



Albemarle County

Legislation Text

File #: 20-359, **Version:** 1

AGENDA DATE: 6/17/2020

TITLE:

Draft Climate Action Plan

SUBJECT/PROPOSAL/REQUEST: Staff will seek feedback from the Board on the draft climate action plan following a presentation of the plan and a summary of recent community input.

ITEM TYPE: Regular Information Item

STAFF CONTACT(S): Richardson, Henry, Stewart, Harper, and Lowe

PRESENTER (S): Greg Harper

LEGAL REVIEW: Not Required

REVIEWED BY: Jeffrey B. Richardson

BACKGROUND: At its September 6, 2017 meeting, the Board of Supervisors adopted a resolution reaffirming the County's commitment to climate action and directed staff to develop a climate action plan. The following year, the Board identified climate action planning as one of its highest priorities during strategic planning work sessions and created the County's first full-time climate staff position. Staff - in collaboration with partners, stakeholders, and interested members of the public - have been earnestly engaged in planning work since late 2018. On October 16, 2019 the Board passed a resolution establishing community wide greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction targets (Attachment A).

STRATEGIC PLAN: Quality Government Operations: Ensure County government's capacity to provide high quality service that achieves community priorities

DISCUSSION: Successfully addressing climate change will require efforts by individuals and organizations at all levels of society. Local governments have a critical role in this endeavor - besides shifting their own operations to be more sustainable - by creating more sustainable choices for everyone who lives in, works in, and visits the County. Recent County efforts related to climate change should be considered the beginning of a permanent, adaptive program that will be critical to adequately address the threat of climate change.

The draft climate action plan presented here (Attachment B) is the culmination of the first phase of the County's climate action planning process. The purpose of this phase is to identify broad strategies and supporting actions that the County government may undertake to reduce the community's contribution to rising concentrations of atmospheric GHGs that cause global climate change. The strategies and actions in the plan are intended to reduce the amount of GHGs *generated* within the County - by increasing efficiencies, reducing the use of energy, and producing local sustainable energy, such as solar. In addition, some strategies and actions will contribute to mitigation by increasing the amount of GHGs *captured and stored* in the landscape - for instance, through adapted forestry and agricultural operations.

Since local government operations comprise only a small fraction of the community's total contribution to

climate change, the proposed actions are not limited to changing how the County operates. The plan includes initiatives to engage, inform, motivate, and empower the greater community to take part in addressing this worldwide crisis. Because of the community-wide emphasis, the strategies and actions were developed collaboratively - with involvement by key County staff, local subject matter experts, stakeholder groups, and interested individuals and with extensive community participation.

The strategies and actions in the plan are organized into major sectors: 1) transportation and land use, 2) buildings, 3) renewable energy sources, 4) sustainable materials management, and 5) landscape, natural resources, and agriculture. For each sector, the plan includes overarching goals and a description of how actions in that sector can mitigate climate change, lead to additional community benefits (co-benefits), and contribute to equitable outcomes for the whole community. Within tables are listed broad strategies for achieving the goals and more specific actions supporting the strategies.

The potential timing of each action in the plan is identified as follows:

- immediately actionable - actions the County has begun already or will start now; having a relatively low cost and short timeline to completion
- initiate planning - actions the County will begin soon; having a high expected return-on-investment but requiring greater financial and staff resources and a longer timeline
- assess opportunities - most complex actions that will be further explored to identify a viable path forward

Following the completion of the draft plan and after the County began observing restrictions on public events due to the coronavirus, staff created an [online community engagement hub <https://publicinput.com/7926/>](https://publicinput.com/7926/) to publicize the plan and receive community input. The site includes the draft plan, a video summarizing climate action planning and the contents of the plan, and two questionnaires - one to gather sentiment about the plan and one to understand what actions community members are taking (or want to take) and how the climate action plan might better support these individual actions. A summary of questionnaire responses and listing of all comments is included as Attachment C.

Staff intends to incorporate pertinent Board and community feedback into the plan and present a finalized plan for Board adoption at an upcoming meeting.

Following adoption of the Phase 1 plan, the County will move into the next phase of climate action planning. This phase will include continuing or beginning implementation of selected actions, adding structure and specificity to those that aren't yet well-defined, and refining actions to maximize benefits and ensure equity. Working with key stakeholders and partners, staff will develop a methodology to prioritize actions to ensure that County resources are used to achieve the greatest community benefit. Staff will also complete a community wide GHG inventory by which the County can track progress towards meeting the emission reduction targets established by the Board.

BUDGET IMPACT: There are no budget impacts associated with this presentation of information.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff welcomes Board questions and feedback regarding the draft Phase 1 climate action plan and the proposed course of action and timeline leading up to the Board adopting the plan later this year.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A - Resolution Establishing Community Wide Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions Reduction Targets

Attachment B - Albemarle County Draft Phase 1 Climate Action Plan

Attachment C - Community Questionnaire Responses and Comments