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City of Fairfax City Council Work Session, Tuesday, February 3, 2026

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[00:00:12] Good evening. I would like to call this special meeting of February 3rd, 2026 to order. At this time, I would like to move for a consideration for remote participation by Council Member Hall pursuant to Code of Virginia Section 2.2-3708.2.

[00:00:29] Is there a motion to approve the remote participation of Council Member Hall? Council Member Hardy-Chandler? In accordance with city council adopted policy and as permitted by Virginia code section 2.2-3708.2, I move to approve council member Hall's request properly submitted in writing prior to today's meeting for remote participation subject to compliance with the requirements outlined in the city council adopted policy and applicable law in all or portions of the city council work session of February 3rd, 2026.

[00:01:02] Is there a second? Second. The motion has been made and seconded. A roll call vote. Council Member Amos? Aye. Council Member Hardy-Chandler? Aye. Council Member Peterson? Aye. Council Member Bates is not here. Council Member Quillen?

[00:01:18] Aye. All right, the motion passed. I will now recess the special meeting to go into the work session. I will now recognize Ms. Clark for the first work session item for discussion. The first work

session item is a joint discussion with the Environmental Sustainability Committee and Program Update.

[00:01:35] I will recognize Stephanie Kupka, Sustainability Program Manager, for the presentation. Good evening, Mayor and City Council members. It's a pleasure to be here tonight with our Environmental Sustainability Committee. We'll begin the work session from a presentation from the ESC.

[00:01:51] Then staff will provide an update on our division's programs and projects. And then we'll open it up for Q&A. I will now hand it off to ESC Chair Rusty Russell. Thank you, Stephanie. Good evening, Mayor and City Council. We're very pleased to finally have an opportunity to present to you a long-awaited overview of the state of environmental sustainability in our city and hopefully open a few windows into what is coming next in the next 12 months as we move forward.

[00:02:21] As you know, we are a citizen-led advisory group focused on sustainability. We're chartered for 12 members. We currently have two vacancies.

[00:02:39] Thanks to the careful selection process by mayor and council, I can say without hesitation, we have an expertly qualified and fully committed group of individuals to do the work that you've asked us to do. One member who you haven't met yet is our high school liaison, Sauron Quatra, who, down at the end of the desk there.

[00:03:05] Sauron is a student at Fairfax High School and is new to the committee, but in the short time he's been with us, He's been provided valuable insights into the things that concern members of his peer group. And I might also add that he is another of many in the FISA alum coaching tree of environmental sustainability at KJ Middle.

[00:03:30] Additionally, as you see, we are ably supported by city staff members, especially those shown here, and many others.

[00:03:49] There we go. Sorry. In a minute, you'll hear from some of the experts on the panel as we describe our activities and concerns in various domains of environmental sustainability. The question is, what can you expect to hear? What you will hear from all of us is that our work is grounded in existing planning documents that have been vetted and approved by the council and by the resident community.

[00:04:14] While these documents provide plans, objectives, and outcomes, we are organizing our work around a roadmap that will focus on tasks, projects, and programs that will address the desired outcomes. That is the alignment part.

[00:04:30] What you will hear from all of us as well is that we're attempting to be strictly tied to the use of metrics to evaluate progress toward these outcomes. The choices we make and the decisions we take will always be based on data, metrics, and ROI.

[00:04:46] In this, we hope to be in lockstep with city operations. And finally, what you will hear from all of us is an expression of what we deem to be the important actions that need to be taken within each domain of environmental sustainability over the next 12 months.

[00:05:04] That makes it appear to be a lot of work ahead of us. And there is, but at the end of this presentation, we'll present a shorter list of priority actions with which we will be asking the council's assistance and support over the next year.

[00:05:26] Now I'm going to turn it to Greg Farley, who will give a short presentation on our work in energy conservation. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good evening, Mayor and Council. Thanks for the chance to

speak with you this evening. Energy conservation is a fundamental first step for most of the city's other sustainability goals.

[00:05:47] What I've done here is to point out alignment in multiple places with the city's comprehensive plan, and you'll note that what you're looking at are some very high-level outcomes. That's because if you do a search in the document for conservation of energy, it shows up over five dozen times. It's a very, very pervasive and a very, very foundational goal for the city.

[00:06:08] This is embedded in the city's carbon and energy reduction goals. There's a goal to set 30% reduction by 2030 and 55% reduction by 2050. It's embedded in, as you'll hear later on, residential energy audits and affordable housing goals.

[00:06:24] And it's embedded in renewable energy goals. There's also a consideration by the Council of CPACE and how to adopt that best in pursuit of the city's own goals. Energy conservation is uniquely well-suited to data and metrics.

[00:06:40] In fact, the maxim in the practice of energy efficiency is you cannot manage what you do not measure. So the percent reduction in government, commercial, and residential building energy use, the measurement of that should be a frontline consideration for the city, and that measurement will allow better management and better strategy going forward.

[00:07:01] And then the second metric that we'd like to focus on is CPACE-financed projects. These are, again, things that are relatively easy to quantify. And then finally, just a smattering of three priority actions that the Environmental Sustainability Committee would like you to consider.

[00:07:20] The first and foremost of those is the hiring of a full-time climate and energy manager. Speaking as someone who cooperates in this effort for a large public university, having the personnel to do this properly will be critical to its success.

[00:07:38] Development of a climate and energy action plan on behalf of the city is also a goal that we'd set forth. And finally, we'd ask the city council to work with us on the adoption of the green building policy. It's then subsequent implementation and assessment of how well it's working with the idea that once again, if you measure it, we can revise it going forward to make it even stronger.

[00:07:59] But I applaud the city council and the city's history in setting forth some of these goals. And now it's time to just go forth and make them happen. With that, I will pass to Elaine Wilkes, a co-chair of the committee here. Oh, I'm not. Sorry.

[00:08:16] I will pass it to Luis Bernal for a discussion of residential energy audits. Good evening, Mayor and members of the council. We would like to advocate today for residential energy audits program.

[00:08:33] One of the key pillars of our presentation is based on action, and we think this is a great opportunity to expand on what my colleague already mentioned about the importance of energy conservation. We have the opportunity today to leverage funding from the ECBG grant, and it's perfectly aligned with the city comprehensive plan in promoting energy-efficient use of energy by our residents, as well as partnering and providing for education to the public

[00:09:10] and partnering as well with private sector so that they can also learn more about the opportunities in this arena. In terms of the expected outcomes, the target should be 1,100 residential energy audits with a period of performance.

[00:09:33] The original grant was for 18 months, but due to additional circumstances in the federal funding, it's my understanding that the full implementation should be executed within 13 months. So we encourage to prioritize this opportunity that the city of Fairfax has in front of it right now.

[00:09:57] In addition to that, some of the elements that we believe are expected outcomes from this exercise, even though it would be on a voluntary basis, is to start collecting data about the measures that have been adopted by the city residents.

[00:10:12] I think this is a great opportunity to empower our community to address the expected energy cost increases that were approved last November and enabling them to address those present time needs, but also with the goal of preserving the environment in the long run.

[00:10:36] There are numerous data points that can be generated with this exercise, but not only that, I also believe that it's a great opportunity to promote behavioral changes by empowering people to make educated decisions about how to prioritize investments in their homes.

[00:10:57] In order to accomplish this, we encourage the hiring of the program coordinator within 90 days and launch the program in the third quarter of this fiscal year, and also prioritizing the public awareness so that the community could be aware of these opportunities within this period of time.

[00:11:22] And with that, I'll turn it over to Faisal, right? Faisal. Yeah, Faisal. Good evening This as you all can see it aligns very well with the with the same pattern and norms that we are continuing that how it aligns with the city Voice and the City Council that you guys have approved it aligns with the proper disposal and recycling of Household waste ensure the cleanliness of properties and roadsides and public places Before I begin with the data and anything else I would like to thank Melissa And Stephanie, especially Melissa, for the cart rollout, literal cart rollout,

[00:12:02] and especially with all this snow and stuff, it's been very positive, but I'm sure there are other noises as well along with this that she has been... Where are you? Hiding back there. So she has been dealing it very well. So ESC has been working very closely with the staff, and the staff is very, very supportive.

[00:12:21] So I really want to make that pitch for Stephanie and Melissa, and Anna, who is not here as well. We work very closely with them. The data and the metrics, as you can see there, the reduction in the recycling contamination has dropped from 21% in 2021 to just 6% today.

[00:12:38] And this is all with the effort of educating and, you know, working with the community and all the efforts that we have done together, reduction in waste. And that has definitely led to the tipping fee for recycle and cost share is much lower compared to trash because the recycling contamination has reduced so much.

[00:12:57] And then measure reduced methane through composting as well has been very, very important there. What are the priority actions for the composting? As you can see, we have like 500,000 pounds of food waste that has been composted. And the composting is right now behind the, around the city hall here.

[00:13:15] And the solid waste management update, we had about 600 plus public survey responses so far, which has been good feedback. So what are the action items? The action items are few that we would like to present to you all is complete the solid waste management plan update, which is really important.

[00:13:32] Study efficiency of curbside composting, which is very important because many people are unable to drive all the way up till the city hall to drop their composting. Also look into curbside glass pickup. That is also one of the things that we don't have. People have to drive somewhere.

[00:13:49] Use data to guide service optimization and cost control. Like right now, I know it's great to have free pickup service for everything, but there are people who empty their entire house on the curb. They should pay for it. I'm sorry, that's how I feel about it, right?

[00:14:05] So, I mean, look into all those things, how we can save money to put somewhere else. Community engagement and representation is huge as we hear through these surveys and kind of see what people need and we need to incorporate that. Work with the four city schools, our new generation, the new citizens, they are the ones who are the leaders in this.

[00:14:26] And if we work through them and educate them and encourage our four city schools to start composting, right, and how city can collaborate, not just leave it on the schools, that would be really, really good to kind of teach them. And it's really good.

[00:14:43] And also one more thing I would ask that in many of the rental, I'm not sure how council has the leverage on that. They don't have recycling, and you can speak for Leighton Hall, right, in that area. Everything is thrown out there. So I don't know how much teeth you have in that to enforce recycling in every household in the city.

[00:15:04] On that, I will end. Thank you so much. Thank you, Faiza. Now I'd like to turn it over to Ben Rhodes for a discussion of something that's becoming a much bigger issue in the city, and that's stormwater stream restoration and management of our city watershed.

[00:15:21] Hey, Mayor and Council. So, again, I'm Ben Rhodes. I'm a watershed professional based out of Reston, obviously, living here. And when we talk about watersheds and stormwater in the city, the thing that I think about are our total maximum daily load action plans, Our action plans for reducing pollutants of concern moving into the Potomac River and the Chesapeake Bay.

[00:15:47] Those are of particular concern for the Chesapeake Bay or phosphorus, nitrogen, and total suspended sediments. And so a couple of those are what we have here when I'm looking at our existing metrics against those TMDL action plans in our reports from 2025.

[00:16:11] We've made some progress since that reporting was done for 2025 already. So in 2026, we'll look forward to further reducing our load into the Chesapeake Bay of nitrogen and phosphorus through the Stafford Drive stream restoration, two outfall restorations at Stafford Drive, the dredging and retrofit of Ashby Pond, and the Old Robin outfall restoration.

[00:16:39] All of those are bringing down our pollutant of concern load substantially against our TMDL action plans. And this is something that I am really interested in continuing to work with Satoshi and Patrick and the rest of their team on tracking for the sustainability committee and with council as we get towards the 2028 deadline, essentially, for the phase three watershed implementation plan for the Chesapeake Bay cleanup.

[00:17:10] So some priority actions. These aren't necessarily priority actions for council at this point like some of our some of my colleagues here. These are things that I'm really looking forward to myself

working with Satoshi and Patrick on in stormwater continuing to consult on upcoming stream restoration projects.

[00:17:27] I have the pleasure of working in Reston where we have some innovative stream restoration projects going on and research into innovative best practices in stream restoration science. And so looking forward to bringing some of those new approaches into the city along with looking to help out the city as much as I can with seeking out additional funding.

[00:17:57] I'm lucky enough to be a Chesapeake Bay landscape professional and a member of the Chesapeake Stormwater Network as one of their CUSP professionals. And so I have the opportunity to live in this network of professionals and work there and learn about a lot of great opportunities that are available for the city.

[00:18:20] And I look forward to working with staff here to incorporate those into our upcoming projects. Thank you, Ben. Thank you. Next, Elaine Wilkes is going to take on a subject that actually only became a concern of ours on the committee when Council Member Peterson was chair of the committee, and that is urban agriculture.

[00:18:45] Great. Thank you. So urban agriculture is not new, but it is a growing field, especially, I would say, in the past year, having locally sourced and affordable food that is reliable and accessible to everybody has become much more of a topic, although it should have been a topic always.

[00:19:04] And so we are adding ETS, as you can see, to a key area of focus for the ESC. It also aligns with the comprehensive plan around healthy and affordable, locally grown food for everybody, right? So not just selective, but for everybody to have access to this.

[00:19:20] It is relatively measurable, looking at the number of community gardens. That has been a very popular program. There's a wait list for those. A way to expand those as well would be key. The solid waste survey results that you've heard a little bit about already from FISA.

[00:19:36] And the city database of gardeners that we would seek to compile because there are a lot of folks within the city who do garden. And so being able to have as a resource for the broader community, we thought would be a great way to measure that. In terms of actions in order to adopt this methodology, we want to continue to review the regulatory opportunities to expand urban agriculture.

[00:19:59] The city has already adopted a zoning ordinance last, I would say last year, but 2004, close enough to last year, where we had Area 2 farming come into the city. Opportunities to expand that kind of business would be something we would seek to do for a variety of reasons.

[00:20:16] Create a gardener newsletter. So in order to foster adoption and foster knowledge, more than anything, is to have a newsletter, potentially quarterly, we'd be seeking to draft and arrange for the benefit of everyone in the city. And then we looked actually to expand farmers markets to make them year-round.

[00:20:34] If we are looking at Area 2 farming, we have year-round farming and agriculture, so why not have year-round markets as well? And so we'd look to see how we could accommodate that and marry the production of produce with the sale of produce on a year-round basis.

[00:20:50] And then much like Fiza had mentioned, you know, expanding into the schools, right? That starts with the youth of understanding where our food comes from and how to grow it and how to expand it and how to let others need that opportunity to access affordable food. And so start with the youth to

figure this out and really take a hard look at how to include all ages and all groups within the city boundaries around the knowledge.

[00:21:17] Thank you, Elaine. I'm going to take on the urban forestry slide. Urban forestry story, the story is an ever-improving one in the city. During a period of time for many years, what I would characterize as unconscious neglect, the city suffered from a reduction in tree canopy, health of the street trees declined, and the reaction to invasive species was, well, if it's green, it's okay.

[00:21:50] And community engagement during that time was more of a, but we've come a long way. The hiring of professional urban foresters and stewardship coordinator. The rapid increase in community engagement. We have completed a tree inventory, a non-native plant species assessment.

[00:22:11] The urban tree canopy assessment. The sprout initiative has been begun. And the production of a state of the urban forest for two years running. And culminating in an almost completed and soon to be adopted urban forest master plan.

[00:22:28] The city can be very proud now of its designation as Tree City USA. We are working closely with the comprehensive plan as it relates to the items that you see listed. The urban forest master plan will be a driving force in what activities we want to engage in moving forward in support of the urban forest.

[00:22:52] The ramping up of staffing and completion of the various assessments mentioned puts us in a good position to chart the future with precision. The Urban Forest Master Plan is ready, and I understand you will be hearing about that at your next meeting next Tuesday.

[00:23:11] I urge you to adopt it when it is presented to you. Thank you. The committee.

[00:23:28] Good evening, everyone. I wanted to start with this picture because it reminds us as to why we need climate action and what it is that we are trying to protect here. So when we talk about climate action, there is actually two components to it, and they're both equally important.

[00:23:46] From the comprehensive plan, we get the mitigation portion of climate action, which is addressing the causes of climate change. And from the strategic plan, we get the adaptation component, which is addressing the effects of climate change.

[00:24:07] So building resilience for all the climate hazards and conditions, whereas mitigation is more about reduction of greenhouse gases. So in the comprehensive plan, we do have a very specific goal to develop and implement a climate and energy action plan.

[00:24:27] And we have specific targets of greenhouse gas reductions. And with that, we'll kind of get into what I think we really accomplished that I wanted to highlight within climate action.

[00:24:46] So we have the green building policy was developed and completed. And I thought that that was a huge win for the city. And I was quite involved in that because I was reviewing it just as a citizen.

[00:25:08] It was one of my interests. So kudos to the staff, kudos to the council for actually getting it completed. And now we have to get it adopted and actually put it into practice. The second set of projects that I'm going to highlight are the ones that are kind of lighting related.

[00:25:26] And the reason why I kind of wanted to highlight this is because these projects show the economic potential of projects like this. So, for example, when you look at the LED streetlight conversion

project, I mean, you do a very quick back-of-the-envelope calculation, and you could probably end up with a savings of about \$150K a year.

[00:25:52] So that might be significant enough to offset any staffing costs. And I know we all have budgetary challenges, so this is the kind of thinking that could help address your budgetary challenges. So that was the key point I wanted to make was that we need to start looking at things with an ROI lens and not just treat projects as some costs.

[00:26:17] So that's a good example of that. Moving on to what I think opportunities for improvement. So the one that I feel very strongly about is, you know, obviously the comprehensive plan calls for the climate action plan.

[00:26:37] It was first funded in 2024, kept getting deferred, and probably will not get started this year as well. So that will be three years in a row. The earliest I'm told it will get started is in 2028.

[00:26:53] So as you can see, a very critical component of our comprehensive plan is not really going to be even started for a while. And so our recommendation is that we reprioritize this.

[00:27:13] I think we need to put the horse before the cart and actually develop the plan before we start implementing all the climate action projects. So we really need a course correction there. So that is, I think, our first action. The second one I notice is we need to start making a transition to being more metrics-driven.

[00:27:36] And that requires actually putting in instrumentation. So, you know, rather than just simply tracking action, we actually start tracking traction, which requires metrics. So an example would be if one of our goals is to complete 100% renewables in the city operations by 2035, which is hardly, you know, nine years away from now, and you're trying to hit approximately 10% a year, we have nothing to tell us whether we're actually achieving that or not.

[00:28:14] So that's the reason why I think we need to start putting in the instrumentation, and I think the first baby step we need to do is, and that's our recommendation, is to start with the utility data management software. It's a modest cost.

[00:28:30] I think it's been on the books for a while. I'm just not clear on why it's not getting implemented, but that will help you track your energy usage. So once you've got a handle on the energy usage, then you can actually create programs to improve it and measure the improvement.

[00:28:47] Next slide, please. Oh, I wanted to point out, in case you're curious about where the other localities stand And vis-a-vis the climate action plan, I've actually compiled all our neighboring local governments. And you can see every single one of them has completed their climate action plan, including the city of Falls Church, which is smaller than us.

[00:29:09] So clearly, they're assigning a very high priority, and I think we would be wise to start working on this and getting this done and then executing all our climate projects. Next slide, please.

[00:29:27] So these are the climate action recommendations. I'm going to skip on three of these because I'm going to also cover the overall recommendations from the ESC. But I will highlight one, which is one of the recommendations is for this.

[00:29:44] I'm told that the city council has not adopted their strategic goals and priorities for 26-27. I know this is precedence. And the problem is that it creates a lot of confusion when it comes to project

prioritization.

[00:30:04] And so I would strongly urge so that we get the specific direction that we are looking for. We have to break the comprehensive and the strategic plan, which are looking out. The comprehensive plan is looking out 15 to 25 years.

[00:30:22] The strategic plan is looking out maybe three to five years. But what are we going to do for the next two years? That's the term you all are here for. And so that we can be very focused on the execution side and trying to align with that. So my recommendation is please adopt your strategic goals and priorities.

[00:30:41] And if possible, make them smart. Make them very specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound, so that they really are actionable. So that would be our request. With that, we'll move on to, I'm also going to cover the overall recommendations from the ESC.

[00:31:03] Next slide, please. So if there is one slide, if there's one takeaway from this entire presentation, it would be this one. Because this summarizes the top seven recommendations from everything that everyone's talked about.

[00:31:24] So this is kind of our unanimous position on what we think are the key takeaways from this presentation. So the first one, right at the top, as you've heard this multiple times, is we need to really staff the climate and energy manager position.

[00:31:41] And you will see later on that there's several other projects that are actually dependent on this. So if we don't get this done, we will not be able to do the others. So number one is staffing the climate and energy manager position.

[00:31:58] We just talked about this. Help us focus. Adopt the strategic goals and priorities. Sit down and think about what it is that you'd like the ESCE in environment and sustainability. What are the specific things that you'd like us to accomplish from the overarching strategic and comprehensive plan?

[00:32:21] Next. Adopt and operationalize the green building policy. We've already developed it, but it needs to be adopted. It needs to be put in practice. And the only way to get that done is if you have that staffing position, because it does require 25 hours a week of staffing resource.

[00:32:42] So that is another one of our recommendations next. And then you've heard about this. I think we need to course correct on the climate action plan. We need to reprioritize that.

[00:32:58] We need to fast track it. And we need to make sure we pull it in from fiscal year 28. to as early as possible, because I think the risk, especially on the adaptation side, is huge. And we have done absolutely no work on adaptation.

[00:33:15] We've started some work on mitigation, but that's a whole new assessment of risk to the city and what response our response is going to be. Again, this one requires the climate and energy manager position. So one FTE could actually probably fill in both of those roles and be able to get all three projects off the ground.

[00:33:40] Next. One more. Yeah. So from a metrics perspective, we said this was the baby step. Let's start measuring our energy usage.

[00:33:55] So let's start by deploying the utility data management software in fiscal year 26, if possible. Next. I think this is the energy audits. I think this is a project that's well underway. I think there's a lot of potential here, so I feel good about this.

[00:34:15] So we need to keep going with this. Next. And the last thing is that if you guys found any value in this dialogue, we feel that we should have more of these dialogues and more frequently.

[00:34:37] And, you know, enhanced communication is the key to, in my mind, the key to agile delivery. And climate action requires urgency, a sense of urgency. So that's kind of the driver for us, suggesting that we meet more often and be able to react quickly to all the issues associated with climate action.

[00:35:04] Thanks, Pradeep. I should mention that when I brought up the subject of possible quarterly meetings with the council, we got from the committee a lot of support for that. So that was a last-minute addition to your list of priority recommendations here.

[00:35:23] we're going to in a minute go into the staff report but before we do I just wanted to say a couple more things about environmental sustainability and I realize I'm more speaking to the choir than anything else but we have caught sort of gotten caught up in the doing part of trying to make a difference with respect to environmental sustainability. And we have overlooked the bigger picture, and that is

[00:35:55] we're in a time when the earth is warming, despite the snowcrete outside, which I thought was going to be a novel reference until Dan mentioned it to me earlier. And that really impacts the city from now till quite a distance out. And so I think of my kids and my grandkids when that comes up.

[00:36:21] the things that we are doing are helping, but it's like Swiss cheese. We're poking holes in it instead of shredding it from the top down. And I think the things that we're presenting to you now look at the big picture, the things that need to be in place that will put us in a position where our doing will be more efficient, more cost effective, and therefore better for the city in the long run. These are not the kinds of things that are tangible and visible to many

[00:36:56] of our residents. It's a hard sell, some of these things. It's difficult to put these out there when you can't see the return on your tax investment. But it is really critical in terms of, it is critical, it is measurable, and it will put us in a better place moving forward. So now I'm going to skip through our part there and turn it over to Stephanie for the staff report. And then we'll

[00:37:29] do questions at the end of that one. Before the staff portion of this presentation, I'll provide

[00:38:10] an update on the Environment and Sustainability Division's programs and projects. Right now, the city is facing unprecedented challenges with climate change and rapid urban growth. We're seeing more frequent and severe storm events, extreme heat days, increased pollution, More stressors on our natural resources like our urban forests and water and energy supplies.

[00:38:36] The city council recognized these challenges and in 2023 adopted the environmental sustainability and stewardship goal. This was the first time this type of goal was adopted and they made it their second highest priority.

[00:38:55] Staff have been working diligently to achieve this goal. So since then, the city has adopted ambitious environmental and sustainability goals through the adoption of a comprehensive plan, multiple small area plans, and the strategic plan that was adopted in 2023.

[00:39:16] The city has backed these goals with real investments and have funded plans, studies, and projects to help move these goals forward. As a result, the city has made meaningful and measurable progress.

[00:39:34] However, there is limited staff capacity. The Environmental Sustainability Division is made of myself and Melissa McDonald, who serves as our Environmental Sustainability Specialist. So over the years, the scope, complexity, and the number of environmental sustainability initiatives have grown.

[00:39:54] However, staff capacity has not increased as fast as the city's ambitions. So as a result, staff capacity has become the primary bottleneck in implementing those adopted programs and projects.

[00:40:11] The Environmental and Sustainability Division is responsible for developing and implementing initiatives that help achieve the city's environmental, social, and economic goals.

[00:40:29] This includes city operations and also community-wide. Our work is organized in six focus areas. That includes climate action, energy efficiency and renewables, waste reduction and recycling, environmental protection, collaboration, and education and outreach.

[00:40:48] So the following slides, I'm going to go into more detail about all of our programs and projects in these areas. The first one is climate action. We are working to identify, implement, and promote high-impact practices that mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change.

[00:41:12] As noted earlier, the city has an adopted goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 80% from 2005 baseline levels by 2050. We do work with the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments to do a greenhouse gas inventory every few years.

[00:41:27] So we are working to track our progress over time. Our current programs and projects are listed to the left. The first one has already been mentioned tonight is that we're developing a green building policy which will establish green building standards for both the public and private sector.

[00:41:49] We will be going this into more detail at the February 10th work session where we'll be talking further about adoption and implementation. For the Old Town Lighting Project, we are working to remove the gas lights and replace them with LED street lights.

[00:42:06] This is a great project which improves lighting, safety, reducing operational costs, and improving overall ambiance to the downtown area. We have been working with the fleet division to transition our fleet to fuel-efficient and zero-emission vehicles.

[00:42:27] Just recently, we purchased three EVs and six hybrids. We also were able to get \$16,000 in tax credits to help offset the cost of the EVs. Right now, we are also working on designing new EV charging stations.

[00:42:44] So we, in partnership with Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments and other municipalities in the region, we won an \$80,000 grant to help with installation of EV charging stations at City Hall and the Sherwood Center. Collaboration is a big part of climate action and wanted to highlight one of our main partners, which is the George Mason University Virginia Climate Center.

[00:43:10] Last year, we got a \$50,000 grant that went towards hiring a temporary part-time climate and energy manager, which helped us with implementing climate and energy projects. And they also provide technical and data analysis for us to help with decision-making, policy-making, and developing projects going forward.

[00:43:34] So they're a wonderful partner that we enjoy working with. Some of the future projects we have planned is once the design is done for the EV charging stations, we'll install them next fiscal year. We are also continuing to transition our handheld equipment, like the leaf blowers and trimmers, from gas-powered to electric equipment.

[00:44:00] We will also begin to develop our climate action plan, which was, of course, brought up by the ESC. This is going to be a long-term strategic plan for how we're going to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and reduce the impacts to climate change.

[00:44:17] Another initiative we'll be working on is developing an electric vehicle readiness plan. So this plan will devise a strategy for how we should encourage and also install electric vehicle charging stations throughout the city, and then also how we're going to transition our entire fleet to either zero emission or very high fuel-efficient vehicles.

[00:44:43] Some future projects that are not quite fully funded is the gas-to-LED streetlight project for the gaslights that are outside the downtown area. So this is in the transition district. So we requested funding for fiscal year 27 and 28 for that.

[00:44:59] So that way we can replace all of our gas lights with LEDs. And then also we'll be requesting funding to implement the green building policy. As the ESC has mentioned, in order to adopt the policy as it's written today, this requires 25 hours of staff time since this is a brand new program.

[00:45:19] And that'll cost the city about \$85,000 a year. For energy efficiency renewables, we aim to minimize energy demand and increase renewable energy sources.

[00:45:37] The city has adopted a goal to achieve 100% renewable electricity for city operations by 2035 and community-wide by 2050. Some of the current programs and projects that we're working on is promoting the commercial PACE program that we adopted last year.

[00:45:55] This is a wonderful program that commercial property owners can take advantage to get low-cost fixed-term financing to basically finance clean energy and green building improvements to their buildings. So we are working with the EDO on promoting that and, of course, the ESC.

[00:46:14] The city provides solar incentives to residents through our solar tax exemption, waiving our solar permitting fee, and also collaborating with nonprofits on the Solarize NOVA program, which provides free solar site assessments for residents and discounted prices on solar.

[00:46:33] As also mentioned, we are working to convert our electric street lights that are owned and operated by Dominion to LED as well. As also mentioned, this will save the city \$150,000 a year on our utility bills.

[00:46:50] So it's a really great project, and it'll prove safety and lighting throughout the city. Another project that was mentioned is the Energy Efficiency Conservation Block Grant, the EECBG grant. So we were awarded \$100,000 to hire an energy outreach coordinator, which I'm happy to share.

[00:47:09] The job was posted on Monday, and we'll be accepting applications through that through February 15th. So this job, they will be leading and developing a residential audit program and providing 100 free energy audits and also distributing energy efficiency kits for free.

[00:47:29] So this is a wonderful opportunity for residents to improve their energy efficiency in their house, save money on their utility bills, and also make their households more comfortable. We're also in

the process of procuring a utility data management system.

[00:47:47] So as people mentioned here before, utility data management system will allow us to track all of our utility data, electricity, gas, water, et cetera. So that way we're able to measure our progress and then we'll be able to report it annually to the public to show how we're doing and meeting our goals.

[00:48:07] And we'll also be able to track our return on investment. So when we do energy efficiency projects or solar projects, we can show what is our return on investment over time and also use that information for future budget planning. So that way we can invest future dollars so the city can continue saving money while reducing our energy usage and water usage, et cetera.

[00:48:31] For future projects, we will be conducting solar site assessments of all of our city facilities, and this includes schools. So we're going to be evaluating where we might be able to install rooftop solar, ground-mounted solar, or solar parking canopies.

[00:48:49] Based on the results of that assessment, we will then, for the sites that are prioritized as the best fit for solar, we'll then have funding to install solar panels at those locations. Next is waste reduction and recycling.

[00:49:09] For this, we aim to ensure that our city's solid waste management system remains safe, efficient, and effective, and environmentally sound for decades to come, while prioritizing waste reduction and recycling.

[00:49:28] So some of our current programs and projects include the Trash and Recycling Carts Project, which was also mentioned tonight. We are very happy last week we completed the distribution of trash and recycling carts to our curbside collection customers.

[00:49:43] So this project is going to improve worker safety, improve operational efficiency, while reducing waste and litter. And it also sets up for making future improvements to our solid waste services in the future. One of the other main projects we're working on this year is the Solid Waste Management Plan update.

[00:50:06] Every five years, based on DEQ requirements, this is an update that we have to do. Melissa McDonald will be providing an update on the progress of that plan right after this presentation. We are also working on a residential waste and recycling assessment.

[00:50:25] So with this assessment, we're going to be evaluating our services to figure out where we can continue to reduce waste, how can we make it more efficient, and how can we cut costs. And so we'll present the results of that when that assessment is complete. We also have regularly occurring programs for this.

[00:50:44] We have our composting center and workshops. We have glass recycling at the Purple Can Club. We also perform regular refuse and recycling audits. And then we're required to report our refuse and recycling data to DEQ each year.

[00:51:01] So some upcoming future programs and projects include a commercial waste and recycling assessment. This includes auditing our commercial properties to make sure they have the proper waste and recycling receptacles.

[00:51:18] Are they maintained properly? Are they picked up regularly? Because we have been getting complaints from residents that there is pollution in the downtown area. I think this would be an important

one to do to make sure that our businesses are in compliance and then also create education and outreach to help them with making improvements and then updating our solid waste code to make that more stronger.

[00:51:49] And then also future projects we'll be requesting funding for is creating a solid waste enterprise fund at the budget retreat. This was something that the council had suggested they're interested in evaluating further so we'll be providing a project request for that and then also updating our solid waste ordinance not only for the commercial side but also residential side as well for environmental protection we aim to

[00:52:26] preserve promote and enhance the city's natural environment and resiliency the city collects approximately \$110,000 each year with our plastic bag tax. This funding is used towards initiatives such as community cleanup events, which are very popular in community, the distribution of reusable bags, and education and outreach. For policy updates and legislation programs, we work to integrate environmental and sustainability language into various planning

[00:53:01] policy documents, and then also our legislative program to ensure that we integrate sustainability best practices throughout policies and regulations. And we also work a lot with other departments within the city, and there's a lot of internal collaboration that goes on. Some of our closest partners are the urban forestry team and also the stormwater management team. We work with regular

[00:53:28] on events and initiatives for the city. Next is collaboration. So with collaboration, we aim to foster a culture of sustainability and resiliency in government operations and community-wide. Collaboration is really a core component of our division. We have a lot of collaborative partnerships, one of which is the environmental sustainability. So we have the pleasure of working with really hard-working volunteers that want to

[00:54:06] make an impact locally. So one of the highlights of my job. We also regularly act as an advisor and partner to other departments within the city to enhance future current and future citywide initiatives. We also work a lot with the region. We work with regional organizations such as COG and NVRC.

[00:54:29] We're a member of the Virginia Energy and Sustainability Peer Network. Webka, et cetera. So we do a lot of regional collaboration, because as you know, climate change doesn't end at our border, so we have to work a lot with our regional partners.

[00:54:45] And then we work a lot with schools, such as George Mason University and, of course, Fairfax County Public Schools, and our utilities. And one of our main partners is Dominion Energy. We partnered on outreach education with them at the History Day, where we gave out free energy efficiency kits.

[00:55:00] Some future programs and projects that we're working on with collaboration is to develop an internal sustainability strategic plan. So this is an action that came out of the citywide strategic plan. And this will basically determine a long-term strategic plan for how we're going to operationalize sustainability within the city.

[00:55:23] So how can other departments be involved and take on sustainability actions as well? because we need to work as a whole within the city and not just our division staff working on things. And one of the things we're looking at with that is to use the Lead for Cities certification as a framework. So this is a national standard that we can use to identify high-impact practices and then also benchmark our progress. And for education and outreach,

[00:56:03] We aim to increase community awareness, understanding, and engagement. So some of our current educational initiatives focus on recycling, composting, energy efficiency, and solar. We provide regular newsletters to our community to share information, best practices, updates on events, how people can get involved, et cetera.

[00:56:28] We lead and participate in many events. We can be out there sometimes multiple days, the weekends, nights. So we do community cleanup events, help out with invasive removals, Arbor Day, History Day, etc. So we're out there in the community a lot.

[00:56:45] We also attend HOA meetings and community events to help promote programs and projects and also solicit their feedback because it's really important to understand what the needs and wants of our community are. So, this brings me to our schedule here.

[00:57:06] So, this slide shows our division's current and planned special projects and how will they be sequenced over time. So, there has been some concerns tonight from the ESC about the timing of projects. So, one of the challenges that we have is that since the number, scope, and complexity initiatives have continued to grow, but then the staff capacity has not matched that.

[00:57:32] So due to that, we have to push back certain projects based on staff capacity. So this schedule here assumes that no additional staff capacity will be added.

[00:57:48] And this also assumes that no new initiatives will be added either or that will pursue any grants. And as we've seen over the years, priorities tend to shift and new projects and programs are adopted. So we're constantly juggling priorities based on the guidance from the city manager and also the city council.

[00:58:11] I also wanted to note that some of these projects were paused by previous city managers, which has caused some delays. So the main reason for pausing on some projects was because of fiscal concerns, because a lot of these programs and projects are new and would require staff and other resources to implement.

[00:58:36] So with the current staffing, progress continues on projects. However, it is a slower pace than initially envisioned when city-adopted goals and project schedules were initially set. So right now, this list here, projects have been prioritized based on the following items.

[00:58:58] So is it required for compliance reasons? Are there grant-funded projects with strict deadlines? We also prioritize high-impact projects that save energy and cut costs, and also projects that improve public safety.

[00:59:15] So that's how these projects were ranked. so uh to move forward effectively staff is seeking council guidance on priorities and capacities so we have a variety of questions for you guys but i i know also you probably have questions for the esc and myself as well so i'd like to open up open it up to to q a all right then we'll open it up to we'll start down at this and council member amos no i i greatly appreciate this was a fantastic

[00:59:51] and very thorough presentation uh i only had a few questions but i also wanted to touch on the questions that you put on the slide deck. Just starting off with that, and from my personal perspective, it would be prudent to probably focus on where we can get cost savings or generate funds that can help support these other projects. For example, the Solid Waste Enterprise Fund would probably be the most

crucial one because I can generate a significant amount of dollars and a portion of that or more of it can go to getting these other goals and tasks completed. And I think

[01:00:26] cost savings is something that we're looking at not just with climate and energy, but overall throughout the city, where can we get more bang for our buck, especially considering some of the fiscal challenges a lot of local governments are now dealing with. When it comes to my questions, they're pretty basic. Y'all did a really good job. When it comes to the CPACE program, is that typically, are there like annual updates, something you could provide? I remember that was actually one of the first decisions we made as a group, and I was actually very curious on how that's been progressing i know it's a newer program so i'm wondering how is that reported out per se

[01:01:01] we don't have a reporting schedule however i guess we have not received any requests for pace financing so it is run by the virginia pace authority so if any commercial properties were interested in it they would contact the city and unfortunately we haven't been contacted yet from what other jurisdictions have seen who've adopted CPACE, it is slow to adopt because it does require a lot of education and outreach to developers to, number one, let people know it exists, and then, number two, like, walk them through the process to show how the financing would work and the benefits of it.

[01:01:40] So it does take a while to educate developers in the area and make sure that they know that they can take advantage of it and feel comfortable taking advantage of it. Makes complete sense, the sticking with the education and outreach, I'm wondering how often or when was the last time that we did some type of analysis or survey to assess how familiar people are with these different programs like CPACE, like Solarize, to really assess where we are from an education perspective.

[01:02:11] Like, I would hope that this is something that the general public is just aware of, although I admit that I'm doubtful. So how can we track that and maybe even, if possible, map it out so we have a better sense of maybe we're not targeting this area hard enough. Maybe it's apartment complexes to Fiza's point.

[01:02:29] I'm glad she beat me to it. You know, now I get to have a blue can. That's going to be a nice change of pace. But how do we measure and track that so we're optimizing our current processes? I guess that was kind of a comment more than a question.

[01:02:45] And the other thing that I wanted to throw out there is, you know, I'm glad you brought up snowcrete. As we're seeing more natural events come through, I think we need to have a more robust conversation regarding resilience hubs. And I think that's something that needs to become more of the forefront moving forward.

[01:03:14] Okay, so should we move on? Council Member Hardy-Jandler. So first of all, I also want to express my appreciation for both the committee's report and the staff's report. ONE OF THE ELEMENTS OF AREA COMMITTEE'S CHARTER IS TO ADVISE THE COUNCIL.

[01:03:34] AND SO I APPRECIATE THE ADVISING THAT YOU BROUGHT THROUGH YOUR PRESENTATION AND THE INSIGHTS. I SPECIFICALLY APPRECIATE RECOGNITION OF THE REGIONAL POSITION THAT WE HOLD AND HOW WE'RE BEHIND SOME OF OUR NEIGHBORS IN TERMS OF PLANNING.

[01:03:53] and that the point about sequencing, that there needs to be investments in the beginning in order for certain things to happen after that. Because of that, I do want to ask a question about staffing and

particularly the estimated, and you will probably not have this tonight, but I think in the future it would be helpful or in the upcoming weeks to know the investment of staffing that would promote the return on investment of some of these initiatives.

[01:04:28] So, for example, if we had the program, the energy program manager and the coordinator, the program coordinator, and the data system, what would be the cost of that through 2030?

[01:04:47] I think that number would be valuable for us, not only for the expense itself, but as an investment in making some of these other things happen. I just really appreciate what I saw in terms of the coordination between the staff and the committee, and I saw a lot of areas of overlap with that staffing being one of the major ones.

[01:05:13] So not tonight, but in the upcoming weeks, I would love to understand what that cost, WHAT THAT INVESTMENT WOULD BE FOR THAT STAFFING AS A RESOURCE INVESTMENT AND JUST HOW YOU SEE THAT THOSE INDIVIDUALS FORWARDING SOME OF THESE OTHER ELEMENTS.

[01:05:34] SO THANK YOU. COUNCILMEMBER PETERSON? THANK YOU. I HAVE A NUMBER OF QUESTIONS, SO I MIGHT DO A ROUND AND THEN CIRCLE BACK IN ORDER TO GIVE OTHER FOLKS A CHANCE TO CHIME IN.

[01:05:51] BUT I WOULD LIKE TO JUST START BY SAYING IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU. It's been a lonely year without you, so I hope we'll be seeing more of you going forward. Let's do it. I also want to just kind of big picture call out that in terms of our overall city government, I think there's an interplay here between the government and a citizen advisory committee that's very important and should be recognized here.

[01:06:26] Between the two of these bodies, what you've seen and heard tonight, I think, systematic strategic thinking and I think that's really quite critical for the city to have that capacity and to nurture it and to actually use it so really very much appreciate you demonstrating that with your thoughts here this evening the other thing just to note something that I learned when I had the good fortune to be with the environmental sustainability committee for a few years and to be able to chair it one of the roles that the committee

[01:07:02] plays in collaboration with the sustainability division is to initiate and incubate programs that go on to become implemented by the city and so this catalytic function is very important and I think one of their two very big examples that come to mind that I hope citizens will appreciate and be aware of one is the solid waste program and this has been a very big area of focus for the environmental sustainability committee it continues to be and I hope it will

[01:07:37] it's certainly a very high priority for the city and it has become a center of excellence within the city operations and it's something that the city and the citizens all can and should be proud of but the the environmental sustainability committee and the staff working together really were able to engineer pathways for this to be where it is today and hopefully where it will continue to progress as we've seen tonight.

[01:08:04] And that's just been a very, very important thing. I think the other thing to recognize here is the interplay that exists between the work on, and let's call it sustainability, but I think that's kind of a basket here, and the rest of the government.

[01:08:26] And I think this is an area where we are seeing progression towards a whole-of-government approach. And that is a never-ending job. But in order for these efforts to be effective, they have to be a part of a larger whole and not isolated.

[01:08:47] And so I very much appreciate that, as you have been providing us thinking, part of that has been the migration of and the evolution of what you do to a broader and more integrated basis inside the government. And, of course, it stretches outside the government as well.

[01:09:03] Again, I just call this out because I don't want it to be underappreciated by the public that the work that you do is so integrated in other areas, and that's a big part of your job, and that takes a special set of skills to do that. So really appreciate all that. A couple questions, and again, I may circle back for a second set, but one comment, maybe a call out to get the ball rolling.

[01:09:31] I very much appreciate your notation that we are living in an age that is characterized by changes and conditions. And these have accelerated, these changes have accelerated on a number of fronts as we speak this past year and the year we live in now are defined, I think, historically by the changes and conditions we are experiencing, environment, energy, economy, society, many different areas.

[01:10:05] And one of the challenges that all local governments have is being able to identify and respond to these changes. And I think where that goes is the question mark of how we become, broadly speaking, more resilient.

[01:10:21] Again, the ability to know where these changes are taking place, what our exposure to risk is, and how we respond to that. And environment is a piece of that, but it's a broader fabric that we're caught up in. and I think that maybe gets picked up in some of the things that you're recommending, and I will be curious as I go through this to know how we are connecting the dots to this broader set of changes that we're experiencing.

[01:10:45] For instance, energy and economy are very big areas, and you're not alone. This is something that local governments everywhere in the United States are going through. This is a particularly challenging time for everybody to try to work through this. The city council's goals that are in the presentation for 2023-2024, it would seem to me that this council could, through acclimation or whatever means necessary, agree that at least the environmental goals in there should be adopted for the current term of this council,

[01:11:24] which is 2025 and 2026. And I appreciate very much the point that the absence of them could potentially be misread as a de-emphasis of environment. And I don't think that is anybody's intent on the council, to my knowledge, but I hope we will find a way to raise that and rectify that so that it's not a question mark in anybody's mind.

[01:11:49] A question that's kind of a little bit in the weeds, no pun intended, has to do with leaf blowers. And as the city exercises leadership by example in making transitions to electric equipment, out of curiosity, and I'm looking out of the corner of my eye at Mr. Summers, and I may be spotting our chief financial officer who's hiding at the moment, as a matter of policy, are we able to establish preference for purchase of local sourced equipment?

[01:12:25] Can we buy equipment here in the City of Fairfax, or is that something that's not permissible under our procurement policies? I could try to answer that. So trying to limit to just within the City of

Fairfax, that is not allowed currently in the procurement policy with the state.

[01:12:49] There are minor carve-out exceptions. If they were a micro-business or a SWAM vendor, they would get preferential treatment, but we could not just restrict it here to the City of Fairfax. Thank you, and I would just only note that, in point of fact, the City of Fairfax has a couple of retailers that carry this equipment, and it is high-performance equipment at a very competitive price, just so that everybody's aware of that.

[01:13:16] One of the pillars of the sustainability program is collaboration, and if I'm not mistaken, when you look at the charter of the ESC, it might be the second or third objective, I forget which, is community education, essentially, but that's writ large.

[01:13:41] And I think once upon a time, the committee was focusing on that in a manner that would encourage and engender two-way communication and shared decision-making and public involvement, collaboration, all these terms which are all about two heads or better than one.

[01:13:58] I'm curious. I didn't see much of that kind of activity referenced in either of the presentations where we are focused on public involvement, focused on public engagement in a way that brings people in early and often to be a part of the decision-making process program and a committee standpoint.

[01:14:18] Can you comment on the vision and the thoughts of where that resides in your priorities? Well, I'll go first with respect to ESC. We do have the collaborations that have been mentioned already.

[01:14:37] We are working with the GMU's Virginia Climate Center. We've been reaching out to other committees, more specifically the Commission for Women, to collaborate on a program in March.

[01:14:55] The outreach to the community is one of the fundamental pieces of every single domain on which we're working. That is, without the public's input, and then ultimately their support in enacting whatever is decided upon is critical.

[01:15:19] You can only multiply your loaves and fishes so many times, and you need to be able to count on that. So it wasn't mentioned because we were focusing primarily on alignment, on metrics, and on what our priority actions would be.

[01:15:37] But suffice to say that in each of our areas, collaboration with the community and outside of the city community as well is a priority. And from the staff perspective, as you saw from our focus areas, two of our six focus areas, one was collaboration, one was education and outreach.

[01:16:00] So this is very important for us. And for all of our planning efforts, like with our solid waste management plan, we wanted to make sure the public was engaged early and often. And we had a very successful survey with our solid waste management plan, over 6,000 respondents.

[01:16:16] 600, what did I say? 6,000, sorry. I guess I'm over 600. Sorry, thank you for the correction. That would have been amazing, 6,000. So we've really received a lot of feedback from our community, and it's extremely important that we get input for our community.

[01:16:36] So for each project, we want to ensure that there's a very thorough education and outreach perspective on our projects. Well, and I would maybe call out as a bit of a success story here the Urban Forest Master Plan development, which has specifically involved a lot of what we call co-development and co-design, bringing experts and non-experts together from a variety of perspectives to make decisions.

[01:17:07] And that's the kind of thing that, it seems to me, could be enacted more broadly. So great to hear that. We're going to talk more in a little bit about Solid Waste Enterprise Fund and things like that.

[01:17:23] But I think perhaps a question for our city manager, not to put you on the spot, is the general strategy that that's a part of is transitioning cost centers to revenue centers, taking things that heretofore have been just outlays and finding ways to turn them into revenue sources and generators.

[01:17:49] So enterprise funds are one mechanism by which that might happen. But that's a part of the agenda of innovation and revenue generation. Is that, as a matter of scope, something that is included in the upcoming finance and efficiency audit, which I'm probably not describing correctly, or is that sitting somewhere else in terms of a whole of government approach here?

[01:18:16] Yeah, great question. I'm going to come back to you. We're going to come back to you on feedback relative to the retreat and the discussion we had on that piece since we had a significant conversation around that. And we'll certainly talk about the scope from, you know, our outtake from that engagement.

[01:18:34] And we certainly could add that piece to it as far as looking at the scope of the efficiency audit, as we discussed during that retreat. So it's certainly an area that we can explore. It may not, maybe too much scope, you know, around that, but certainly could be part of it.

[01:18:52] Okay. Well, so I think that it is an example of the potential more broadly that exists in the city to translate and transition things that are pure cost into things that have either blends of revenues or can become straight out enterprise centers.

[01:19:12] So look to your to your point. It's obviously something that we've talked about and the council has talked about taking a look at so we can look at it You know the siloed piece but certainly as part of a larger strategy of looking at enterprise and cost recovery Well, and then it'll pick up an issue that's been raised in the presentations and raised earlier Which we can circle back to which is there is an upfront cost Associated with this and so we'll need to understand where they are and what the returns are associated with them.

[01:19:43] And my last question from this set, and I would like to circle back because I've got a couple of things for the ESC folks, but to the question, I think your final question that was raised about where our priorities and suggestions would be.

[01:19:59] There's a heck of a lot of content in that slide, and I would find it helpful to maybe embellish that table a little bit so it's actually a matrix that tells us for each of These line items, you know, what's the cost?

[01:20:19] Do we anticipate that there will be revenues or cost savings associated with that cost? And if we could have some sense of who the beneficiaries are, how many people are we touching?

[01:20:34] How many people are we helping? Just so we can kind of weigh when you get to return on investment. You know, there's multiple criteria here. It would just be very helpful to have. It doesn't need to be enormously complex, but just a little bit of a cheat sheet here. And then I would like to have the opportunity, I hope others would agree, to have a little bit of time to look at that and circle back because I think it's a very important discussion.

[01:20:57] It's one that I'm not sure I'm prepared to fully address tonight. I'd like to look at this a little bit further and might have a few more questions. So if it's acceptable to others, I'd like to ask if we might be given that opportunity. I'm not hearing any objections.

[01:21:13] And again, I have some additional questions, but I'm going to stop here and allow others to chime in. Councilmember Bates? So looking at the questions that we've gotten from committee members as well as staff, I'll try to get to most of it.

[01:21:36] As far as the sustainability goal, I was, of course, part of the council that first adopted that. And so that's certainly something I still support. And thinking about the projects that we have in the queue here, I would personally want to prioritize projects that give us the greatest impact on carbon emission reduction and, you know, sustainability,

[01:22:07] other, you know, quantitative indicators of sustainability in the long run, the greatest proportion of that to the long-term cost. And, you know, looking at long-term cost, I would prioritize, you know, long-term recurring costs over perhaps, you know, a large one-time cost.

[01:22:34] So we might see something such as the LED conversion project where it is a significant initial one-time cost but may actually lead to cost savings in the long run. That's something that I would see as a very high priority because of that because it's a win-win.

[01:22:50] So others that, you know, I'm not sure that we know what that would look like for some of these other ones. But, you know, the solar initiatives and EV infrastructure, but basically things where we can see some direct impact on sustainability.

[01:23:12] But also the green building policy, I think it's very important to make sure that we have the infrastructure in place, staff infrastructure to see that through because that is um something that really kind of permeates the entire community and not just city operations um and in the thinking about a greater collaboration with the esc i'd certainly love to see greater collaboration with you all but also with all our other boards and commissions that would lend themselves to perhaps more of an advisory role

[01:23:48] with the council planning commission EDA Commission for women Commission for the Arts and you know prab school board even even though they're separately elected you know thinking about let's say this has been about an hour and a half you know once per quarter kind you know ends up adding up and so then if you're looking at say seven boards of commissions that's the equivalent of about two to three additional meetings you know per quarter for us council meetings, but maybe, uh, you know, and then this is maybe a larger conversation, but, um, some kind

[01:24:26] of compromise there, uh, maybe one longer meeting per year. And then, you know, a few shorter half hour check-in meetings during, uh, you know, the other quarters, um, or, uh, perhaps a regular email update from, from the chairs of these bodies, something like that. But, uh, you know, ultimately um you know for for those initiatives um and then the um you know infrastructure and planning initiatives i look toward our new city manager for support in how we prioritize those

[01:25:06] council member maquillen first i wanted to thank you for that um presentation and for the fantastic job of the rollout on the carts program i overwhelmingly heard positive feedback there were a few people that, you know, had some hiccups, but overall it sounded like it was a great rollout and initiative, so congratulations on that. I do have a few questions. I also, I think we were all sort of thinking return on investment. It seems like a lot of the questions relate to that, so

[01:25:42] I wanted to know which initiatives deliver the fastest cost savings or emissions reduction. I think that would be really helpful to know and for us to be able to look at those things with that in mind, prioritizing. I'd also like to know if there are any opportunities for reinvesting savings, things like the LEDs or efficiency projects, into other priorities.

[01:26:07] And then what fiscal year 26 decisions you would need us or that would be required for us to push through or continue with in order to prevent any delays for fiscal year 27 and 28.

[01:26:25] I also wanted to know which programs most directly benefit our vulnerable or lower income residents and how that's going to be measured. And I will also, I agree, I'll piggyback on Council Member Bates, everything that he mentioned in all the initiatives and programs I agree with.

[01:26:51] I have been an advocate for the composting, I think, especially with schools becoming involved with that. Education is key. I'm really proud to see all the work that you guys have done with education, prevention, trying to educate and expand to our community, the preservation initiatives that you guys are doing as well.

[01:27:14] I do see that, and I know that our children do too, so thank you. I think that's all of the questions that I had and the information that I, at this time, am needing to be able to kind of steer you in the right direction as far as our priorities, okay? Thank you. May I just comment on Councilmember Bates's point, and it's well taken, of course, from our perspective.

[01:27:38] We are the only committee that's important, and I realize that if you have to give everybody else the same amount of time you give us, that would add up. I anticipate that what we're talking about is not so much an hour and a half meeting every quarter, but to stay in touch more closely.

[01:27:57] And there are other avenues to do that. And if you would allow me to, we'll discuss this at our next meeting and get back to you with a couple of suggestions. Council Member Hardy-Chandler. Stephanie, if you could go back to the slide with the sort of the year, the chart.

[01:28:17] I'm going to call it the Gantt chart. But could you repeat the criteria you used to prioritize these? And the reason why I'm asking about that is because I think those criteria, although they're not listed out, I think they're really helpful in terms of decision-making when we're looking at weighing competing interests and competing projects.

[01:28:44] So I thought it was a really good list. Could you repeat that very quickly? Yeah, happy to. So one is compliance. So is this required by state or federal agencies? uh is the project grant funded that has strict deadlines so like grant funding may expire if we don't finish it by a certain time um high is it a high impact project that that saves energy or you know helps conserve our natural resources etc so is it high impact and then also does it help um with immediate cost savings and then uh are projects that also improve public safety so those

[01:29:23] were the criteria for for this ranking so those that ranked high were moved uh earlier in the time frame and what you just listed is also the answer to my my answer to the question how does council want to want staff to manage new requests okay in terms of running it through that exact sort of matrix of uh prioritizing um and also just wanting to emphasize that um again i think having the other resources all have to be managed or forwarded by someone, two people on staff

[01:30:00] doing all of this. Is that correct? Yes. And so I really just really feel like ultimately the climate traction, right, is going to be forwarded by expanding that human element to the resources. But I think for me, that list really answered some of these questions. Beyond that safety is a priority and how these elements support safety and all of the things that other people mentioned but I love that matrix and I think that should

[01:30:39] be a decision-making guide may I also point to everybody to the letter that we sent to mayor and council last week regarding the climate and energy manager position it's laid out very deep in a very detailed way what the the cost and benefits would be to it I want to mention that Elaine Wilkes was primarily responsible for building that and I just would direct you to reread that letter as a part of the answer to your question yeah and just as a comment you know when we're talking about cost savings and expenditures someone has to

[01:31:19] be the accountability person on that and so someone has to oversee that someone has to you know identify how those areas are moving so um i just really want to echo that okay let's call on councilmember hall are you with us councilmember hall thank you thank you very much hopefully you can hear me okay yes okay great sorry my camera is not wanting to work at the moment but um just want to thank everyone for the presentations and the questions and the information um i also want to say, I love having so many of the members of the ESC come out and speak up and each share their

[01:31:57] own thoughts, plus the combined thoughts of the committee. I think, you know, sometimes when you're working in a group, the loudest voice or the most common theme is what gets pushed forward. But I really do appreciate when people are willing to speak up and say, you know, I maybe don't agree with this, but I also think this is important, even though we weren't able to address it collectively as a group. So I think that's really important. Just to try to answer some of your initiative questions or expectations. I do want to congratulate overall the department and the ESC on education and outreach. I think it's fantastic what you do. Everything with the trash cans going

[01:32:35] out and just the communication in that regard is really, really impressive. I would say priorities for me specifically would be what gives us the biggest bang for our buck. Definitely try to prioritize those things. Things that might bring around some overall cost savings, whether it's for us specifically as a city or if it, you know, has a trickle-down effect to our residents and our taxpayers. Safety items, renewable energy, waste reduction and recycling. I know, you know, we now have the glass bins that we can go throw away, and I understand that not everybody has glass, but

[01:33:13] from a personal standpoint, I, you know, we don't happen to drink a lot of wine in my house, so I don't have a ton of bottles, but does certainly make me not want to go out and drop them off very often just because it's sometimes difficult. So I love the idea of the energy audits. I think that's a really great idea. And I was curious, are there any plans to add solar panels to city buildings other than Willard Sherwood? Yes. So one of our future projects is to do a solar facility assessment of all of our facilities, and then those that rank the highest will install

[01:33:52] solar there. So we haven't pinpointed which facilities will install solar yet, but we'll have that information after the assessment is completed. Okay, I definitely support that. That was \$55,000. I think that's a huge, huge asset for our community. I will say too, with Solarize Virginia, we were fortunate to take advantage of the solar energy credit before the end of the year, but with the elimination of the federal tax

credit and no state tax credit, I do think the conversion from homeowners and residents might slow down pretty significantly. A resident did

[01:34:29] message me during this meeting, they're watching from home, and they suggested that maybe the Renaissance program could start to include solar as a priority for upgrades to homes. I know when we did the Renaissance program, that wasn't on our radar at all back then, but I thought it was an interesting thought. And then I think my other question, and I don't expect you to get back to me right now, but you had mentioned that some of the programs had been delayed due to previous city manager. And I was just curious if you could let us know what programs were delayed, how that has

[01:35:05] hindered you and what you're doing and how we can try to get back on track with that as soon as possible? Yeah, so the guidance that we received from the previous city manager was that any initiative that would potentially cost the city more money was paused. So the residential solid waste assessment, the commercial waste assessment, the climate action plan, the EV so there are multiple initiatives that were paused and also the green building policy

[01:35:40] because these are new programs they do require additional staff and resources to implement because it's been such a tough budgetary time right now he was trying to be sensitive about not presenting new initiatives that would then cost the city even more money when the council was looking to cut costs so that's where i guess that was coming from but hopefully we can reinvigorate these projects and get them back on track yes thank you i don't think that as an individual council member i was aware of some of the direction that was given with regard to cutting specific

[01:36:20] programs i know we kind of took a high level approach in some areas and so i'm disappointed to hear that that was a trickle-down effect um directly and would hope that moving forward if there's some confusion or concern over what is happening that you know we are all kind of kept in the loop on those kind of conversations so thank you very much that's all for me council member Peterson? Energy. I didn't see, but maybe I missed it, anything in the presentations about

[01:36:55] load growth. And for those who are not familiar with the term, it is the increased demand for electricity that is potentially outstripping the supply of it. And the consequence of that is it exposes us to price increases and price shocks, possibly power outages. It also has indirect effects where it can find its way into other utility bills like water bills and what have you. Virginia is experiencing one of the most acute versions of this, and this is an area where forecasting makes a very, very big difference because if you look at what the business as usual

[01:37:34] line has been and where it's going, they're taking off in very different directions. Is the committee focused on this issue as a part of sustainable energy now and if not now do you anticipate that this would be a principal component of a climate and energy plan um i'll start that answer i'm sure others on the committee have comments around this as well one of the the big things when it comes to load growth is that you have to be able to quantify what exactly is happening and

[01:38:13] then what solutions you can come up with. So the audits that Luis was talking about earlier tonight are a key component of understanding what that load situation is as well as how to rectify it. We can't make any decisions unless we know what the problem is and the granularity of that problem.

[01:38:30] So getting the information down first and be able to chart exactly what is happening within our city is critical to be able to make any recommendations of how to combat that. You are completely correct

is that our region is experiencing very significant growth as well as very significant price increases that the moment we can't do a whole lot about.

[01:38:48] The other benefit of the audit is it allows people to be able to reduce. Before you can really deploy any meaningful savings across, you have to get in line how you're consuming. And the majority of residents, and I would say people in general, have no understanding of what their energy consumption actually is to be able to make just everyday different decisions.

[01:39:08] So it's really critical, again, going back to understanding how we want to quantify what's happening to advise residents with their own actions as well as any other policies and any other developments that might be able to aid in additionally reducing that income and bringing it back into line. If I might pile on for a moment, that's just to say that that load growth does present challenges. It also presents certain kinds of opportunities. If we as a city are able to measure and manage our electricity consumption, there are demand response programs of various

[01:39:46] flavors that could represent a new income stream for city government that could be in some cases quite lucrative but we must get the ability to measure and quantify and manage that electricity down first before we can consider other revenue streams so I thank you very much I think this is an area of strategy and scope for a climate and energy plan that is worth some further discussion as we contemplate how that actually becomes addressed, and I think that's a part of this review of the set of actions before us.

[01:40:24] This is a big-ticket item on that list, and it's a ball of clay to some degree, and it raises the issue of priorities and focus. This is, I think, a big one worth consideration. There's the whole process, as you say, of reducing the causes of it, which means we are more efficient in the way we use energy, then we use less of it. And if that energy comes from renewable sources, then it has less pollution associated with it. But we're going to be experiencing the effects of that, like it or not. And just to remind everybody, this is not an issue that is just caused by artificial intelligence and data centers. The cold weather

[01:41:04] that we're having today is very much tied to radiative forcing. There's something that sits on the North Pole. It's kind of like a big donut of cold air. And when the globe warms, it stretches and bends and does funny things, particularly when there's a big warm mass on the other side of the globe in Asia. And while it's warm as heck over there, it pushes that cold air down on us. So ironically, what we call global warming can result in cold extremes. And we're in for more of them, although being able to forecast that isn't as another matter but the other thing I think that

[01:41:43] this raises in terms of again strategy and discussion for how we approach this issue and other ones a certain amount of what the city can do in response to this it can do by its lonesome we can do on our own here in the city with the help of citizens but there are many things that we cannot and we need the help of the state or we need the help of our compadres across the region

[01:42:07] And I would hope that as you contemplate the planning process, that there would be a place in that for identifying recommendations for actions that the state could take that would be of benefit so that the council would know when it becomes our time to make those recommendations, we can draw upon the results of a plan like yours to guide us for that.

[01:42:29] So I will really very much look forward to knowing more about it. On the climate and energy plan there's again. It's on the list. It's a big-ticket item We've heard a lot about staffing. I think that there's a

bit to unpack there a question that maybe we can't answer tonight But I'm curious to know is whether our investment in staff Possibly I don't know what the four hundred twenty thousand dollar figure entirely comprises But whether that investment reduces the consulting dollars that we need to expend on the issue

[01:43:01] If we have an opportunity invest in staff in a way that reduces those outlays for third-party consultants technical assistance, et cetera It's certainly worth knowing that and that could factor in to how we want to handle That budget on the water issue. I caught a very interesting term there Which is consultation and stream restoration, and I'm just curious we had some sessions about stream restoration in the past and one of the key things that I think we agreed upon but I'm very curious on your thoughts

[01:43:36] and follow-up here was engaging stakeholders in fact having a stakeholder watershed management committee but being able to bring the public into that planning process so that we're looking so that people are understanding and agreeing upon the problem if you will but also what the the full set of solutions are so that they can see the alternatives and work together to find the best ones. Is that the consultation process that was noted or am I referring to something that hasn't happened yet? So, yeah, you're referring to something that is still in the works. What I was noting there in that slide was

[01:44:15] staff's consultation, continued consultation with ESC and thereby, you know, public consultation on or, you know, public awareness of these stream restoration projects, but particular projects in this current phasing of stream restorations that was presented most recently to council hasn't begun yet, except for on the Engage Fairfax page, but for individual projects.

[01:44:40] Is there an active effort to work programmatically with the city and by the city to form some sort of citizen-based stakeholder group or a group that would be involved in that planning process?

[01:44:56] Not that I'm aware of, but I might have not gotten to that conversation with stormwater staff yet. We were in relatively initial conversations, but I don't know if staff does more. And one of the items that Ben and I have discussed that we haven't brought to committee yet is the idea of there are many property owners whose property is actually in the resource protection area and putting together a group of them where they could begin to advise us on how best to approach taking care of the RPA when it is on private property.

[01:45:33] That was one of the things that we've discussed, but we haven't gone any further. Well, it would be great to follow up. I think that was a discussion point that we reached some agreement on with staff, and it would be great for you all to maybe collaborate with that. On urban agriculture, I think hiding in the back we may have an urban agriculture person is that right? So I want to make a pitch that y'all continue to work on that and just pass on to give you some indicator of the enthusiasm around it. Where I, in the neighborhood that I

[01:46:11] live in, Country Club Hills, some of our residents are starting their own, here's a new word for you, Yarden Club, right? Yards and gardens. We have Yardens. It's something that our community takes a lot of pride in. And they're trying to go community-wide with this. And so it would be great to sort of bring them into the fold. It does raise some interesting and important issues in terms of standards, for instance, so that when people are doing this, they're doing it in a way that's consistent with community standards. But I just wanted to note that that's an area that is of real interest and growth and enthusiasm. So look forward to anything more you can do on that.

[01:46:48] My final thought here, I'm thinking most of my questions related to forestry will probably wait until next week when we go through the urban forest master plan, but I do just have one point of clarification, and that is that when I went through the area of focus on forestry, I'm not sure I read this as clearly as I might be able to,

[01:47:21] But the question mark was whether somewhere in there we have a very clear, intentional goal to reduce the amount of tree canopy and forest loss in the city.

[01:47:36] And I didn't quite read that loud and clear. Again, I think that's a very big question mark for the master forest plan. But can you tell me whether that is something that is included and embedded? Because I see kind of a lot of stuff, but it didn't just out and out say, hey, you know, part of what we're trying to do here.

[01:47:54] minimize that loss rate. I'm not sure I understood. Did I get the question right that you were asking whether the plan is to reduce the tree canopy? Let me just reduce the diminution of the tree canopy. So let me maybe help a little bit here. So the Washington Council of Governments last week, I think it was, released an update to the assessment of tree canopy and forest land

[01:48:27] lost in the region. 4,000 acres a year over the past seven years. That's the equivalent of the size of the city of Fairfax that's lost every year in the region. The region is just short of 2 million acres. What that shakes out as in terms of a rate is the city, if it was consistent with that rate, would be losing about eight acres a year. That's like losing the equivalent of the Blenheim Estate every year and a half, or losing the equivalent of Van Dyke Park every four and a half years or losing Daniels Run Park every six years it doesn't sound like a lot but it adds up real fast so I think it calls into question as a matter of policy and programming what are we

[01:49:06] contemplating and what are we doing to help minimize that loss and I'm just curious to know where that maps into the ESC's work well I think one thing we have to remember is that tree canopy is just one of the measures of the health of the forest, and there are qualities of tree canopy as well.

[01:49:30] There is certainly an interest on the part of the committee to work closely with urban forestry and the Urban Forest Master Plan as it relates to that. I was sent that same report, and I was struck by it.

[01:49:51] Our plan within the urban forest master plan is there will be a metric for the tree canopy, how we want to approach that and how we want to increase that. But the quality of that canopy is also an important aspect, and it ties very closely to the plans the city has for development, for other activities within the city that will impact the urban forest, such as some of the stream restoration projects.

[01:50:26] So we're handling it as a balancing act between are we reducing our TDMLs of sediment going down to the Chesapeake Bay in the case of stream restoration, but reducing it by 500 trees, which is a big carbon sink.

[01:50:45] That's one of the questions that I still feel we need to look at more closely to determine whether there's some middle ground there as it relates to our watershed management. Well, I'll look forward to maybe more discussion on it next week.

[01:51:01] I appreciate that. I just wanted to call that out because it has been a long-term area of focus for the committee. And so back to what I said at the outset, the urban forest program itself was spearheaded

by and incubated through the committee, and so it's played a very principal role in that and would look forward to further advice.

[01:51:21] Let me just add one other thing on the matrix we talked about. I think that's worth a conversation about what goes into that in terms of the screening objectives. One thing that we often overlook is the potential for actions we take on the environment to stimulate local economic development.

[01:51:39] And one of the ways that happens is through local spending. And it's one of the reasons I asked the earlier question on leaf blowers, is whether there are ways in which we take actions here to improve the environment that attracts a net accumulation of capital and then results in the spending of that here locally to help our businesses, et cetera.

[01:51:58] It also helps if that becomes an attribute of the city that attracts business location, et cetera. So I would just say that that's maybe a criteria we might want to think through. And with all of these, when we put together a table, it would be great if you guys could take a swing at just saying, well, what's the high, medium, and low on these things?

[01:52:19] This is a criteria, that's fine, but is it a little thing? Is it a big thing? That might help us a little bit as well. I might also suggest that there are two different things that we may have been just talking about. One is the attraction of businesses to the city because we have plans in place to be a resilient location for businesses.

[01:52:44] The other was, are there specific attributes about the city, natural attributes about the city that attract people? Do we have a Burke Lake or do we have a major garden center that would bring people to the city?

[01:53:00] And at this point, my personal opinion is we don't have that particular attraction. Well, we'll talk to Parks and Rec about that. But we have a bunch of forest land here, and it's the tree city, and people do like to come here.

[01:53:16] for that environment. So maybe we'll talk a bit more about that. Can I also let, Greg had a question too that he wanted to speak to. Thank you. Yeah, less a question, council members, than a comment. As we talk about a lot of the initiatives that fall under the umbrella of environmental sustainability, I've heard all of you tonight rightly think about the concept of return on investment. I would like us to, as a city, consider that as one metric among many, and this is going to sound like heresy,

[01:53:56] but please bear with me, perhaps not the most important. Climate change has been an issue for my entire working career. I started hearing serious scientific concerns about climate in the late 80s and early 90s when I was an undergraduate. Since then, return on investment thinking has gotten us to where we are now. We have blown through one and a half degrees centigrade over the historical average.

[01:54:24] We do not understand where all the heat is going in the oceans and what will happen to it when it resurfaces. We do not understand the capacity of the oceans to continue to buffer carbon dioxide at the sea surface. Return on investment is a tool of business as usual.

[01:54:45] I'm not saying we should not consider that. I am asking Council to not consider it as the first, primary, and please not the only criteria we use to prioritize projects. Thank you. I think you're right.

[01:55:04] The problem with the traditional ROI models is that it doesn't really take into account what economists call the negative externalities. So really, the price of carbon is not taken into account in your

ROI calculation.

[01:55:21] So therefore, if you do take that into account, I would argue that the ROI calculation probably will be more legitimate. And I think that's the big miss is we do this very blind ROI calculation without all the negative effects which are not priced into your model.

[01:55:38] And so I think if we are looking at ROI, we need to be balanced in our view. I think that would really help make the case. Councilmember Amos. I'll make a quick comment because I see how eager Melissa is in the back to present on solid waste.

[01:55:55] The the only comment I'll bring up and I think rusty was leaning towards towards it was specifically also How do we maximize the current impervious surface in the city? And how can we redistribute that redevelop that add green space to it?

[01:56:11] What are our opportunities with someone for example these vacant parking lots that we have? Which I know there's some things coming down the pipeline that I'm excited for so that's it councilmember Bates So certainly a couple points

[01:56:28] I mean, you know, as far as the budget and the consideration of these initiatives as part of that, you know, last time around, we agreed to make a lot of more specific cuts that, frankly, I think were even greater priorities, as high of a priority as these initiatives are.

[01:56:52] So, I mean, when we send that message, you know, on the things that are looked at at a more high level, you know, to make up that difference as far as the tax rate that we're aiming for, you know, that is the message that we're sending.

[01:57:11] And I want to make sure that we have the resources to do everything that we want to do, but are also balancing this against other, you know, I don't want to get into, of course, a broader budget discussion here, but other priorities that we need to consider as well.

[01:57:31] But certainly, you know, we want to make sure that we do what we can to make progress on this and make perhaps more progress, hopefully, at a faster pace than we have.

[01:57:50] You know, and then as far as I also want to clarify, you know, certainly don't want to put it on the ESC as far as, you know, the time commitment to interacting with you all. And, you know, certainly at least as much on us, if not more so, to, you know, maintain discipline and, you know, make sure that we're leaving time for other boards and commissions as well.

[01:58:20] But, you know, and I certainly look forward to seeing what you all come up with on that front. And maybe that could even be a model for how we collaborate with other boards and commissions as well going forward. Anything else, Councilmember Hall?

[01:58:38] Anything? Okay. Councilmember Peters? Nope, I'm good. Thank you. Okay. Thank you, Councilmember Hall. Councilmember Peterson? So a broader point that can be picked up at whatever point is appropriate, I think more for the city manager and the chief financial officer, but I think the point is well taken that if for any reason it appears that actions that have been budgeted and appropriated by the council require rethinking,

[01:59:13] i think it's really quite important that those decisions come back for consideration by the council so that we're aware of them i know in the past year apparently a number of those decisions were made without our knowledge and i i think that's probably not best practice so we'll look forward to that

being fixed a little bit well i would take some exception to that because we have a manager council form of government and the city manager runs the staff and the resources including staff time so not everything comes before the council because that is not our role we are a

[01:59:48] governing body and we we we allocate resources through our budget but the day-to-day operation of the city is under the purview of the city manager and that includes the last city manager who had to make decisions about whether or not we had the staff capacity to implement brand new programs that is the purview of the city manager so just if people don't understand our form of government. It is a manager council form of government. And so going forward, I do believe that the city in this particular dais is very interested in every aspect of the government,

[02:00:22] which is fine. But we all each have discrete roles to play. And I hope everyone keeps that in mind as well. So thank you so much. This has been very informative. I appreciate all the time, the effort. This has been a fantastic presentation. We have the slides. And we look forward to engaging with you in the future. It's all out in front of us. Thank you so much. Ms. Clark? Our next item is the Solid Waste Management Plan Update. I will recognize Melissa McDonald, Environmental Sustainability Specialist, for the presentation.

[02:01:28] There's a lot of transition going on. Thank you.

[02:01:50] Thank you, Mayor Reed and members of the Council. So tonight we have a presentation for you to go over and provide an overview of the Solid Waste Management Plan update in accordance with the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, as well as open up for discussion to get your thoughts and feedback on the plan itself and a few key areas.

[02:02:09] I'm joined tonight by our consultant team from RRS. We have Helen Lee and Olivia Polamini, who will also be helping me with the presentation tonight. All right, thank you, Melissa. Giving Mayor Reed and members of council, we are so pleased to give you an update today of our Solid Waste Management Plan update.

[02:02:28] I know there's been a lot of conversation already, And we noted from council members here today on topics of waste, recycling, composting, you also touched on the Solid Waste Enterprise Fund. We appreciate your dialogue, and we have duly noted your comments. And so we'll be very efficient with our time today.

[02:02:45] But we're going to pick up on that discussion and go a little bit deeper. So here's the agenda. We're going to start with our Solid Waste Management Plan, why we need to update it, our project timeline, and where we are today, a review of our extensive outreach and engagement, the major themes we heard from the community, our key strategies we would like to get your feedback on, and next steps as we prepare the final draft for council consideration later this spring. And this agenda mirrors kind of the structure of the draft solid waste management plan and ensures that we address both our regulatory requirement as well as our community

[02:03:19] priorities. So next slide. All right. So what is a solid waste management plan? A swamp is what the city's long-term roadmap for how we manage all aspects of waste. Thank you for the chuckle there, Councilman Peterson. This 20-year plan contains goals that shape decisions related to future infrastructure, such as recycling or composting sites, programs and services including curbside recycling

and drop-off centers, education and outreach to help our city residents and businesses reduce and divert waste, budget and policy decisions. I know we talked a lot about

[02:03:54] that here today, but those decisions that support efficient, equitable, and environmentally responsible waste operations. And this plan not only meets those state requirements, it also aligns with the city's broader sustainability and climate goals that we touched a little bit earlier today.

[02:04:13] So the salt waste management plan covers the entire waste stream from reduction and reuse all the way through disposal. A few important points I would like to highlight. First, Virginia has 19 years of remaining landfill capacity in the state, 19 years. And that's a figure that reinforces the need for a long-term planning and how the city can reduce and divert materials. The second point is that since 2007, the city's municipal solid waste disposal costs, so the cost to throw away

[02:04:47] our trash, have increased 73%, rising from \$52 to \$90 per ton. This trend impacts our budget and informs our strategy and why we need to reduce our waste and divert more materials. So also the city is required by law to meet 25% mandatory recycling rate, but the city aims to exceed that to support sustainability and broader stewardship goals. The city is currently at a recycling rate of 39% for the state in 2024. So the plan is updated every five years, but it does guide us

[02:05:21] decisions for the next 20 and ultimately needs to be adopted by council. Next. So this slide shows our project timeline from fall 2024 through spring 2026. We've completed our project kickoff, number of public engagement meetings, including tabling events, meetings with the ESC who kindly mentioned our update in the presentation just before us. We held a public meeting open to all and a public survey that stretched from October through December.

[02:05:49] We also established an advisory committee for this project with four meetings that were scheduled across this planning period with representatives both from residents, commercial business, as well as students from the education area.

[02:06:05] So we're now in the January through March period, finalizing recommendations, and we aim to return to council in April for the public hearing and adoption following submission to Virginia Department of Environmental Quality by May 1 of 2026. So the city's outreach effort has been robust, incorporating both digital and in-person engagement to ensure the greatest accessibility and equity of information.

[02:06:32] Highlights include, I won't read all the numbers, but I find it very impressive, 3,400 webpage views, community survey that we have reached a 98% confidence level, Over 600 survey respondents, social media impressions that reached across the multiple social media platforms, engagement meetings that reached 50 people in person, as well as event participation that reached over 10,000, mailers that we distributed to residents and engagements through YouTube videos.

[02:07:02] And these numbers all reflect strong community interest in waste management. An additional outreach included a feature in Fairfax Now, City Scene Newsletter, our school outreach, bus ads, A-frame signs at community locations, postcards as promotional collateral.

[02:07:20] We really did as much as we could to try to reach every corner of our community. And this multi-channel approach really helped us reach that diverse set of audiences from families in the city to commuters to multi-unit housing residents. And to summarize, we had almost 50,000 engagement touch points in the city.

[02:07:40] And we're very excited to see the engagement that our residents, the city, had on this topic. All right, so we heard several consistent themes across this engagement period. And first, being that according to our survey, nearly 91.5% of our respondents either strongly agreed or somewhat agree with the statement that they support efforts to increase recycling in the city.

[02:08:05] So City of Fairfax residents care. They care about recycling. It's evident in our strong turnout. And second, 92% of our respondents reported they actively recycle. And so the data shows that residents both care when they have the means and opportunity to divert materials, and they are putting that into action.

[02:08:25] So with that said, there were opportunities that we heard from our residents, from the city's residents. One, strong desire for public recycling bins adjacent to trash bins that are clearly labeled. We did hear some frustration around the lack of curbside glass recycling and that convenience factor.

[02:08:45] Heightened interest in composting, including curbside pickup, low-cost bins, better guidance on what's allowed, the need for clear, consistent, multilingual recycling instructions, requests for greater transparency in how recycling is processed.

[02:09:03] You might have heard that question, is my recycling actually getting recycled, right? I see some faces. Yeah. And so that question of what happens to our recycling? Is it really getting recycled and that trust that we need to build? The demand for expanded specialty recycling drop-off options, whether that is electronics or batteries and a lot of this, this is for safe disposal to not protect our environment, but for our human health as well and safety. I know safety was mentioned earlier, the safe disposal batteries is paramount, and the risk of fires that it poses

[02:09:38] for both our employees and, you know, for residents. So these things directly inform I recommend the strategies, and I'm going to share some of these quotes that represent quotes that capture the community's sentiments. I'm not going to read through all, but what is clear is that residents are looking for services that are convenient, cost-effective, and equitable. And they want to participate in programs that help reduce and recycle more, and site composting, glass pickup, or some of the strategies they identify. But they're also wanting that greater transparency,

[02:10:15] as I mentioned. And I know in kind of the last session you guys just had, council members have brought some attention to different funding mechanisms, such as evaluating a solid waste enterprise fund. And that was a goal that was actually part of the 2021 version of the solid waste management plan. So this plan has to be updated every five years. This is why we're here.

[02:10:37] So I did want to bring attention to that quote on the bottom right there, where we did have some residents express the perceived inequity between single family and multifamily housing waste services, who gets paid, who charges for what, what services do they receive, and have heard some comments about that.

[02:10:56] And so, you know, we will go a little bit deeper, and we'll have the opportunity to hear your direct feedback, but that is something that we are considering. So we also heard from residents that they also truly appreciate and acknowledge the staff that really work hard to support the collection, program implementation, such as rollout of carts as well as outreach as you can see on the bottom left corner there and overall these comments highlight both enthusiasm and for improvement as well as the need for

thoughtful implementation next so we benchmarked Fairfax's draft strategies against surrounding jurisdictions

[02:11:32] and we we heard the importance of that as well regionally working regionally so we looked at the city of Alexandria Fairfax County as well as Arlington County and for my review there were three key areas where they were focusing waste reduction recycling and organics and what we found is that these strategies that the city's neighboring jurisdiction are looking to employ are consistent with some addressing some of the concerns and solutions proposed by the city's very own community and so some of these themes include the desire for finding ways to reduce

[02:12:08] waste, and that could look like container limit policies, evaluating alternative funding mechanisms or maybe fees, and greater benchmarking through regular audits. And consistent with the city's engagement, these jurisdictions are also focusing efforts on glass recycling, multifamily recycling, and all are working towards that strong demand from residents on composting.

[02:12:33] And so these comparisons really help us align in terms of best practices and maintain that regional consistency. Next. So our recommended strategies fall into these five broad categories, effective government operations, education outreach, reduce and reuse, recycling, and organics.

[02:12:52] And within each of these categories, we have identified objectives and actions that reflect the community feedback as well as that regional alignment. So to the fun part here. All right, so today we're looking for council's feedback on a set of waste and recycling strategies that we are evaluating.

[02:13:09] I want to start by saying these are not final recommendations, and your feedback today will be considered as we work towards finalizing the plan. And the goal we want to today is to share them at a high level, explain what they do, and hear your perspectives as we refine next steps.

[02:13:26] But first, on the top left corner there, we're considering evaluating a container limit policy. bulk pickup fees, and alternative funding mechanisms. So these strategies are about making sure that our system is financially sustainable, fair, and aligned with actual service use while also supporting waste reduction.

[02:13:50] And so a part of that might be looking at evaluating, limiting what's currently placed on the curb, consider perhaps fees for services, perhaps it's a bulk pickup service that's quarterly or maybe by appointment, or limiting what might be on the curb. So these are all just different strategies that have been looked at from other communities. Second, we are considering twinning our recycling, the city's recycling bins in public areas, pairing recycling with trash in parks along with sidewalks. And the goal is simple, make recycling just as convenient as disposal in

[02:14:29] public spaces. Third, we are evaluating curbside organics collection to see whether capturing food scraps and other organics could meaningfully reduce disposal and complement existing yard way services. Next, we're evaluating glass recycling options. We heard from council members earlier for that, including, you know, are there different approaches to make it more convenient, a solution that balances costs, market conditions, and the environmental benefit.

[02:15:00] We're also looking at a commercial waste audit to better understand from the businesses community what is being disposed and where the opportunities for diversion are. And building on that, we also seek to evaluate comprehensive commercial and multifamily recycling programs to improve access, consistency, and performance in a sector that generates so much of the waste stream in the city.

[02:15:25] And lastly, oh, sorry, the next one is looking at our salt waste ordinances and regulations to ensure that they reflect current programs, best practices, and enforcement needs. And lastly, we're proposing recycling transparency education campaigns to clearly explain what can be recycled, what happens to materials, and why programs exist to help improve that trust with our residents and improve participation.

[02:15:53] So let me pause there. We wanted to gain some of your feedback on some of these strategies. And again, we heard from the former session you guys talked a lot about on waste, but we would love to hear more. Thank you.

[02:16:09] Well, all right. Council Member Amos. I think everyone already knows I'm going the multifamily route, but I'd be extremely curious on what maybe other jurisdictions do around the country on how they can address this, because it's not just an issue that we're dealing with here.

[02:16:25] But, for example, one of the big things is Americana Drive over in the Braddock District. They're facing these challenges as well. And, you know, we just don't have – my current home in the city is the first place I've ever lived in my life where I could not recycle. And that's been odd for me.

[02:16:41] It was an adjustment in the beginning. Unfortunately, I may have gotten used to it. I'd rather not. So how can we mitigate those circumstances? How can we help incentivize these owners to provide the opportunity for people to be able to do that? Because right now there's just nothing we can do. Or is that an American Disposal Services conversation?

[02:16:58] How can we get that moving forward? I do also want to highlight that some of the popular programs that might be worth considering, or at least models that we could look at, there was actually an interesting story when the pandemic hit. Students from Centerville High School, and I can't remember their names, but two sisters formed the Glass Recycling Network, and they actually drove around and picked up people's glass recycling for them.

[02:17:23] But then you can also look at, for example, our Scout programs. They do a significant amount with e-cycling and with different types of cleanup or even paper shredding events are always extremely popular. So maybe it's taking that type of model that people really like, like a free type of composting or a free type of solid waste event for people to attend, and we could do that through partnerships.

[02:17:44] So that might be worth considering. Thank you. Council Member McQuillan? Sure. So I, looking on this list, I think evaluation of the container limit policy, pickup fee and alternative funding mechanisms definitely is something that I would be interested in learning more about and exploring. Commercial waste audit, can you go into a little more detail on what that entails, please? Sure. So right now, the city has pretty good data on our residential

[02:18:20] collection because we do it ourselves. So we have our tonnage reports for what exactly is being recycled, composted, yard waste, brush, metals, etc. We have little to no information on what is coming out of our commercial waste sector stream. This is information we're required to do as part of our DEQ waste report, but we rely on Fairfax County for their information and their data based on the calculations are funky, and they're hard to estimate. It's like a percentage of the city businesses compared to the total county waste, so it's very inaccurate. It's guesstimating at best, and there's a lot of potential to reduce waste from the commercial sector that we just don't

[02:18:59] know how to tap into because we don't have that baseline metric so a commercial audit could look like it could look like a lot of things but essentially it'd be consultants or city staff going to a mix of businesses a random sample and seeing like what size containers do they have is it adequate space for trash recycling that clearly is not happening even though it's technically required to different issue so finding businesses and potentially buildings that are out of compliance with regulations and seeing how we can get them up to compliance using the data that we don't have. So looking at where the bins are located, is it technically up to code? Are they

[02:19:38] in compliance? If they're not, how do we help them get there? So that's kind of that baseline data that we really don't have, and we don't really have a launching off point without that. Would that also take into consideration the types of waste? I know that certain businesses have certain...

[02:19:54] Absolutely. And that is one of the, we do have funding through a CIP for a commercial waste audit. And that is one of the projects that is, was on the previous presentations, Gantt chart for an out year project potentially. That is one of the projects that is currently paused due to staff capacity. But we are hoping to get that off the ground at some point. Okay. So possibly that might assist with the multifamily that could open up some more options or opportunities for us.

[02:20:21] Absolutely. Okay. So, um, and also going back to council member Amos's comment, um, then recycling transparency and educational campaign might be something that's important. If we have certain residents who don't know how they can recycle in their own homes, um, we don't want that to happen.

[02:20:39] Right. So I think that's a key for us as well. Um, I'd like to see that prioritized and let me just make sure there's nothing else. And the twin recycling bins in public, have we considered, um, doing anything in regards to composting in that way? I know some communities have composting bins with their recycle and their trash at specifically very frequented areas, parks, playgrounds, schools, things like that. Have we considered that as well? Yes and no. We do have challenges with recycling in public areas right now. A lot of it is just trashed because it's so contaminated

[02:21:14] and the bins are, some of the twins are just two black containers that have like the littlest words that say recycle that could and should be improved so a lot of our public space recycling is actually getting trashed so we have that step to take first to better recycling in our public spaces at community events at schools work on that and then introduce composting so it's a couple of steps but it's it's on the wish list of many things excellent thank you so much the thing I would add to that you know and there are different localities that do different things as far as color-coded containers so that it's very obvious what is glass or paper or plastic.

[02:21:53] But we also have to have enclosed containers, especially for composted material, because there are other residents of the city who are small and have four legs and like to feed off of the composted material that is not really compost. It's just food waste.

[02:22:10] So there's all these unintended consequences of these efforts. And so that's the other thing we have to consider is if we do this, What is the thing over here if it's not enclosed to prevent people feasting, residents feasting?

[02:22:27] I mean, a great suggestion you just had is to add, like, twin recycling, like, enclosed containers in public places. So that's, yeah. I'd like to jump in, if I may. Yes, please. In 25 years, our solid waste ordinance has not changed.

[02:22:44] It's obsolete, and it gives us no flexibility to enforce abuse. It is very loose and people can put anything out. And it's very hard for us to tell them that's contractor debris or to tell them that we're not picking that up.

[02:23:02] So to me, almost non-negotiable, we have to update that ordinance. It's over 25 years old and it doesn't give us any authority to determine what we pick up and what we don't.

[02:23:18] I picked up engine blocks. I picked up rolls and rolls of carpet that obviously were from a business. People have told people, hey, dump it in the city. They'll get it. And if I try not to get it and I go to the city attorney, I usually lose because the ordinance doesn't support what I want to do.

[02:23:36] So my vote is for that ordinance. Very wise. Very wise indeed. Councilmember Peterson. So thank you. And to build on that, maybe two things. One, I think a review of these areas and identification of update needs is something that you should do, not just kind of across the board and figure out how to get on the right schedule to do that.

[02:24:02] I'm curious, this gets to the question mark of getting to know your customers. And let me just say the anecdote here to set this up is that I think one of the things that maybe we discovered or made progress on or whatever with the rollout of the trash and recycling bins was a recognition that not all households are created equal.

[02:24:29] and that the fancy term for that is market segmentation and it's really all about understanding your different audiences the different segments of your population and how you will tailor your programs and your policies to address those unique but also overlapping needs and that's obviously a cross-cutting issue when I look into your presentation it looks like you're doing work that relates directly to that through the surveys and so you've got surveys and responses what do

[02:25:01] you not have from those surveys that you would need to go back in each of these areas and go through an update that would tailor things a little bit more to unique customer segments? Have you got what you need already or do you need a little bit more interaction with folks, a little bit more homework to figure out how to tailor make things a little bit better? Well, it's funny you mention that because we are kicking off sometime in this end of the fiscal year into the next fiscal year residential curbside assessment, which will look at all of our residential services and look at ways we can improve them, where the ordinance needs to be updated, what services could be changed or

[02:25:39] optimized, potentially decreased. There's many variables. There's many options. Our solid waste services are beloved by the community, and that's a testament to our residents, a testament to our crew members who are on the back of the trucks picking up trash every day in all sorts of crazy weather conditions. So there is a lot to look at. There's a lot to consider, and part of that assessment will be extensive education and outreach. We did see with the carts that there's a lot of awareness. There's a lot of concern that services are going to get cut because we are in tight financial constraints. And there are a lot of concerns that, you know, our crew members are working so hard, like they also deserve the recognition for what they do on the back of the

[02:26:14] trucks and our operations teams who are driving those big trucks and this kind of crazy snow crete that we have out here. So there is a lot of awareness of potential changes that could be coming down the pipeline and part of that is extensive education and outreach so there's definitely more to do and that assessment will look at those more specifically of what services could and should be reviewed well thank

you so much and I think it's really important information to help us help you identify what to do here if we understand how at some systematic level we're understanding our residents and what their needs are and how that fits in terms of our going

[02:26:54] forward plans. So thanks for doing that. Councilmember Hall. Thank you. I would certainly support the twin recycling bins in the public areas. I do think that we don't often have enough recycling bins around town. I think the Recycling Transparency Educational Campaign is really key.

[02:27:15] I do also love when you send out the statistics on how much cleaner our recycling is of late than it was, let's say, a year ago, because I think that really helps people strive to do what they are trying to do and lets us know that those efforts are being rewarded. With regard to the container limit policy, I think, you know, by and large, I think the people that collect the trash are probably the best ones to let us know when they're seeing things that don't look as they should. And I think that we all have someone on our street or in our neighborhood who is guilty

[02:27:54] of bringing home contractor waste or putting out debris that they did not generate themselves. And I think those are areas that we really need to try to key in on. And in Mr. Summers' point, I do think that looking at our ordinance and looking at those guidelines and giving the ability to be able to inquire further about some of those areas is really key, because I do think that that ends up being a very expensive way of utilizing our services in a way that they're not really intended for. I know I think it's Montgomery County and I think some of the other areas do a

[02:28:33] bulk pickup fee. I'm not sure that I'm in favor of it, but I do think it is worth understanding what that might look like and understanding what the costs might be behind it. Because sometimes I think that educating our residents, not by fear of a new fee or a new, you know, a reduction in service, but I think by educating them on this is how much this costs, and if you do it this way instead, it will reduce our costs or reduce our need to clean out the machines again because they were not properly recycled and instead there was contamination. I think just that education

[02:29:12] component is really, really helpful for people. I do think that the, you know, we were big on composting early on, but depending upon the time of year, I think we tend to do it a little bit more, it would be nice to have that curbside. But I do think that, like Mayor said, sometimes might have its own challenges with other residents in the city. And same thing with glass recycling.

[02:29:39] I mean, I think that's kind of hit or miss. But for me, maybe those are areas in which we could do every other week or once a month, as opposed to doing it consistently every week. I don't know what that involves. But I know my sister, they're here in Southern California, where I am now, And they have a bag in their freezer and all of their food waste gets scraped into that bag.

[02:30:02] And then when that bag gets full, they put it out with whatever trash bin they're supposed to do. And so I think it's, again, it's just changing behavior and educating people and trying to give them some ideas on how they could maybe do things better. With regard to the commercial waste audit, I know we don't provide that service for our commercial businesses.

[02:30:25] So is the hope that that would be something that would just help educate them better and help them make sure that they are having the appropriate sized bins? Can you maybe comment on that one a little bit more for me in case I missed it? Absolutely. So the commercial waste audit would look at a myriad of things, one of which is what is going into these waste streams.

[02:30:45] The waste of a restaurant is very different from the waste of a yoga studio. So there's very different concepts of what is going into a dumpster. Like the strip malls that have communal dumpsters, standalone businesses have sometimes just the 64-gallon carts that get picked up. So there's a lot of variables, and the commercial waste audit would look at all of those variables and see, like, what businesses are out of compliance, maybe which ones are feeding our furry friends by accident, where can we help them get up to compliance if they're not recycling, and also where can they reduce waste from the source.

[02:31:17] So restaurants have a big opportunity with food waste and composting, potentially. Some restaurants, I know, do great things with all their scraps and, like, putting that into stocks and different things, but could it be done elsewhere? Grocery stores have a lot of food waste that are still in packaging. Is there an opportunity to get that, you know, not even compost it, but reuse that if it's still edible?

[02:31:36] Maybe it's a little bit ugly, but the apple is still good and tasty, and can it be reused elsewhere? So there's a lot of opportunity with the commercial sector, and the Waste Audit would kind of look at that. um that is a program that is um currently on the shelf so we could definitely relook at the scope of it and kind of incorporate more of these principles um that we have been hearing feedback from the community and one of which food waste has come up quite a bit especially with the amount of food waste that is edible that is getting put into the trash um this is good food that could be going to anybody for use um and a big opportunity we have is with schools hearing feedbacks from like doing school food pantries of if a kid didn't eat their bag of chips could that bag of chips go

[02:32:14] into a communal food bank at the schools for the children who need it. So there's a lot of opportunities there. The commercial waste audit, again, is shelved right now, but we can relook at that scope and better incorporate some of these principles as well, as well as get the data that we need for what's going to waste, where can we reduce waste, are the containers up to compliance, maybe help our furry friends not get fed from the dumpsters and go back into the woods, all that good stuff. Thank you. That's really helpful. And I would strongly agree that there's a lot of waste at schools and other places where, you know, you get a bag of chips or you get something that you just don't want, but it kind of comes with your meal and then it ends up

[02:32:51] getting tossed. I think that's a really, really good area to be considering. The only other thing I will say is the Comprehensive Commercial and Multifamily Recycling Program. Is it standard or typical that multifamily places just don't do recycling? Is that what you're finding or is that not a requirement from their, uh, service providers? So I can't speak to every single commercial or multifamily building. I can only speak to those I have, uh, interacted with personally or residents who have talked to me about this. Um, a lot of places will have L air quote recycling. It's all going into the same dumpster and all getting picked up by the same

[02:33:31] place. And it's all going to the transfer station to get trashed. Um, so they have recycling provided, but it's actually getting wasted. And that's where a lot of this misconception about is my recycling getting recycled come from because residents are doing their best and business owners and visitors in the city are trying to recycle but it ultimately ends up going into the trash and it's disheartening so I can say for absolute certainty that our curbside recycling gets recycled but that commercial sector is unknown of who's picking it up and where it's going so that's hard to enforce because that's the data we don't have I just wanted to add so our current

[02:34:06] ordinance does require commercial and multifamily businesses to recycle. However, one of the things we don't do, we don't have a commercial program where we audit and enforce that. And because we don't have staff capacity, that's not happening. And that's why we requested funding to do this so we could audit to see who's in compliance, who's not, how can we get them up to code etc but this is a gap right now um we we don't really have the data to know what's going on which is probably what's really important to get this baseline data so we can take steps forward

[02:34:43] and part of many businesses um i spoke to a handful of businesses one-on-one with them about their solid waste needs and a few of them have openly said that they don't recycle anymore because they got went right to the trash and that they were paying for two services that they weren't getting. Councilmember Hardy-Chan. Oh, sorry. I'm sorry. I just had one more thing to say. Thank you. We mentioned, I think I used the phrase before, bang for your buck when we were talking with the ESC. And I just want to make it clear because I think it also applies here.

[02:35:15] Bang for your buck, when I said that and when I'm saying it now, doesn't necessarily mean best way to spend our dollars. That's going to give us the most money back. But quite honestly, with some of the things that you're describing here, bang for our buck might mean going door to door to these commercial businesses and giving education, which then might reduce waste and might provide other opportunities for education.

[02:35:37] So it's not just about a money thing or a get money back situation. I think it's about what it is that we can do or staff can do in certain ways that really produces the best outcome possible for what we have to work with. So I know you, Melissa, have been going door to door to do a lot of things with the trash and recycling parts, and I know you're very much boots on the ground in general. So this is just another example, I think, of what you're already doing and how it can produce results that are probably far beyond what we could calculate at this point. So thank you.

[02:36:11] Okay, thank you, Council Member Hall. Council Member Hardy Chandler. So I really appreciate the comment by our public works director, because I think just like we talked about earlier, sequence matters. So a lot of these things make sense, but some are building blocks for other things.

[02:36:30] So I think what really sets the stage for a subsequent thing to be successful is a good way to go be, because these don't carry all the same weight or the same impact for future programs, if that makes any kind of sense.

[02:36:47] So I do think the ordinance, in order to enforce anything that you implement, if you don't have the teeth to actually have that happen, it's just paperwork, right? Or it's just aspirational, I'll put it that way.

[02:37:03] So I do think sequencing matters. I also think synergy matters because you were taking notes as the prior group was presenting and any opportunity to merge those efforts, I think will result in more efficiency and also a sort of, you know, sort of a collective impact of those effects.

[02:37:27] So where there's opportunity to bring those things together and rather than respond to these individually I also think that going at a little bit of a higher level a community I loved when you talked about trust as a social worker right I love when you talked about trust because I think that some of this can be more strongly embraced and more impactful when it's when it starts with community effort right so one of these big blocks covering everything should be THE COMMUNITY FOCUS AND GENERATING SOME OF THAT.

[02:38:05] AND I'M THINKING ABOUT SOME OF OUR CIVIC GROUPS. I'M THINKING ABOUT OUR CITY GOVERNMENT CIVIC ACADEMY SORT OF WORKSHOPPING SOME OF THESE INITIATIVES AND INCENTIVIZING THOSE IDEAS.

[02:38:21] AND WHEN WE TALK ABOUT BEHAVIOR, IN ADDITION TO THE INFORMATION, WHAT REALLY IMPACTS A LOT OF BEHAVIOR IS PEER PRESSURE, QUITE FRANKLY. and things coming from our fellow or sister residents as opposed to just, you know, from the city you should do this.

[02:38:40] When you have your civic association making that a focus area for the year that you're a member of and that you identify with, that has a stronger behavioral impact for change sometimes than, you know, the newsletter, let's say. Not to eliminate those things, but I think you have a very persuasive force within groups that exist within.

[02:39:03] And I'm just imagining all of the kind of projects and initiatives that can be community-driven versus information, you know, coming from the outside. If they can be the generators of that innovation and that information for their neighbors, for their scout troop or whatever it is, I think those are the things that really have a longer-term impact here.

[02:39:28] So I just want to emphasize that community-driven element that I think is kind of the backbone of a lot of these initiatives. And I'll just add to that, you know, the success of the Invasives program, both awareness, training, and people feeling like they could make an impact, it's the same model.

[02:39:46] Recycle, repurpose, reuse. It's just not piercing people's conscience. I want my dog. There's entire households, you know, furniture, and we have a donation center that's just opened. People are not thinking when they see stuff like that that people are not being environmentally responsible.

[02:40:04] So if we're going to talk about environmental sustainability, then we need to apply that to this, back to Council Member Hardy. There has to be synergy, there has to be messaging, and a community has to see you can't just be environmentally focused on invasives, but you don't care what's on the curb in your neighborhood that is not being responsibly recycled, repurposed, and reused appropriately.

[02:40:29] So this has to kind of be a cultural thing that comes to our city. And so we can call that education, but I don't even think it's just education. I think communities, neighborhoods, HOAs, whatever, have to embrace that they're committed to this. This has to be something environmental sustainability has to apply to everything.

[02:40:48] It is a lens that applies to everything, not just this or that, but everything. Council Member Amos. And to quickly follow up on Council Member Hall's question and the response, something that we do need to keep in mind that I don't want to get overlooked is that not all multifamily housing is equal.

[02:41:06] As a developer, pretty much recycling is kind of a standard condition now for newer developments. It was not back in 1955 when Layton Hall was developed and some of our older, naturally occurring affordable housing stock. And they weren't developed with ever having recycling put in.

[02:41:24] So someone go to Layton and tell me where you're going to put a massive recycling bin if you decide to do it communally like how we currently do our trash. Are you going to take away some of the parking? Layton Hall is one of the few areas in the city I would say does not have enough parking. So good luck with that.

[02:41:40] So I want to make sure that we have realistic conversations if we're going to go out to these folks and tell them, hey, you need to make this work without actually providing a guideline or provide any advice on how we can actually get it done. Council Member McQuillan.

[02:41:57] I agree with everything that Council Member Hardy Chandler stated in sequence of events, right? So education is huge. We need that. I think something else that would be a huge tool in the updating the solid waste ordinance and regulations portion and enforcement portion is when you educate our community, they look out for each other.

[02:42:18] So you can walk on my street, but we're going to let you know that, hey, did you know the Goodwill down the street is accepting furniture, used furniture, and you can donate it there. So having those conversations, making sure that the residents all know what's going on and where they can go, that's a huge part of it is word of mouth and making sure that everyone understands what the ordinance is, what happens when we enforce it, how are we going to enforce it.

[02:42:46] That all needs to be very, very clear, and this goes back to Council Member Amos and his statement about if we are going to make changes to recycling in multifamily program, you know, project areas, we need to ensure that they understand exactly how they can do that, where they can put their recyclables, what is recycling. We're doing a great job of sending out those alerts of, you know, this, not that. I love those updates. I think they, especially since they're so timely, we talk about Christmas lights, things that during that season that really affect people. If we could do that and continue that kind of communication and outreach in regards to all of this any whichever way we're going to go I think that's

[02:43:25] key is warning people like like you had already said people are aware that some changes might be taking place to our waste collection process we're discussing it now making this very very vocal and visual for people to recognize and understand and then to have some input as well so we make sure that we don't roll something out and then later realize that it's affecting one part of the city a little differently than we expected thank you council member bates so i'd say that my top three out of these i believe that they're all worth considering at some point but my top

[02:44:03] three would be uh that upper left box value container limit policy bulk pickup fee alternative funding mechanisms and then the twin recycling bins that's something that is on my mind quite frequently, you know, there's a trash can, but where is the recycling bin? And I think that the city already does a better job of taking care of that, providing recycling bin where there is a trash can than other places I've seen. But, you know, we'd certainly like to see us get to a point where, you know, wherever there's a trash can, there is a recycling bin. And then given what we

[02:44:38] heard from our public works director, last but not least, certainly updating the solid waste ordinance and regulations and that to uh council member hardy chandler's excellent point earlier really uh could have implications for some of these other items so maybe doing that first and then that might have implications for commercial waste um and you know glass recycling for that matter curbside organics collection that could have implications for some of these other potential

[02:45:12] strategies. But again, I think that all of these are worth considering going forward at some point over the long term. Thank you. So is that the feedback you were looking for at this point? Absolutely. It was amazing. Thank you. We got so many great ideas, especially the fact that it's not just about imposing fees or fines or scaring folks. What are the solutions, education? What are the community projects that we

can do to bring folks in together, whether it's a buy-nothing facebook right like you guys talked about goodwill and other ways to bring the community together

[02:45:50] this was the best feedback so thank you thank you anything else good okay well thank you so much go forth and keep doing great solid waste management thank you ms clark our next item is a discussion on revising the fee for the use of the public city-owned electric vehicle charging stations. I'll recognize Stephanie Kupka, sustainability program manager, for the

[02:46:28] presentation. All right, back again. Okay. All right, so the purpose of this work session is to discuss updating the fee structure for our publicly owned EV charging stations. Oh, I clicked off of this. Try this again. Okay. So the goal of updating the fee structure is to ensure that the program remains fiscally

[02:47:03] sustainable while continuing to support EV adoption and the city's climate goals. So the use of electric vehicles is steadily rising. We want to make sure that we expand EV infrastructure to keep up with that demand and then also encourage the community to transition to using electric vehicles because of all the environmental benefits. Driving an EV reduces greenhouse gas emissions and reduces air pollution. And within the city, transportation is actually one of the leading causes of noise

[02:47:38] pollution and air pollution. The chart on the right shows our greenhouse gas inventory. The area in blue are the emissions from transportation. So they make up more than half of the city's emissions. So this is an area where we really need to focus to reduce those emissions associated with transportation and encouraging EVs and having EV infrastructure helps us reach that goal.

[02:48:05] Another benefit of having EV chargers is they strengthen economic vitality. So having charging stations in community areas, people come there and will park to charge their cars and while it's charging, they will shop and dine in that area. So right now the city owns four public charging stations. There's two at City Hall and two at Old Town Hall. So right now the current rate structure which was directed by the City Council is the first three hours are free and then after that

[02:48:44] it's 43 cents per kilowatt after. So in fiscal year 25 we saw strong demand and consistent use for the charging stations with an average of 2.5 hours of charging. So because of the new rate, it used to be completely free, if you guys recall, and then it was changed to this. So because the first three hours were free, we saw that the average charging reduced significantly, which helped. However, the revenue wasn't as high as we thought. So in fiscal year 25, there were over

[02:49:22] 5,000 charging sessions, delivering more than 70,000 kilowatt hours of electricity. And these charging sessions help avoid approximately 62 tons of embodied carbon. So that's equivalent of 13 houses of electricity use in a year.

[02:49:41] So this is a significant impact. So even with four charging stations, we're already seeing the results of this program. So to go back to operating costs, so the total operating costs were \$11,000, and this is mainly due to electricity usage.

[02:50:00] And then we saw revenue generated was about \$2,000. So overall, the program is well used and is popular with residents. However, recovery is only about 20%, but the goal was to have a cost-neutral program.

[02:50:16] So we do have some challenges with the EV charging stations. There's a need to look at how we can improve availability for the charging stations.

[02:50:31] We do get complaints from residents that they're unable to use the chargers because someone is always parked there and is constantly being used. We did evaluate to see how many users were using it more than four hours, and there is a small percentage. However, they are visible, so we do see instances of people charging overnight or leaving their car there all day.

[02:50:53] So there is a challenge there. Also, as we mentioned earlier, operational costs exceed revenue, so there is a need for predictable funding, so that way we can make sure that we have enough funding to operate those charging stations, and maybe even capture a little bit more to help with expanding EB chargers in the future.

[02:51:15] With equity, we did get some claims from residents that, about the free charging, they have, those who have reached out to us have stressed that those who use the EV chargers should pay for them.

[02:51:30] So those who use it should pay for it. So those, that's overall some of the challenges that we currently face with the charging stations. So we did some research to see how other jurisdictions and private companies handle EV charging rates.

[02:51:48] So what we saw was that most charging stations charge a per kilowatt hour charge plus a dwell or move fee. So what a dwell fee is, is after the car is fully charged, if they leave it parked there, occupying that space, they'll be charged a certain dollar amount per hour.

[02:52:10] And so what we found in our research is the dwell fee ranged from \$2 to \$3 per hour after the charge was complete. And then the charging fee structure per kilowatt hour ranged from \$0.17 per kilowatt hour, which is about the rate of electricity, to \$0.55 per kilowatt hour at some of the privately owned stations.

[02:52:37] So staff is proposing a two-part fee. We're proposing a \$0.22 per kilowatt hour rate for the electricity they use, and then a dwell fee of \$3 per hour that would be capped at \$25 per session, which is consistent with the maximum civil penalty allowed under Virginia law.

[02:53:01] So the max dwell fee that we're allowed to is \$25. And then we also want to put more strict parking limits for the EV charging station. So we have reached out to parking enforcement, and they have agreed to help us with this if and when this is adopted.

[02:53:20] So we recommend a four-hour maximum at all locations, with the exception of Old Town Hall, which has an existing parking limit of two hours during 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. on weekdays. So we want to make sure that we're abiding by the existing parking rules there.

[02:53:41] So the annual EV charger program costs are estimated to be at approximately \$14,000 per year moving forward. So this is what we predict for next year. So this includes the electricity costs.

[02:53:58] So electricity costs we estimate to be about \$10,000. There is a subscription fee, which is \$250 per charger. And then we expect we might have some maintenance costs in the future. We haven't yet, but we have heard from other jurisdictions that you might need to do an upgrade on the cables or whatnot.

[02:54:18] So we want to make sure we have enough funding for any maintenance costs in the future. With the proposed rate of \$0.22 per kilowatt hour, plus any dwelling fees, we predict that we would bring in revenue of \$14,000 or more.

[02:54:36] So I'm assuming the dwell fees would be low, assuming that parking enforcement can help keep it four hours or less. So hopefully there won't be too many dwell fees, but that will be there to help

capture when parking enforcement can't always be there. So what does this cost a typical driver?

[02:54:58] So I wanted to kind of give you an example so you know what the rate would be. So for a Nissan LEAF, assuming they max it out and charge for four hours, and the energy delivered for that would be about 26 kilowatt hours, which would give them 105 miles of range.

[02:55:18] And I thought I'd updated this. Sorry, this is a typo here. But at \$0.22 per kilowatt hour, that would come out to \$5.72. So, this is kind of a very good charge, and they're able to get around town with it.

[02:55:34] And the cost for this is much lower than what it would cost for a gas-powered vehicle. So, it's very well-priced. So, for next steps, if council wants us to move forward with this, we will adopt the new pricing as part of the city budget's rates and levies.

[02:55:57] If data gets approved in the budget, then we would notify the public of the new pricing in May and June. And then July 1, we then impose the new pricing at the four public EV charging stations and then put up all new signage and then coordinate with parking enforcement to enforce the new rules.

[02:56:19] And then moving forward, we'll continue to monitor usage and revenue on an annual basis. And then if electricity prices go up or usage change, we'll then propose new rate fees as part of the rates and levies in the annual city budget.

[02:56:38] So that concludes my presentation. Which is similar to what we do with the cemetery. You know, the cemetery is supposed to be similarly cost-revenue neutral. So Jamie Lindley, who runs the cemetery every year, looks at what it costs us for burials and such, what the other cemeteries are charging.

[02:56:57] she updates the rates and levies and we would be kind of handling this in the same manner that makes sense councilmember Amos no thank you for the presentation this was great I had two questions one of them you kind of partially answered already because I was curious about what would happen if we just did the dwell time fee without the charging fee what the discrepancy would be in the budget between revenues and costs you kind of got into that that you You expect the dwell fees to be lower because of increased parking enforcement.

[02:57:30] So I appreciate that. But maybe having those numbers would be helpful just for calculation. I'm curious about it. Because theoretically, and maybe I shouldn't be thinking about it along the same terms of how I think about the Q bus system. Are you concerned at all that increasing this fee or putting in this fee would deter folks from using the public EV charging?

[02:57:54] Well, I guess to answer your first question, it's hard to predict future use. We tried that before and we were off. So it's hard to predict. So if enforcement is like on top of it and, you know, dwell fees could be nothing, you know, or, you know, maybe lots of people are abusing it and dwell fees, we'd have a lot of revenue.

[02:58:16] So it's kind of hard to predict. So I don't think I could come up with a number per se. But for the rate, if I go back to one of the previous slides, if we compare what other jurisdictions do, we'd be below the rate for Fairfax County, just \$0.02 above what Falls Church does.

[02:58:44] Loudon is a different structure, but then definitely cheaper than any privately owned. So we're at a very reasonable rate compared to other charging stations because we want it to just be cost neutral where others are trying to make more revenue.

[02:59:01] Greatly appreciate that. And then just real quick, the revenue slide, I think, is it right after this one or right before this one? This one. So let's say if we did assume that the dwelling fees were flat, with that rate, do you still anticipate revenue equaling out to costs or being a little higher?

[02:59:20] So with the \$14,000, I didn't, I assumed dwell fees was zero, but because I just, it's hard to predict because I wanted to put a number on that but I just don't know so I think maybe after a year I could report back to say dwell fees was this and then we could adjust that but it's just I think you did the right thing so I appreciate that that you assumed it was zero thank you councilmember Hardy Chandler thank you for this information I absolutely support your proposal it sounds like it's fair the idea of becoming cost neutral is good there's a

[02:59:59] huge difference between 11,000 and 2,000. So I think raising that is really important. I think the other thing is hopefully the deterrence of abuse of those spaces so that the real equity question is that more drivers can have access to those charging stations. My only question was about not including a 15-minute grace period like some of the regional jurisdictions have.

[03:00:26] Was there consideration for that? Yeah, we could add that for sure. But in the deliberations for this proposal, was there a reason that that was not considered? I think the main was just to make it very clear for parking enforcement.

[03:00:45] So I guess we would then have to say the limit is really four hours and 15 minutes. So just to make it more cut and dry for parking enforcement. But I guess I could just provide that guidance that it would be four hours and 15 minutes to time. I don't have a preference either way.

[03:01:02] I just, you know, was curious if that had a rationale behind it or if there was information from other jurisdictions that was helpful or problematic. You know, who knows? So I don't have a strong preference. I'm not certainly requesting a change, but was just curious about that.

[03:01:20] And, yeah, I just really support this very strongly. I think it does incentivize electric vehicles, but also recognizes that these cost-neutral kinds of programs are really beneficial across the board.

[03:01:40] So thank you. Council Member McQuillan? Thank you. Will this also be at the EV chargers at the school? No. So the city doesn't operate those. Okay, good. Okay, good. And then I don't have an electric vehicle, so is four hours enough to fill an empty vehicle, like a four-door sedan, or about how long does it usually take to...

[03:02:07] Yeah, so if you wanted to fill it up all the way, depending on the type of vehicle, it could take six to 11 plus hours. It depends on the battery size. So like a Tesla battery has a bigger capacity and a bigger range, so those take longer to charge.

[03:02:24] The Nissan Leafs that have a smaller range, smaller battery, charge faster. So they could charge in about six hours. But with the example I gave with the Nissan Leaf, they would have – the four hours would give them 105-mile range. So that's pretty significant.

[03:02:40] Right, and four hours for a Tesla, it wouldn't fill the battery up, but it would give them plenty of power to go 100 miles or so. I mean, a Tesla fully charged can go 200, 300 miles. Yeah, I just was curious as to how much. So I think that was it.

[03:02:57] Thank you. Council Member Hall. Thank you. I, too, am on board for increasing the fees and charging for it. I think that we will probably have increased maintenance costs moving forward and also

need to consider that we'll probably need to replace the charging stations at some point.

[03:03:19] Sorry, I'm trying to look at the slide and just had another question. But I think Council Member Hardy Chandler's point about the 15-minute grace period is considerate. And I also think that it is probably helpful for people. But I also think that if you're, you know, feeding a meter somewhere or doing whatever you normally do, if you're at, you know, another place, you don't tend to get that grace period.

[03:03:45] You know, I don't think we're going to have anyone standing there waiting and waiting and ticking down the minutes to give a ticket. But I think to me that if we just call it when it's done, that's an easier approach and doesn't put a lot of ambiguity into things. So thank you for this information and taking the time to review it thoroughly.

[03:04:04] Council Member Peterson. I agree. This seems like a very solid analysis. From your standpoint, is there anything soft here in the analysis that we ought to know about or be concerned about that might not work out as expected?

[03:04:23] No concerns on our end. Based on our research with other jurisdictions, this rate would be on the lower end of things, And other jurisdictions are seeing high usage of their EV chargers, so I don't see any negative impacts of it. And since they've been so popular and heavily used, I think a small fee would be fine.

[03:04:44] Yeah. So you benchmarked this pretty hard against other jurisdictions, and I think that reduces the uncertainty around this. And I think that was a great thing to do. I mean, one thing I would just say is I think something that you're addressing here that has to be addressed that hurts EV charging station programs is the hogging business.

[03:05:05] If people think, you know, they're just going to run into somebody camped out there, it really is a big turnoff and makes them reconsider. So thank you so much for addressing that in a reasonable and effective way here. And I'm 100% supportive of this. Council Member Bates.

[03:05:22] I absolutely support the fee structure as proposed by staff. All right, that looks like it's a wrap. Thank you so much for that presentation. Thank you. Ms. Clark? Our next item is an update on FY26 second quarter financial review.

[03:05:45] I'll recognize J.C. Martinez, Chief Financial Officer, for the presentation. Good evening, Mayor, Council. I'm actually going to recognize Gwen Riddle, the budget director, for the presentation as soon as I bring it up.

[03:06:04] Good evening. So wait until J.C. pulls it up. I'm here tonight to present the city's second quarter financial review for fiscal year 2026. This quarterly review process is designed to update and inform city council on the city's financial position and to identify and recommend funding priorities for council's consideration.

[03:06:29] Budget reviews are presented to council on a quarterly basis. The following presentation provides an overview and an update for the FY26 forecast based on information available as of January 14th. So this slide shows our reviews and financial steps throughout the fiscal year.

[03:06:49] You should be, we review it every time, so hopefully you've seen it before. The first three items are X out. The first two were completed in the fall with the first quarter financial review in October.

[03:07:05] And then December 9th, the FY25 financial results were presented. We did not need the fall supplemental, so that did not happen on December 9th. Obviously, this was updated before the snow, so it should have been presented January 27th.

[03:07:24] And then we'll be back to you in April on the 28th for our third quarter review. The following week will be the adoption of our 27 budget, along with our rates and levies. And then in June, we'll be coming back for any spring supplemental appropriations, as well as grant accounting appropriations.

[03:07:44] And then July 1 starts the next year. So at this time, we're projecting a positive variance of approximately \$2.7 million for the fiscal year. Revenues are about 2% or \$4 million favorable to budget.

[03:08:00] The main drivers are increases in the real estate assessments, accounting for \$2.8 million. an additional \$1 million forecasted for state school aid, and approximately \$200,000 additional ambulance transport fees. The primary driver for the 7% or \$1.4 million increase in expenses is due to updated forecasts for the non-educational city-county contracts to better reflect project expenses as well as a slight increase in the transfer to the other funds from an additional tax received due to appreciation and an increase in disabled veteran support.

[03:08:39] And I'll go through all those in a little bit more detail later. So the following slides provide an overview of market activity during the last calendar year and the remainder of FY26. With the Federal Reserve actions during 2025, mortgage rates have also moved lower.

[03:09:01] Next page. Average sales price. Now we look at activity within the city's housing market last year. The number of sales at the end of December was slightly higher than the year prior, and the average sale price increased 3.95% year-over-year, so \$795,000 for 2025 compared to \$765,000 for 2024.

[03:09:30] The spike shown in June of 2025 can be attributed to the sales of newly constructed townhomes at Norfax and the Overlook. This slide is a sneak peek of appreciation in the housing assessed value. Average assessed values are shown for each housing type and include housing units completed during 2025.

[03:09:55] Okay. So 1.3% overall increase is forecasted for commercial and multifamily. Of that, \$64.2 million in new construction for development and redevelopment project is forecasted to be added to the tax base for the calendar year 2026.

[03:10:14] This is slightly under \$700,000 in annual real estate tax revenue. The picture is of Brightview and Norfax, and that will come online during the calendar year. So we're anticipating that increased revenue in FY26 and 27.

[03:10:34] This chart provides greater detail of the revenue numbers I spoke about earlier. At the time of this report, average real estate assessments are increasing approximately 3.5% across all property types.

[03:10:50] With updated billing practices, the ambulance transport fees in the city is seeing a slight increase in revenue in that area. Also, we have refined and updated the state school aid, which is made up of both state sales tax and basic school aid.

[03:11:08] So working with Leslie Ashman, the director of human services, we received updated information from the county on many of the human services and district court expenses. And after analyzing the past expenditure trends, we have realigned the FY26 forecast to better reflect the true cost of these programs.

[03:11:27] The highest dollar increases came from the juvenile and domestic relations support, as well as the court services and custody programs, offset by decreases in health services and the community service board. In addition, the contract with the county for emergency 911 dispatch calls and non-emergency calls for the fire department has also been increased based on current spend rates.

[03:11:53] The small increase in transfers is due to the increase in assessed values providing additional tax revenue for the prospective funds. Since the budget was created last year, the city has seen about a 33% increase in applications for disabled veteran exemptions. However, this increase is also offset by a lower-than-expected tax relief for senior and disabled.

[03:12:16] Next slide. In summary, the projected positive variance is \$2.7 million for FY26. One thing to note is that the city has met the first and second quarter position vacancy targets, about \$750,000 each per quarter, and is on target to meet this goal for the fiscal year, which was one of the requests during the budget exercise last year to balance the budget.

[03:12:46] And I've spoken about the increase in the real estate and the update to the non-educational contracts. When we look at the five-year projection, there are a few items to note. These are high-level preliminary numbers and are being refined for the FY27 proposed budget.

[03:13:04] This projection has no anticipated changes in rates or levies, and any increases in revenue is purely due to forecasted appreciation. revenues are conservatively projected at about two percent yearly increase the school's tuition contract is projected with a five percent increase beginning in fy 27 and a moderate inflation increase in other areas we will continue to monitor and adjust as needed as a reminder this forecast considers the change in moving maintenance projects from the cip to the operating budget it's about 6.8 million which we'll talk about in more detail when the city manager presents the

[03:13:43] budget at the end of the month. Next. So to review, we ended FY25 with a 17.7% or \$33 million of unassigned fund balance. We are currently estimating a reduction in fund balance of about 3.7 million or 2% to be set aside for an anticipated obligation. This brings the balance to 15.7% or 29.3 million. This is still 7% or 1.3 million over the policy of 15%. The funding of the budget stabilization fund gives the city availability to cover unexpected overages in

[03:14:22] certain areas. There was an increase to the fund balance in the budget stabilization fund in FY25, bringing the balance to 7.9 or 4.2 of the overall fund balance. The CIP project summary is a high level look at currently appropriated CIP projects. A detailed listing of projects can be found in the proposed CIP on the city's budget website and will be updated for inclusion for the full proposed budget document later this month. Staff will continue to monitor the non-educational accounting

[03:15:00] contracts to be aligned for the FY27 budget. There will be strategic thought behind the use of any estimated positive variances with one-time purchases or the increase of the city's unassigned fund balance. The FY27 proposed budget will be presented to the city council on February 24th.

[03:15:17] Throughout March and April there will be a number of work sessions for council to work through the budget and public hearings for residents to provide comments we'll be back on april 28th to provide an update to the fiscal 26 financial forecast for the third quarter and this is just a reminder again of our fiscal plan for the rest of the fiscal year so any questions are there questions on the budget update anyone anyone wow you guys just knocked it oh council member hall questions i just wanted yeah i just wanted to say thank you i think this is a really really

[03:15:56] good presentation. I, you know, we, we did have some one-on-ones to discuss this a little bit earlier. So many of my questions were answered there. But just understanding why there's an overage and knowing that we're on target with regard to the vacancy rates and that we're just continuing to keep an eye on everything is really good. The fact that the appreciation and the real estate has gone up, I think is really helpful, especially at a time like this. I just want to clarify the one part about the, sorry, trying to get the slide on my end. On page seven,

[03:16:34] the anticipation of the new construction for development in North Fox, if I'm understanding that correctly, you're expecting an additional \$700,000 in annual tax revenue. Is that on the entire complex itself or just what's expected to be sold in the coming year? I think that is for the nursing home area, the assisted living, not for the individual townhouses. Those have already been sold. Okay. Yeah. They're part of our base. Okay. It just seems really low for, and maybe I'm

[03:17:12] just not understanding what you're saying exactly, but if a new building of 64.2 million is coming online, that only generates an additional 700,000 in revenue compared to what it was valued at previously is that what I'm understanding you're saying let me get some additional details from our real estate director and we'll have them sent out to you just so I don't want to misspeak of what she has presented totally understand totally understand um and I do appreciate the specific breakdowns and where the additional revenue and funding has come from

[03:17:49] so um I look forward to our next quarter and obviously our budget conversations as we go forth. So thank you. Okay. Thank you. Anything else? Nope. It looks like you guys did a fantastic job on this. Very clear. So thank you. Ms. Clark. Our last item is future meeting topics. I'll recognize Dan Alexander, city manager, for the discussion. Good evening, Mayor and Council.

[03:18:20] To keep this somewhat simple, I've taken my stapled pages and laid them next to each other. So it might be helpful for you side by side to look at this. We recognize that based on our storm and our schedule that we created a fairly compressed agenda for the 10th get some feedback from most of you about it And we have suggestions understanding that we got a diverse You know set of opinions around this. So I think in summary as you look at these two sheets I'll do it just from the standpoint of the

[03:18:58] what was currently scheduled on the 10th on consent alone we had a through I we've reduced that to a through F so just again from a broad stroke perspective that's where we are the public hearing on the urban form master plan would stay on um and then as it relates to the actual work session we've taken a through E and reduced it to a and B and so I think overall you see a pretty you know significant reduction um in the agenda understanding that when we get to the meeting on

[03:19:32] the 17th some of these items we've covered with you before in terms of presentations the way we would function on the 17th is all these would be open for you to discuss each of these items that we have on here whether we've presented them or not so um you know that's that's the way this is is you know pretty much laid out from a broad perspective you know we've had some conversations again on meetings. I think we've said in passing that we're taking a whole look at our agenda process and finding ways to get you information sooner and to create a plan around when we start

[03:20:12] the agenda, when we have deadlines, and when we get you information. We've also talked about consent from time to time and how we manage that. I think if we get you information sooner, When we are at the portion of our meetings, when we talk about future items, you're probably going to be better informed to ask questions at that time about what goes on where and how we discuss these things.

[03:20:37] And so, you know, we had a conversation earlier today about consent and reframing that to allow potentially for council members to ask questions up front on consent. So in some jurisdictions, what will happen when you introduce consent That is the question will generally get asked, are there any questions on consent?

[03:20:57] And that's an opportunity, even if you don't want to pull something, to ask some of those questions. Now, after that, if you want to deal with the individual items and have a discussion on that, you can go move forward and at that point pull individual items after that process.

[03:21:14] We think that will probably help to a certain degree, too. If it's simply a question that needs to be asked, staff can come up and deal with that question at the time. So additional food for thought process-wise in terms of how we look at that, trying to create as much efficiency, get you information early on, and balance these agendas the best way we can.

[03:21:35] So we'll take any feedback. I think this is a good structure in terms of discussion for you, and happy to take any feedback or go in a different direction. Thank you, Mayor. Councilmember Hardy-Chandler? I suppose my only concern is making sure that those questions are contained and it doesn't become a de facto work session sure so just really recognizing structure around that absolutely other questions on this council member Peterson thanks first off for doing this because I think

[03:22:14] it's we were looking at a kind of a long agenda there when we got started on consent what's the difference between a consent item and a regular discussion item and I ask that because there are two elements of it. The first is whether the item is read and and not just read but explained so somebody can say here's what this is so we and others who are listening in will have the benefit

[03:22:48] of that and so that's one element of that and the second is the element of questions and when you're doing a regular discussion thing that you certainly it's not uncommon to accommodate a number of questions and i don't know how that approach actually works here i'm well let me just let you respond to that rather than guessing how that might i think that you know i'm not going to use the analogy of you'll know when you see it as far as consent i don't think you know that that's accurate but it is to a certain degree um there's certain things that we typically will put on here

[03:23:25] like the initial public hearing thing that's something that we have done with the understanding that we're bringing that back to to the council at some point i i'd like to think too that still being efficient that as we look at the future's discussion and I know it's often late when we do that that that's an opportunity for us to say yeah probably not you know let's let's think about you know whether we can place that in a different spot again if we're getting some of this information to us early meaning we have time to look at it we're getting it to you a little bit earlier then you have time to digest it better ask the ask informed questions even a week or so

[03:24:03] ahead of time. Under the best case scenario, I'm not going to set the standard now, but if we could get you information more than a week ahead of time, then in essence you'll have information way ahead of the next meeting. So we might be able to ask better questions in that timeframe. So I think we have an ongoing dialogue. We've made some tweaks here, certainly open to additional tweaks as time goes on with the understanding that we want to be efficient in the process. So if I could guess at how that might work, would it be the case that

[03:24:40] when we are invited to ask questions about consent items at that stage, one of the first questions would be, what is this? And an explanation can be given. And then following that, it might become evident that this needs extended discussion at which point we'd say let's plan to pull this from the agenda and at that point it would go through the normal procedure for somebody saying I'd like to go ahead and pull this so we can have a little bit more time to talk about it is that

[03:25:15] a realistic approach to I think so but I want the council to to I think so but I think I want the council to agree that that's the case we are introducing a new element so I want you all to be comfortable with that council member Amos so two things one the proposed schedule I like it I don't want a super long meeting on the 10th appreciate that for the second item but my only concern and I know it came up previously when we talked about boards and commissions is that I again and when it comes to efficiency making sure that we're not just summarizing every consent item and

[03:25:53] it can already extend what can might often be longer meetings I understand there's certain things I need additional explanation and requests to pull from the agenda should probably happen before we get on the dais anyway. So if there's something that someone wants to flag for additional information, I feel like overall as a council have been fairly receptive to that as we've shifted in this process. So I think the more we can do earlier, the better rather than waiting until Tuesday and everyone kind of looks at each other like, oh. So I think it's best to avoid that and be efficient. Council Member McGuill. I agree with that. I'd also say that I don't know

[03:26:31] that many people wait until like five minutes before the meeting to want to throw that out there. I think it's usually people just, you know, we're trying our best, but I think I like the proposed schedule. I think this looks really good. I appreciate the futures list and us having the opportunity to discuss these things a week or two in advance. I think we have a really good process going and I appreciate all the work on it. Thank you. Thank you. Councilmember Hall, thoughts, Questions? Feedback?

[03:27:02] Yes. Yeah, I appreciate this very much. I know the consent agenda has tended to be a point of contention just because it's not something that we often have a ton of information on. And I recognize that it's intended to be a way to move quickly through the agenda items. But sometimes we just don't know exactly what we're agreeing to or why. And I think that that's where some of these key questions come up.

[03:27:26] I will say from a staff perspective, I really appreciate the advanced notice of some of these items that we've been getting most recently. It's allowed some time for me to think about it, to respond back and ask some questions to try to understand, you know, what exactly is trying to be accomplished by a specific item rather than it's already too late and the public got the agenda the same day that we did.

[03:27:49] So that addition of us being able to review and ask questions and understand has been extremely helpful. so i'm very much supportive of the proposed changes to the agenda for the upcoming two weeks i know it's a lot to fit in and i think that this looks to be a good way to move forward with it so thank you any other questions comments councilmember peterson just to clarify comment i made about explaining the items it wasn't my intention to suggest that the actual item should be read at

[03:28:26] length, but rather some quick summary of it, a lay translation, if you will, and just to and maybe any essential update. So as an example to that is the noise ordinance, which we have discussed before, but there's also been some flow of information here in the last week, particularly related to snow removal that I think is worth calling out.

[03:28:47] And I think it would be well for the city attorney to be able to explain how that's being addressed under what we already have. that wasn't necessarily totally clear beforehand. So that would be an example of an explanation that I think would be very helpful to everybody. Any other questions, comments?

[03:29:08] Council Member Peterson. Just a quick note on the board and commission interviews. I'm not sure what our roster looks like right now in terms of vacancies, but I believe we have vacancies for more than just the planning commission.

[03:29:25] And I'm just wondering whether it was our intention to limit this only to those two or whether we might be able to look at the broader list? Can you help me understand the game plan there? I believe it was due to time constraint. If I could.

[03:29:46] Go ahead. If I could. The 17th was the meeting that the council had agreed to have for board and commission interviews. My assumption is it would have been a full night of interviews. Planning commission has two vacancies, and there are two applicants.

[03:30:03] That is a high-profile board. So it was staff's recommendation that those two, at the very least, those two come forward. You now have six agenda items after those interviews, probably going to go well past 10 p.m.

[03:30:20] So adding more interviews, counsel discretion, but it'll be a late night. Thank you. That's helpful. But I am curious. I think we got a note saying that only within the last day or two, one spot has opened up on the Planning Commission.

[03:30:39] Correct. If that's the case, I'm wondering whether there has been really adequate time for people to express an interest so that we would have a full set of folks to talk to. I mean, this is like kind of an overnight deal.

[03:30:55] It is. However, the previous position has been advertised for a month, two months. So for a couple months.

[03:31:14] And there are only two people that applied for that position. Okay. Well, as a practical matter, I assume that, as is always the case, it would be the council's prerogative to invite additional applications if it sees fit.

[03:31:30] If I could just add one other thing. For the 17th, originally your meeting was scheduled for 7 p.m. We're requesting that you start at 6.30 to do those interviews so we can start the work session or the regular special meeting at 7, if we can get a quorum.

[03:31:53] Acclamation Councilmember Hall does that work for you? Yes. Does it work for everyone else? It seems like it works for everyone just if I might what is the start time for February 10?

[03:32:14] I think we may have some earlier activities the receptions at 6:00 I think there's a closed closed meeting at 6:30. I think we have a 6:30 closed meeting, right? Thank you So yeah, yeah anything else for the good of the body anything council member hall no i'm good thank you very much okay great all right uh council member

[03:32:49] amos has nothing to do with this but i think we all echo our appreciation for public work staff first responders and everyone during this snow creed and shout out to city manager dan alexander being out there with the shovel we appreciate you yeah it was it was a team effort it was a supreme effort i think

everyone went above and beyond and i know a lot of people on this dais got emails and tried their best to answer respond coordinate forward the things that people were saying were an issue for them that's what sets our city apart from all the others so thank you and with that we are councilmember Peterson just

[03:33:26] to add to that my appreciation actually just to note that at one point I inquired whether council might be able to express appreciation by stopping by the command center with donuts and I was told they're too busy pushing snow to eat any donuts so we'll deal with that later but I do want to note that yeah the the city operation on snow has been a full court press but just to note also in my neighborhood on Sunday we had not less than

[03:33:56] five water main breaks during the day and that's something so that all got resolved and I do want to thank Fairfax Water because they really worked hard and fast to fix all that and they had a long list of these things to do all across the city but one of the things that's clear from the experience this year and last on that is these cold weather snaps have consequences and you know it gets to the climate change plan we talked about earlier and forecasting extreme events but I did have a long conversation with Fairfax Water and they were very clear that this was a temperature induced issue here and so they're going to be

[03:34:36] updating their forecast statistics and modeling around you know repair and maintenance schedules and what-have-you but I just want to note that that's been a particular big issue and in addition to everything else okay and with that we are adjourned



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