the co-presidents of Interfaith Movement Promoting Action by Congregations Together (IMPACT). She said that when she moved back to this area, she was searching for a place to live, and they found a home within the community of Albemarle County. She said that without the financial assistance provided by their deceased, hardworking, single mothers, they would not have been able to afford to move back here.

Rev. Karlson said that as a result, they were among the privileged individuals who can afford to live in this area. She acknowledged that they were aware of this privilege and recognized it. However, she also recognized that there were tens of thousands of people who could not afford to live in this area and were seeking more affordable housing options. She said that IMPACT recently hosted their Nehemiah Action, which brought together over 1,100 people who shared a common belief in the need for $10 million annually for affordable housing.

Rev. Karlson said that several County Supervisors were in attendance, and they were pleased to see their presence. Unfortunately, the County had once again failed to fund affordable housing at the level it was needed. She said that they were grateful, however, that the Board had recently allocated additional funds for the Housing Fund, which would provide a long-term solution, and for the Eviction Relief Fund, which would help keep people out of harm's way in the short term. She said that despite this, the housing crisis continued to worsen. In fact, last year, the Housing Fund received requests for $20 million in project applications.

Rev. Karlson said that as community leaders, the Board members were in their respective positions because they wanted everyone in Albemarle County to have a decent place to live and a safe place to call home. Affordable housing for everyone was a fundamental community need, and if they did not address this issue, how could they expect to provide for the well-being of their community? She said that the budget had not yet been finalized, and she urged the Board to consider allocating more funds to the Housing Fund. She said that they boldly asked that the Board do so.

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Ms. Denise Zito, White Hall District, said that she also was as a member of IMPACT. She said that she had lived in this area her entire life, raising three children who had all stayed close by. She said that two of them still lived in the County, while one resided in Charlottesville. Recently, her eldest child asked her, "Why are there so many people begging on the street corners when I didn't see that as a child?" She explained to them that they had had 40 years of underinvestment in housing, resulting in a severe shortage of affordable places for these individuals to live.

Ms. Zito also said that at the Nehemiah Action, the Director of the Haven had told them that it was a myth that people were unhoused due to mental illness or addiction. Other cities had successfully addressed these issues by funding affordable housing options. One of her church members, who was initially skeptical, asked, "Why doesn't IMPACT work with the private sector?" They questioned why they always seemed to rely on government support.

Ms. Zito said that she responded by saying that leaving this issue to the private sector had led to the renovation of properties into luxury apartments. She said that the City of Charlottesville stepped in to address the problem by purchasing a mobile home park near Carlton Road by using their Affordable Housing Trust Fund. This allowed the residents to remain in their homes. A similar situation occurred in Albemarle when Cavalier Crossing Apartments became available for purchase. If they had utilized the Affordable Housing Trust Fund that the community had been requesting for years, the County could have purchased the property and kept it affordable.

Ms. Zito said that instead, the complex was sold to a private entity, which planned to convert it into luxury apartments. She emphasized that they did not need any more luxury apartments; what they needed was affordable housing for their low-income residents. She said that the problem would only worsen if they continued to delay addressing it. The experts with whom IMPACT had been working had emphasized that the best practice was for the County to solicit proposals for funded projects in an annual competition. This would involve developing rental housing near the urban ring with public transportation.

Ms. Zito said that what had been proposed in this budget was insufficient to address the issue, as evidenced by the growing number of people on the streets and sleeping in their cars. She said that there was no better use for the vast reserves the County kept than to solve this humanitarian crisis. She urged the Board to take all necessary steps to provide the required funds and initiate a process for better housing options for those in need, regardless of their economic status.

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Mr. Reed Chrobak said that he was a 10th grader at Community Lab School here in Albemarle. He said that he could have been spending his time with friends or studying for the SOLs, but he chose to be here today to discuss climate change at today’s budget meeting. He said that as humans continued to burn fossil fuels, the world would undergo drastic changes, and people would certainly suffer. He said that climate change was already exacerbating the severity of weather, and the County was unprepared for its effects on its beautiful County.

Mr. Chrobak said that his generation would likely inherit a world wracked by extreme weather and worsened injustices. To address the pressing issue of climate change, the County had set ambitious goals: a 45% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from 2008 levels by 2030 and net zero by 2050. He said that the County’s Climate Action Plan outlined clear actions to support these goals, which could have a significant impact. However, these actions were not funded. He said that the proposed budget for the Fiscal Year 2026 included nearly $10 million for the Department of Facilities and Environmental Services, but almost all of this would go towards facilities and maintenance, not climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Mr. Chrobak said that additionally, no money had been allocated for the climate action funding pool, which was ever-depleting. As a young person, he would either grow up in a world where people sat by while climate change became irreversible, or he would grow up in a world where they took action. He said that to address climate change and meet its climate goals, Albemarle County must allocate $1 million in the annual budget for a Climate Action Plan Implementation Fund.

Mr. Chrobak said that this fund should be designated solely for the administration of the County's Climate Action Plan and the measures outlined in it, including increasing the extent of sidewalks and bike lanes to reduce reliance on gas-powered cars, providing incentives for private renewable energy development, and increasing tree cover in urban areas. He said that when properly executed, these actions could make Albemarle a leader in the fight against climate change. However, they required funding.

Mr. Chrobak said that the City of Charlottesville already included $1 million in their annual budget for climate action, and Albemarle must follow their example. He said that climate action was not free, but it was essential. He said that a $1 million Climate Action Plan Implementation Fund would help to secure a healthy environment for his generation and future generations.

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Ms. Veronica Vitko, Rivanna District, said that she was a junior at Albemarle High School. She said that she was here today to request that the Board include a $1 million climate action implementation fund in this year's budget. She said that $1 million may seem like a significant amount, but when it came to protecting their future, her future, and the future of every young person in this County, it was the kind of investment they needed to make. She said that currently, only about $200,000 remained in the climate action pool, which was not enough.

Ms. Vitko said that given their commitment to reducing emissions by almost half by 2030, and considering that the climate crisis was already here, they needed to provide real, consistent funding to support their goals. She said that climate change was not an abstract concept; it was actively changing the way they lived. Yet, the budget this year failed to allocate new funds towards real climate solutions.

Ms. Vitko asked how they could prioritize the health and safety of their community when they did not invest in addressing this critical issue. She said that they were well aware that climate change was one of the biggest challenges they faced, not only globally, but locally in Albemarle. She said that it affected every aspect of their lives and the longer they delayed, the more difficult and expensive it became. She said that climate action must be an integral part of their priorities, encompassing transportation, housing, public health, schools, and funding it should be a non-negotiable component of their priorities.

Ms. Vitko said that this fund would enable Albemarle County to make significant strides toward achieving the goals of the Climate Action Plan. She said that other cities in Virginia, such as Richmond, Charlottesville, and Alexandria, were already investing in climate action. She said that Albemarle had the opportunity to lead, but that would not happen if they continued to wait for the right time. She said that there would always be other needs and priorities. However, ignoring climate change would exacerbate all of these problems.

Ms. Vitko said that $1 million may seem like a significant amount, but compared to the cost of inaction, it was merely a starting point. She said that it was an investment in jobs, healthier communities, safer infrastructure, and a brighter future that many young people would inherit. She requested the Board to prioritize climate funding this year, as their future depended on it, because it does.

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Ms. Cathryn Riley, Rivanna District, said that she was a junior at Albemarle High School. In 2020, the Board made a call to address climate change mitigation through the Albemarle County Climate Action Plan. They pledged to work towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the community by 45% from 2008 levels by 2030 and achieving net zero emissions by 2050. This goal was commendable, but without sufficient funding, it could not be achieved.

Ms. Riley said that going to net zero emissions by 2050 was impossible unless the County committed to providing the necessary funding. Her community, the Climate Conscious Youth of Albemarle, recommended allocating an annual amount of $1 million towards climate action. This investment would ensure that organizations working towards achieving the necessary funding were supported.

Ms. Riley said that the funding could be directed towards initiatives such as electric buses, efficient building energy, solar power, protecting public lands, and creating a walkable community where everyone could access their desired destinations without relying on gas-powered vehicles. This was not only crucial for their community's present, but also for the well-being of future generations. The decisions they made in the next couple of years would have a lasting impact on their children and grandchildren.

Ms. Riley said that given the recent federal funding cuts to climate action, it was imperative that local leaders stepped up and made a positive change in the community. She respectfully asked that the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors uphold their promise and further commit to funding an annual amount of $1 million into the Albemarle County Climate Action Plan.

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Ms. Jane Colony Mills, White Hall District, said that she served as the Executive Director of Loaves and Fishes Food Pantry in the Jack Jouett District. She said that she was here to discuss Loaves and Fishes, but she also wanted to emphasize her support for funding affordable housing and climate action in Albemarle County.

Ms. Colony Mills said that she would like to extend her gratitude to Mr. Richardson, Mr. Bowman, and the Albemarle County Finance staff for including Loaves and Fishes and their vital food services in the County's FY26 Human Services Budget and Capital Improvements Program budget. At Loaves and Fishes, they provided a week's worth of nutritious groceries to over 10,000 individuals facing food insecurity each month.

Ms. Colony Mills said that their customized food distributions catered to household size, dietary restrictions, and cultural preferences, ensuring that everyone receives food that truly nourishes. Notably, half of those they serve lived in Albemarle County. Since 2022, the number of individuals relying on Loaves and Fishes for food has increased by 92%.

Ms. Colony Mills said that in 2024, they distributed 2.8 million pounds of food to more than 128,000 people, including seniors, children, people with disabilities, survivors of domestic violence, and the unhoused. This dramatic increase highlighted the urgent need for continued support and expanded capacity to meet their neighbors with compassion and nutritious food. Given that 65% of their food was perishable, expanding their cold storage capacity was essential.

Ms. Colony Mills said that additional freezer space would enable them to store more fresh proteins, allowing them to respond to the growing demand with dignity and nutrition at the forefront. Last year, 33% of the food they distributed, more than 973,000 pounds, was rescued from local grocery stores and freight haulers, including food rejected by the Walmart Distribution Center at Zion Crossroads. This food rescue reduces food waste at the Ivy Materials Utilization Center, and any food not fit for human consumption was redirected to pig farmers.

Ms. Colony Mills said that to better serve their diverse community, they offered Spanish language support at every distribution and had staff who speak Dari, Pashto, and Arabic on Wednesdays and Thursdays. She said that they also had a full-time dietitian who taught live and online cooking classes, supported visitors with special diets, and introduced new foods through recipes and samples. She said that if the County's budget was approved as proposed, this would be the first time Loaves and Fishes had received funding from Albemarle County, and they were deeply grateful to the staff and the Board of Supervisors for this support.

Ms. Colony Mills said that they would also like to extend their heartfelt thanks to Albemarle County for proposing continued funding for MicroCAT, a service that has been a valuable resource for many County residents, making it easier for them to access the Loaves and Fishes location on Lambs Road. She thanked the Board for helping them better serve the community.

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Ms. Sadhbh O'Flynn, Climate Justice Policy Manager at Community Climate Collaborative, said that she wanted to reiterate a point regarding the slide on environmental services and climate action that was presented earlier. She said that it gave the impression that they were funding climate action with a total of $1.95 million, when in fact, they were only utilizing $200,000 from the leftover funding from the 2022 fiscal year. She reiterated that there was no new climate funding included in this budget.

Ms. O'Flynn said that she wanted to clarify this point again, as it had been a recurring miscommunication. She said that she had been asked by several members of the Board and staff why she, as an Irish person, chose to live and work in the United States. She said that it was a difficult decision, as this was not her home and she did not have her support network here. She said that, however, she was committed to living and working here because she believed that the decisions made at the local level had far-reaching impacts beyond this locality. She said that the work that could be done with the funding from the 2020 Climate Action Plan would have a significant reach beyond this County. She said that she wanted to emphasize this point, as someone who had grown up in a different country and was aware of the importance of climate action.

Ms. O'Flynn said that in Ireland, everyone was familiar with Charlottesville due to the horrific events of 2017. She would love to share information about Albemarle and the work she did with County representatives to advance climate action funding in this County. She said that a circulation had been distributed among community members who were concerned about the lack of climate funding in this budget. She said that the circular noted that there were two full-time staff positions for the Climate Action Program, with funding allocated for four members in each position. However, the two next climate action positions remained unfilled. She respectfully asked the Board to provide the necessary funding to ensure the Facilities and Environmental Services (FES) Department was fully staffed and that they had the two required Climate Action Program members.

Ms. O'Flynn said that she wanted to clarify that the numerous bullet points outlining the work of the Climate Action Program were not separate budget items, but rather descriptions of the work being done by the funded staff positions. She said that the Climate Action Program had already made significant contributions, including community-facing initiatives, energy efficiency, green building incentives, electrification grants, and bridging funding gaps. She said that the City of Charlottesville had already demonstrated their commitment to similar efforts. She urged the Board to fund the Climate Action Program in this budget, as it would enable them to partner with others and build on their existing work.

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Ms. Lila Castleman said that she was here to ask Albemarle County to include funding specifically for climate action in their annual budget. When this County passed its 2020 Climate Action Plan, it was a truly inspiring and impressive event, making Albemarle a leader in action to resist climate change. Unfortunately, she now felt that the County had let its constituents down. The leadership demonstrated when the plan was first passed had failed to back up its goals with significant or sufficient action. She said that when she wrote to Supervisors to communicate her concerns, she was misinformed by a Supervisor that two additional positions had been added to the climate program, which was not true.

Ms. Castleman clarified that there were still only two climate program positions, and one of them has been vacant for months. The funding for climate action in this budget was only $200,000, which was all that is left of the climate action pool last funded in Fiscal Year 2022. This was nowhere near sufficient for attaining the greenhouse gas reduction goals stated in the Climate Action Plan. Local greenhouse gases remained high and had not been significantly reduced since the Climate Action Plan was adopted. She said that in five years, the County had failed to continue funding the climate action that is increasingly necessary. The current federal administration could no longer be relied upon to provide any funding for climate action.

Ms. Castleman said that it was devastating to acknowledge that the responsibility to fight global warming now rested with state and local governments, and they must do their part to protect their environment. Other Virginian municipalities had, for the most part, also struggled or failed to ensure sufficient targeted funding for climate action. Albemarle must be a leader, a trailblazer once again, and inspire other governments to fund crucial climate action. She acknowledged that funding was scarce, and that there were infinite other issues that required money.

Ms. Castleman said that, however, these issues would always be present, and there would never be a right time to start funding to combat climate change. The problem would not go away. Too much time had already been spent, and too many climate-related disasters had already occurred. With this funding, they could prevent the hurricane, both literal and figurative.

Ms. Castleman said that funding for climate action must be integrated into every aspect of government, every department, and every program. She said that she suggested they could begin by establishing a dedicated climate action fund that was replenished annually, rather than being a one-time allocation. She said that the time to invest in climate action was now. She said that she urged the Board to commit to saving the planet, protecting the country and its people, and fighting for a world where future generations could live safely.

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Ms. Lexi Ryan, Rio District, said that she appreciated the opportunity to speak with the Board today about something that affected the future of their home, Albemarle County. She said that they were fortunate to live in a beautiful and vibrant community, filled with trees and flowers. However, as they knew, climate change was having a profound impact. She said that they were seeing more extreme weather, increased flood risks, rising temperatures, and shifts in their ecosystem.

Ms. Ryan said that this was why she was present to recommend a dedicated $1 million fund within the Climate Action Plan. She said that this fund would not only help them react to the effects of climate change but also proactively prepare for them and reduce their contribution to the problem. Other countries and cities, including some in Virginia, were already taking action. She said that they were not doing it because they could afford to wait, but because they could not afford to not act. Unfortunately, their local efforts so far had not been enough. The situation was not improving, and it was imperative that they take action.

Ms. Ryan said that she did not believe they needed to make drastic changes all at once. Even a small percentage of their discretionary budget set aside consistently each year could be the start of a long-term resilience and sustainability. She asked that they think of $1 million towards climate action as an investment in their economy, public health, and the lives of future generations who would call Albemarle their home. She believed that their community cared, and she believed that with thoughtful planning, transparency, and local collaboration, they could rise to meet this challenge. She requested the Board to be proactive and responsible by making Albemarle a model of what a community could do if it chose to protect its future.

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Ms. Mel O'Bier said that she lived in Albemarle County and had resided here since 1991, when her parents brought her here as a child from upstate New York, drawn by promises of good jobs and affordable housing, which they successfully achieved. They continued to live in her childhood home in Hollymead to this day. She said that however, she could not do that same thing. She was raising her own family and living paycheck to paycheck. She had recently completed her Master of Education at the University of Virginia and was teaching at a private school for children with disabilities.

Ms. O'Bier said that unfortunately, she was unable to afford to buy a home in Charlottesville. Charlottesville gained national attention in 2017 for reasons they would rather forget. However, what was happening here today had the potential to rewrite that story. This community had the chance to become known for standing up for dignity, fairness, and the belief that housing is a human right. She believed that this Board had the opportunity to lead, not only through policies, but by acknowledging and addressing the experiences of many residents who are struggling. She appreciated the public statements made by some of the Supervisors regarding their intent to address this issue. She was also in attendance at Nehemiah Action and appreciates the statements made there.

Ms. O'Bier said that, however, the scale of the crisis demanded more than just intention. It required action that matches the urgency and harm. At this point, it was nearly impossible to live comfortably in this County without being aware of the struggles faced by others and recognizing the responsibility that awareness brought. That was why she had launched a petition on change.org titled, Housing is a Human Right. She was asking the Board to take three specific steps.

Ms. O'Bier said that these included the establishment a community-led emergency housing affordability task force, not one focused on landowners and developers, to publicly support lifting the state ban on local rent control, and explore stronger tenant protections, such as fair eviction standards and rent increase caps tied to the cost of living. These ideas were not developed in isolation and are meant to replace existing efforts, not replace them.

Ms. O'Bier said that her hope was that they would see this as part of a broader effort to address the housing crisis in their community. Groups like IMPACT, whom she greatly supported, and Piedmont Housing Alliance (PHA), and many others, were doing powerful work on this issue. She said that this petition represented one more way to contribute to that movement from a different perspective, informed by lived experience. She said that she also wanted to acknowledge the ongoing conversation surrounding IMPACT's request for a $10 million housing trust fund commitment.

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Mr. Todd Cone, Rio District, said that he was representing Indivisible Charlottesville's environmental group. He said that numerous other organizations and groups in the area were joining forces to urge this Board to fully fund the County's Climate Action Plan in the Fiscal Year 2026 budget. He said that they were aware that climate change was a global issue, far beyond the County's borders. He said that it was tempting to leave it to the federal and state governments to address.

Mr. Cone said that their federal government was currently under the leadership of a climate change denier, making it unlikely to take meaningful action and prone to making decisions that only worsened their situation. He said that the State government was also divided, and its ability to make decisive climate-related decisions was uncertain. He said that in the near future, it was likely that the local government would bear the brunt of addressing climate change. He said that they were counting on the Board to take action. He said that they did not want to be remembered as a community that had the opportunity to address climate change but chose not to act due to budget constraints.

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Mr. Michael Monaco, White Hall District, said that as a resident of affordable housing, he had a unique perspective on this issue. He said that he was one of the few households that successfully purchased a designated affordable unit, a rare occurrence in Albemarle County. He said that he was keenly aware of the challenges of living in affordable housing and the stability it provided. However, he was also aware of the limitations it imposed, as he was tied to this location and would face significant challenges if he were to move elsewhere. If he were to consider moving, he would likely look at Madison or Staunton, outside of a roughly 10-mile radius.

Mr. Monaco said that the inflexibility of the housing market in Albemarle County was a problem at all levels. He said it was a problem that affected affordable housing, as well as individuals who could not afford to leave a place they no longer wanted to live in. He said that this issue was not unique to Albemarle County, but it did contribute to a broader problem that affected the entire housing market and contributed to people not being about to live and work in the same place, volunteerism deficits, and greenhouse gas emissions. Specifically, reducing their greenhouse gas emissions goal of 45% would require addressing the root cause of emissions, which was transportation. He said in 2018, 52% of greenhouse gas emissions came from transportation. He said when people have to drive from other counties to work in Albemarle County, that creates greenhouse gas emission that could not be solved by building more vehicle chargers.

Mr. Monaco said that the pressure on the housing market created incentives for evictions and forced relocations, such as those experienced at Cavalier Crossing. He said that this was an issue of justice that required a comprehensive solution. He emphasized that they needed to prioritize housing development at all levels, from subsidized affordable housing to market-rate housing, to alleviate the pressure on the housing market and create a more equitable solution. He said that it was the foundation of the entire system and underpinned everything in their budget. He requested the Board to do everything in their power to further fund the affordable housing fund this year, next year, and years into the future.

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Ms. Susan Kruse, Executive Director of the Community Climate Collaborative (C3), said that as a mom who has lived in this community for 26 years, she was proud to have been a part of this community for so long. Six years ago, she stood before the Board on behalf of thousands of Charlottesville and Albemarle County residents, dozens of local businesses, and non-profit organizations, asking the Board to set leadership goals for climate action. She was proud that the Board unanimously voted to set climate goals at the highest standard, a 45% reduction by 2030 and carbon neutrality by 2050.

Ms. Kruse said that at the time, she shared with the Board that her eldest child, Evan, would be 40 years old by 2050, roughly the same age she was when she was coming before the Board to ask to set those goals. He was nine at the time. Her youngest child, Sebastian, was just six years old. Albemarle's climate work got off to a strong start, as the County worked to complete its Climate Action Plan, its resiliency plan, expanded its climate team, and dedicated funding to implement the Climate Action Plan. She was proud of this Board, including some of the present Supervisors who were serving at the time. Unfortunately, they were no longer on track. The County's own greenhouse gas emissions tell the story better than she could.

Ms. Kruse said that initially, the County was rapidly reducing greenhouse gas emissions, but they have since plateaued, with emissions remaining virtually unchanged between 2019 and 2022. More alarming was that the gap from where they said they would be at this time and where they are was widening every year. Additionally, the County Climate Team had a position that remains unfilled. The initial funds set aside for climate action implementation had been largely spent, and the remainder were insufficient to accelerate the action needed to get them back on track.

Ms. Kruse said that C3 had earned the broad support of this community, with more than 90% of its budget funded by individuals, private foundations, and local businesses. They count on their organization to hold the County government accountable. That was why they are here, advocating that the Board reinvest in climate. She said that by doing so, it would become abundantly clear that Climate Action Plan implementation was a top priority for the Board, not just on paper, but in its budget. She said that it was extremely disappointing that the Board and staff had attempted to claim that funding for street sweeping, recycling, and other components of facilities management and environmental services were, in fact, climate initiatives.

Mr. Kruse said that either the County was trying to put a positive spin on their failures, or the County had a serious misunderstanding of what climate action implementation truly looked like. She said that the children had spoken out tonight. She said that she was speaking on behalf of her children, tomorrow they were delivering 1,000 climate activity kits to fourth graders in this County. She said that it was time for the Board to do the right thing for these children and their future.

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Ms. Indigo Mathon, Rio District, said that she was a junior at Albemarle High School. She said that she was here today not just as a student, but as a young member of their community who was deeply concerned about the future they were shaping, both for her generation and the ones that followed, on the issue of climate change, and specifically in their local community. She said that there had been a significant loss in federal funding for environmental sustainability following their country's withdrawal from the Paris Climate Agreement and many other climate action programs.

Ms. Mathon said that she was here tonight to ask the Board to recommit to the Climate Action Plan with a $1 million investment. The drafted budget listed future projects on environmental services, which were important, but it failed to highlight the need to reduce their emissions. She said that the climate crisis was not on pause, and neither could they be. She said that investing in climate action meant investing in economic sustainability and long-term viability. She said that it meant incentivizing community co-benefits and future-proofing their economy.

Ms. Mathon said that it meant helping families save money through energy efficiency, and it meant giving people, especially young people, hope. She understood that budget pressures were a challenge, especially this year, but she firmly believed they could not afford to avoid investment in climate action. She said that the cost of doing nothing far outweighed the cost of taking action. She said that she was asking the Board to please not step back from climate leadership; keep pushing forward. She said that her generation was ready to do its part, but they needed the Board’s partnership.

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Ms. Martha Donnelly said that she was a resident of the City of Charlottesville. She stated that she was a graduate of UVA's class of 1975, with a degree in landscape architecture, and had returned to Charlottesville seven years ago. She said that listening to the discussion, she was very impressed with the young people's commitment to the seriousness of funding climate action. She said that she was not sure what the original document from 2008 was, but the previous speaker mentioned a 45% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. She said that her question was, was that doing the math, they should be at 77% of their goal by now, given they had only five years left.

Ms. Donnelly said that she was wondering if anyone could provide an estimate of how close they were to achieving that goal. She said that the request for $1 million seemed substantial, and she was guessing it should be more, not less. That was her main point: to ask for a breakdown of the math behind the request and what they needed to achieve by 2030. Additionally, wearing a related hat, she had been working with a team to promote their region as a biophilic region, and the City Council had just approved that concept on Monday. She said that they hoped the County would follow suit. She said that she believed that these two goals, bringing nature more centrally into their society, and reducing climate change, could work together effectively.

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Mr. Andrews closed the public hearing and the matter rested with the Board.

Mr. Pruitt said that he wanted to recognize that many members of the public had likely heard him say this before, but he believed it was essential that they consider the budget in terms of what was possible. He said that they had been operating under a constrained budget, and he wanted to emphasize this for the public who was still with them. He said that they were no longer able to increase advertising or adjust the tax rate higher; their total revenues available was limited.

Mr. Pruitt said that there were members of the Board, including himself, who would support a higher tax rate to meet the $10 million ask. He said that $0.30 on personal property and $0.01 cent on real property would achieve this, if dedicated to housing entirely. However, they were also constrained by their own beliefs about what was possible.

Mr. Pruitt said that many of these issues had already been discussed and voted on, and they knew where people stood. He said that he would reiterate for the benefit of the audience that he had a strongly held personal theory about how they used the money collected through taxes, which was that it was primarily for spending on immediate needs. It was not for saving or holding onto funds for other purposes. He believed they could maintain fiscal solvency with an 11% reserve, so he would personally propose cutting their 2% reserve in half and eliminating their Advancing Strategic Priorities Reserve. Instead, they would set aside the Reserve for Contingencies, which they did use, such as when they ameliorated blight. Such costs must be accounted for, so he did not think this reserve was suitable to be touched.

Mr. Pruitt said that they also knew how each member of this Board would vote on that. In fact, they had had votes on this matter, and those were the constraints imposed by the theory of the possible. Considering what was in front of them and what they believed could still be accomplished, he thought there was a small amount of wiggle room available. He said that he had been discussing this with Mr. Andrews, who had brought to his attention something that had been overlooked. He stated that they were one year into the Resilient Together Plan, which was a collaborative project with the City of Charlottesville and UVA.

Mr. Pruitt said that they had just completed the development of priority objectives and were now entering a community design process, but they lacked the necessary funds to implement it. He said that after completing the design process, they would be implementing solutions collaboratively with their City and University partners. He said that currently, they had $200,000 to contribute to this pot, while the City was bringing in $1 million and UVA could bring in whatever they wanted.

Mr. Pruitt said that they had pulled down a sizable Environmental Protection Agency grant to assist them with this project, but it had vanished due to a lack of reliability from the federal administration. He said that he believed this situation warranted some level of emergency action. He said that he was willing to support an additional transfer of $300,000 from the Advancing Strategic Priorities Reserve, an unallocated fund within the Board's sole discretion, to the climate action program, specifically help fill the gap created by the federal government's actions. He said that he proposed that they discuss this further before he put it to a motion.

Ms. McKeel asked if it would be the $300,000 from the Advancing Strategic Priorities Reserve.

Mr. Pruitt confirmed that it was the Advancing Strategic Priorities Reserve, which had a balance of $700,000, and it was not the Reserve for Contingencies.

Mr. Bowman said that Mr. Pruitt was correct, and he confirmed the precise amount remaining was $693,705. He confirmed that there was sufficient funding for a one-time use of $300,000, as mentioned by Mr. Pruitt.

Mr. Pruitt said that this reserve was separate from the contingency reserve, which was typically divided into reserve and one-time funds. He said that in contrast, this reserve was simply a pot that had been established five years ago or so.

Ms. McKeel said that to clarify, she believed the grant he was referring to was for $460,000 that they had lost due to federal government withdrawal.

Mr. Pruitt said that he did not believe they had used any of that funding yet.

Mr. Bowman said that they had used a relatively small portion of the grant, in the tens of thousands.

Ms. McKeel said that the total grant was for $460,000, and it was no longer available. She said that she wanted to ensure the public understood the situation. She said that that was a significant blow, with no doubt about it. She asked if staff could address a couple of the concerns that were raised by the public, if that was not too much trouble. She said that she believed it was essential to clarify the two full-time staff members that had been discussed in other items.

Mr. Bowman confirmed that there were two positions, one of them currently filled, and the other vacant. He said that the vacant position was not part of the eliminated positions that they had as a budgetary consideration. He said that he did not have specific information on where this position stood in the process, as he would need to follow up with their Human Resources Department. He said that the two positions remained part of the proposed budget, and once the vacant position was filled, the necessary funding would be available.

Ms. McKeel said that she appreciated the members of the public who came to the meeting to express their concerns tonight. She said that climate change and affordable housing were indeed critical issues for their community, and she thanked them for being present and for staying.

Ms. Mallek said that she was looking forward to learning about the greenhouse gas benchmark, which she thought they had sort of lost momentum on after establishing the first benchmark in 2008 due to the recession. She said that she hoped this benchmark would be revisited soon. She said that she was particularly interested in more specific information about how the additional funding would be allocated. She said that in reviewing previous funding allocations, she had noticed that some funds had been used for projects like gardens, which were nice but did not provide a lasting environmental return.

Ms. Mallek said that in contrast, increasing their funding for weatherization programs to make low- and moderate-income residents' homes more sustainable and safer was a climate and affordable housing goal that also improved quality of life. She said that to support the transfer of this funding, she would like to know more about the specific projects and their outcomes before any money was allocated.

Ms. Mallek said that she had raised this concern in previous community funding projects throughout the budget process. She said that she was not opposed to this funding, but she did not want to simply hand over $300,000 without ensuring that there were valid accomplishments made with that money. She said that she was looking for rigor and detail in all of their programs, and she believed that it was essential for making a meaningful impact.

Ms. LaPisto-Kirtley said that she would also be in favor of utilizing the $300,000 from that reserve, but she had the same caveat as Ms. Mallek. She said that to ensure that staff invested in the most effective place to achieve reductions in greenhouse gases. She said that they had implemented several projects that contributed to their climate change efforts, but she believed they should prioritize reducing greenhouse gas emissions. She said that she would like to know the best area to allocate this funding to achieve the most significant reduction in greenhouse gases, rather than simply purchasing another piece of equipment, such as a street sweeper.

Mr. Gallaway asked if Mr. Pruitt was requesting the reserve funding to be used in place of that EPA grant.

Mr. Pruitt said no; he had raised that as a point of discussion. He said that it would be realistically pursued through the Climate Action Fund, which was used for a variety of purposes. He said that they had used the Climate Action Fund for individual community grants, but his understanding of the Resilient Together Process was that it would take the same shape as those previous community climate grants, but with a more public and integrated design process.

Mr. Pruitt said that the Climate Action Fund would likely be the primary location for the funding, but he believed that the Climate Action Fund and the Resilient Together Fund were closely aligned, and it was not entirely clear how the execution would differ. He said that he would like to hear from Mr. Richardson and any other staff members who may be able to correct this point.

Mr. Gallaway said that he believed the final public speaker had made a good point. He said that if they were going to use math and have measurables, they should evaluate the use of funds the same way. He said that he believed this was Ms. Mallek’s point as well. He said that it was easy to support this proposal without critically examining its merits, but they should consider the highest and best use of the $300,000. He said that he believed the source for the funding was appropriate, as it aligned with the Board's Strategic Reserve for climate action and initiatives. He had publicly stated that if they had an additional $1 million, he would direct those funds to the Affordable Housing Investment Fund, not the Climate Action Fund.

Mr. Gallaway said that if they had $700,000 in the Board Strategic Reserve and staff had presented to the Board in October that they had a climate initiative that they felt was the highest and best use to reduce emissions, he suspected the Board would be supportive. He said that if they wanted to earmark the funds from the Strategic Reserve for such a plan, with a requirement that it be contingent on Board review to decide, he could support that.

Mr. Gallaway said that during their previous vote to approve the Climate Action Plan, he had expressed concerns about the plan's lack of concrete action steps and accountability for how their dollars were being spent. He wanted to emphasize that they needed to use their funds in a way that justified their claims and demonstrated responsible stewardship. He said that they should also recognize that they paid for other essential infrastructure like sidewalks and bike lanes through other means.

Mr. Gallaway noted that transportation was funded in this state through other means, and this fund was not used for that purpose, nor would it ever be. If it was about their current situation, some comments had been made about their Facilities and Environmental Services, and he would note that students had initiated them to be the first County school division in the Commonwealth to begin a lease to partner with a solar company to install solar panels on their roofs.

Mr. Gallaway said that it was not the Board’s idea; it was students from Albemarle High School who had already begun a similar project, which caught the attention of policymakers. They recognized the value of this project, finding it to be cost-effective and achieving a goal that they were discussing at the time. He said that he appreciated the efforts of the City and other cities, but he must still interrogate if they were using their funds in the highest and best manner.

Mr. Gallaway said that he was willing to support this initiative, but he would like to request that the staff acknowledge that the dollars would come back to the Board and that the Board would have the opportunity to decide whether they were being used appropriately. He said that they were accountable to their electorate to ensure that these dollars were being used to achieve their stated goals in their Climate Action Plan.

Mr. Gallaway said that he had to admit during his own budget town hall meeting that he was not aware of the current progress and did not recall receiving a report on their current status with their climate action goals. He said that in light of this, he thought it would be beneficial for them to take the time to better understand their goals, how they measured progress, and what actions they could take to determine the actual impact of their efforts. He said that they could then make the most of those dollars, as he had previously stated. He reiterated that he was not interested in pursuing a project that sounded appealing for political purposes.

Mr. Andrews stated that he strongly supported Mr. Pruitt’s initiative due to its alignment with addressing the existential threat of climate change. He said that without assured funding, they often fell into decision paralysis, hindering their ability to make meaningful progress. He said that he believed utilizing Strategic Reserves as a means to secure funding was a prudent move.

Mr. Andrews said that even with $300,000, that was still less than half of what the community had requested to be put towards this work. He said that fortunately, they had various programs in place, such as LEAP weatherization and energy efficiency initiatives, as well as e-bike vouchers that the County could not participate in. He said that they had also discussed EV structures and solar power, although the power purchase agreement method may not be the most efficient.

Mr. Andrews said that, however, it often required upfront capital costs to implement solar power without this agreement. He firmly believed that there were numerous strategies they could employ to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. He said that while he acknowledged that they were already taking steps to mitigate climate change, he also recognized the need for additional measures to meet the goals outlined in their Climate Action Plan. He said that to achieve this, they must allocate more funding to explore and implement effective emission-reduction methods. By dedicating specific funds to this endeavor, he hoped they could accelerate progress and make a more significant impact.

Ms. Mallek clarified that she would not support this funding being used for the Resilient Together project in collaboration with the City and the University. She said that she wanted to support improvements to County buildings, as well as other people's buildings, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from transportation and construction, which were the two largest contributors to emissions. She said that UVA could fund planning groups and that type of initiative. She said that the County was contributing $20 million and more in revenue sharing to the City, which was a valuable source of funding for those planning operations.

Ms. Mallek said that however, she believed that combining weatherization, which achieved greenhouse gas reduction and saved County taxpayers due to reduced operations costs, was a more effective approach. She said that for example, the green roof on that building had cost $6 million to install, but it had paid for itself. She said that it was also the first ENERGY STAR building in the County and had achieved a 50% energy reduction even 15 years ago.

Ms. Mallek said that they had had success with these initiatives, and they needed to do a better job of telling the story of what they were doing and where they were going. She said that the “Cool

Counties" membership should be able to provide them with ways to quickly catch up on benchmarking standards. Although they had been out of compliance for a number of years, she said that they had been back in compliance for at least six years.

Ms. Mallek said that there should be a significant amount of data generated from this, which they could use to inform their report. She also said that she disagreed with the idea of the Secure Futures and solar panels. She said that having the panels installed by someone else and taking the tax write-off for the first eight years allowed them to get energy savings without having to fund everything themselves, which could be a lengthy process.

Ms. McKeel expressed her appreciation for her fellow Supervisors' remarks. She stated that she would certainly support Mr. Pruitt's recommendation; however, it was essential that they specifically identify the best use of funds and the Board has the power to review it. She said that she also wanted to remind everyone that emissions from transportation accounted for half of the County's emissions. She emphasized that transportation was a significant contributor to their problem, and they had recently approved a Regional Transit Authority two months ago.

Ms. McKeel explained that although progress could be slow, this authority would enable them to create a more comprehensive transit system, ultimately encouraging people to leave their cars behind and use buses to serve the community. She was looking forward to this work, but it did seem to take time. Nevertheless, it was coming, and this would be a significant step in helping them meet their goal of reducing transportation emissions and promoting a safer, more community-oriented environment.

Ms. McKeel said that she wanted to assure the public that they were working diligently to implement the authority, despite the slow pace, and they would be coming to them with a plan to address the funding requirements, which would necessitate increased taxpayer dollars. She emphasized that they were making progress, and they had the Authority in place now, so they just needed to figure out how to effectively implement it.

Ms. LaPisto-Kirtley stated that they must see tangible deliverables. She said that given that they were already investing $200,000 and potentially another $300,000, she would like to see a clear plan on how to utilize that $500,000 to address climate change and reduce greenhouse gases. She would like the staff to come back to them with a comprehensive strategy on how to accomplish this goal, so they could make an informed decision. She said that she understood Mr. Pruitt's perspective, but she was concerned that without clear deliverables, the Resilient Together initiative may become a financial burden without tangible results. She said that she was supportive of this recommendation as long as they had the ability to measure its effectiveness and potentially generate additional funding for the following year.

Mr. Andrews said that he agreed with Ms. Mallek's statement, which emphasized the importance of telling their story and understanding where they were going. He said that this included aspects such as the energy resource hub, the ability to effectively communicate with the community through outreach, design of project, and understanding how they could all do their part to be successful was part of their work to reduce greenhouse gas emissions were an important part, although he did not think that was where all the money should go.

Ms. Mallek said that she supported those initiatives, which were separate from the Resilient Together plan. She said that it was a project that LEAP was doing with the City and was already underway.

Mr. Jeff Richardson, County Executive, stated that it appeared that, based on the discussion, there was a strong desire from the Board to consider an additional $300,000 for the Climate Action Fund, bringing the total to $500,000, with a focus on greenhouse emissions. He said that staff would present to the Board twice more on this budget, with the next presentation scheduled for next Wednesday and another on May 7.

Mr. Richardson said that if the Board provided final direction tonight, he would need to speak with staff to determine how quickly they could respond to the Board's request. He said that next week, there was no action expected from the Board, as it would be a public hearing. He said that he would like to bring to the Board's attention that their strategic plan included the SPEAR report, which was scheduled to be presented to the Board in August.

Mr. Richardson said that this report outlined 220 performance metrics tied to performance across all areas of the strategic plan, with measurable goals and objectives. He said that, as the Board was familiar with this report, which had been presented in August, they could align their presentation with the close of the fiscal year and focus on specific areas of interest to the Board, as needed.

Mr. Pruitt clarified that he did not disagree with his peers on the need for more details on how this funding would be used. He said that he frequently told advocates that he was in a challenging position when supporting something without specific asks and projects to point to. He noted that perhaps he made a mistake by bringing up the Resilient Together planning process, so he wanted to make clear that the dollars were not spent on the active planning; they were currently in the design phase, and he said that he would like to explain the process.

Mr. Pruitt explained that according to Engage Albemarle, during this phase, they would engage with community members, partner organizations, and government staff to develop resilient strategies and actions. The outcome of this phase would be the primary strategies for each entity. Then, there was the climate adoption phase, there was a design phase where they would review those strategies, and then they would implement the newly adopted plans, which would include committing local funds and submitting grant applications to fund specific projects.

Mr. Pruitt said that he believed this was the part of this that they wanted to see, although it did not preclude them seeing reporting prior to that point. He said that however, he would assume that once that happened, they would be able to review that information. He said that the Board could delegate, but that information would still come back to them regardless, which was prudent. He said that he did not think they should limit themselves from discussing the potential funding commitment now, given that they would have additional reporting in the coming weeks and further metrics established in the future.

Mr. Pruitt **moved** that the Board of Supervisors reallocate $300,000 from the Advancing Strategic Priorities Reserve to the Climate Action Fund. Ms. LaPisto-Kirtley **seconded** the motion.

Roll was called and the motion carried by the following recorded vote:

AYES: Mr. Andrews, Mr. Gallaway, Ms. LaPisto-Kirtley, Ms. Mallek, Ms. McKeel, and Mr. Pruitt.
NAYS: None.

Agenda Item No. 3. From the Board: Committee Reports and Matters Not Listed on the Agenda.

Mr. Pruitt said that he would be remiss to mention that it was Eastertide. On Sunday, in his final message, before being called home, Father Francis, Christ's Vicar on earth, said, "What a great thirst for death we witness each day. How much contempt is stirred up at times towards the vulnerable, the marginalized, and the migrant." He said that he was sure that everyone on this Board, and he imagined most members in the audience, were aware that yesterday there was a seizure of two Albemarle County residents at the Albemarle County General District Court by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). This incident occurred inside the courthouse, not the courtroom.

Mr. Pruitt said that the County had made a statement through County Executive Jeff Richardson and their Chief of Police, Sean Reeves, noting that they had a policy of non-collaboration with ICE and that Albemarle County did not participate in this incident in any capacity. Additionally, earlier today, Sheriff Chan Bryant released a statement clarifying that she did not believe she had the authority to stop individuals without the express direction of the judge, nor could she prevent people from accessing public spaces. The ICE agents did identify themselves and present documents to the bailiff before executing their duties, which some might consider legally above board.

Mr. Pruitt stated that however, reports also indicated that they did not identify themselves or provide identification documents to the detained individuals. He said that he would leave it to lawyers to determine whether this was within the bounds of legal acceptability. In light of this incident, he believed there were two things they needed to acknowledge as a County, considering their ongoing moral obligations in this circumstance. First, they were aware that the federal administration had a history of being fundamentally untrustworthy on this issue. They had revoked visas and green cards without cause, process, or recourse, including at least one in Albemarle County of a UVA student.

Mr. Pruitt stated that they had also illegally rendered residents out of the country, U.S. citizens had been detained, and the public had been repeatedly misled through public statements that often contradicted the sworn testimony provided in court. While he would like to be confident that these men were taken for a legally justified reason, it was becoming increasingly difficult for him to trust the federal government's actions. Secondly, he strongly believed that the process of seizing individuals in a courtroom was fundamentally flawed policy, making their community deeply unsafe.

Mr. Pruitt said that there were lawful and appropriate reasons for a wide range of individuals, including citizens and non-citizens, to present their cases in court. As a lawyer specializing in national origin discrimination cases, he was unable to bring these cases to court at present, as it would require him to take a plaintiff into a potentially hazardous situation. There may be individuals who were defendants in crimes, who would flee rather than stand trial, and reciprocally, there may be victims of crimes who would flee rather than assert their rights.

Mr. Pruitt stated that there were individuals who committed fraud and civil tort violations against community members, who would not be able to seek redress due to the lack of safety in their courts. He firmly believed that this was morally despicable and bad policy, regardless of its legality. He hoped the Board would use every available tool to prevent these behaviors from taking hold in their County, thereby ensuring that ICE did not continue to commit such acts in their community.

Ms. McKeel said that she did not have any reports available for tonight.

Ms. Mallek said that Mr. Pruitt's comments brought to mind a similar situation when Steve Sellers was still new to the job. She said that she had invited him to visit the White Hall District, specifically the White Hall Community Building Town Hall, in January. At the time, it was a relatively calm and collaborative atmosphere, with various community members expressing concerns about immigration. She said that Mr. Sellers explained the issue in a way that was similar to Chief Reeves' approach, emphasizing that no one can feel safe or protected if every member of the community did not feel safe coming forward to ask for help, provide evidence, and participate in law enforcement in general. She said that the room was visibly moved, with many people expressing a newfound understanding of the issue.

She said that she found this to be a crucial point and was reassured by the police chief's recent comments.

Ms. Mallek said, in contrast, her announcements were relatively trivial, but she would still share them. She said that she would distribute a flyer about the presence of fire ants in the Hollymead Town Center area, which were vicious and destructive. The flyer included pictures for identification purposes.

Ms. Mallek said, additionally, she wanted to remind everyone about the drug take back day on the upcoming Saturday at various location, and the upcoming plant sale at the White Hall Ruritans plant sale, a popular event where beautiful perennials and trees were shared with the community at affordable prices. The sale would take place on Saturday, and it was a great opportunity for Mother's Day gift-giving for children.

Ms. LaPisto-Kirtley said that personally, she felt very comfortable with the stance their Police Chief, Sean Reeves, had taken on the issue with ICE, as he had clearly stated that they were not cooperating with ICE. She said that she was aware that the elected Sheriff had provided a statement detailing what happened and how ICE had identified themselves. She said that she thought the situation was not in the best interest of the County; however, she had faith in their police department, and she believed they would continue to do what they felt was right and what aligned with the philosophy of the Board.

Mr. Gallaway concurred with the remarks made by the Supervisors regarding the events of yesterday. He said that while he understood the importance of being supportive of their residents, it was crucial for everyone reach out to their federally elected officials and state representatives. He said that the correspondence should be directed at the federal level, with a non-stop and continuous effort.

Mr. Gallaway said that the Board would continue to be supportive and control what they could in their local jurisdiction, but he emphasized that this issue was not limited to their locality. He said that it was a federal concern that required a unified approach. He urged those who were concerned to reach out to their federal representatives and encourage them to take initiative to address this issue at the federal level. He said that if not, the County would have to take matters into their own hands in about four years, when they had the opportunity to do so.

Mr. Gallaway said that he wanted to read from their own Climate Action Plan, which was currently being implemented, they had identified the need to develop unambiguous and concrete targets for all actions using SMART goals. He said that they must also quantify each action in terms of estimated costs and benefits and evaluate each action in terms of potential effects on social equity.

Mr. Gallaway said that as they moved forward with the Comprehensive Plan update, they would be considering the lenses of climate action and equity. When they prioritized actions, they should consider the costs, benefits, and effects on equity to best allocate their limited resources. He mentioned this earlier, and he was calling it out during their comments. However, it was stated in their Climate Action Plan that this was indeed what they must do. To ensure he was considering the relevant points, he would review it again when it was brought back to the table.

Mr. Andrews said that he appreciated the comments made on the situation in their courthouse. He said that he also appreciated the comments made by their Commonwealth's Attorney, who recognized the potential chilling effect this could have. He said that he hoped that they would always strive to measure outcomes, and unfortunately, that also required resources. He said that he appreciated that they would fully staff that office and have the necessary personnel to make the calculations and conduct the inventories required to understand their progress.

Agenda Item No. 4. From the County Executive: Report on Matters Not Listed on the Agenda.

There was no report from the County Executive.

Agenda Item No. 18. Adjourn.

At 7:58 p.m., the Board adjourned its meeting to April 30, 2025, 6:00 p.m. in Lane Auditorium, Albemarle County Office Building, 401 McIntire Road, Charlottesville, VA, 22902. Mr. Andrews said information on how to participate in the meeting would be posted on the Albemarle County website Board of Supervisors home page and on the Albemarle County calendar.

Approved by Board
Date: 11/05/2025 Initials: CKB

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Chair