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[00:00:03] Good afternoon. Welcome to the Environmental Committee meeting. This is now the second time I've chaired the committee today, so starting from me. Good afternoon, everyone. I'd like to welcome you to the September 16, 2025 meeting of the Board of Supervisors, Environmental Committee, and thank you for being here today as we continue our work advancing Fairfax County's environmental and climate action goals.

[00:00:28] We have a full agenda this afternoon, including presentations on our federal policy landscape and its impacts on our local goals in the Energy Compass pilot program to ensure we move through everything in a timely manner. And given that we are running a little behind, let us begin.

[00:00:45] Before we move forward with today's presentations, I'd like to call for acceptance of the meeting summary from our May 20th, 2020-25 meeting. unless there are any comments or corrections, we will consider that summary accepted as presented. Does anyone have any edits or comments? Okay, moving forward. At this time, I'd like to turn it over to our county staff to present on the federal energy and climate policy changes and their goals, potential impacts on our county goals. So thank you so much, and the floor is yours.

[00:01:24] Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and members of the Board of Supervisors. I am John Morrill with the Office of Environmental and Energy Coordination. This first presentation provides a qualitative

overview of the recent and strong policy shift by the federal government on energy and climate matters and the impact of these policy changes on county energy and climate programming.

[00:01:48] As you recall, the county established climate goals for both the community and county operations through carbon reduction plans for each, the county and operation, the community and operations in 2021. In addition to carbon neutrality, the Board of Supervisors adopted a resilient Fairfax plan in 2022 to prepare for and adapt to the effects of climate change. A variety of useful federal policies were in place already in 2020, and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act,

[00:02:26] IIJA, in 2021, provided a boost to clean energy, which was further strongly enhanced by the Inflation Reduction Act, or IRA, of 2022. These landmark bills broadly expanded tax credits and provided billions in additional funding for long-term clean energy deployment. Still, our goals for carbon neutrality are extremely ambitious, even aspirational, in the best of times. I've remarked before on the very strong forces in the global economy that influence energy

[00:03:06] markets, not to mention individual behavior and decision-making. Many of these forces are beyond the county's influence. And so while we may have stretch goals in the best of times, today I suggest we're not in the best of times. On July 4th of this year, the president signed HR1, which called the One Big Beautiful Bill, and I'll hereafter refer to as H.R. 1. This bill reversed many of the tax credits and funding mechanisms put in place for clean energy by the IIJA and IRA,

[00:03:45] and it disrupts a number of human services programs as well. Although some may say H.R. 1 helps accelerate older conventional energy supply options, a nonpartisan analysis found the bill not only substantially reduces future investments in clean wind, solar, and battery projects, but only prompts a tiny short-term increase in electricity from natural gas. The simple fact is the suppliers of natural gas generators already cannot keep up with demand and have a backlog of

[00:04:19] orders out to 2029 and beyond. Returning to the county, carbon emissions in our community are overwhelmingly driven by energy use in buildings and vehicles. Therefore, our programming for both the community and county operations focuses on three big strategies, energy efficiency in buildings, renewable energy for electricity, and the electrification of vehicles and buildings.

[00:04:52] So I will frame the impact of the federal policy shifts in terms of these three strategies. The Inflation Reduction Act created the Energy Efficient Home Improvement Tax Credits, which were due to run through 2032, but H.R. 1 ends these credits at the end of the calendar year.

[00:05:14] The IRA also created state-administered home energy rebate programs to incentivize deep retrofits that save substantial amounts of energy per home, as well as state-administered rebates for making homes more suitable for electric heating, water heating, and appliances such as electric stoves and ovens.

[00:05:36] The Virginia Department of Energy has paused its development of this program after presidential executive orders freezing expenditures. The IIJA reintroduced the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant Program, EECBG, and Fairfax applied for its formula-based funding of \$963,000.

[00:06:02] OEEC planned to use these funds in part for our residential programming plus two solar projects. OEEC received conditional approval for this grant in January. Since then, our inquiries to the Department of Energy have only been met with statements that they are still reviewing paperwork.

[00:06:24] I will note that I received a call a few weeks ago from the Department of Energy's Inspector General's office seeking a routine check-in as the agent was under the impression that we had received the funding, but I informed him we had not. The Inflation Reduction Act created a green and resilient retrofit fund for HUD-subsidized housing.

[00:06:48] Staff at the Fairfax Housing Office tell me that they had been considering an application but had not submitted it yet, HR1 canceled that program. For decades, since 1981 really, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has funded the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, also known as LIHEAP, which helps needy residents pay their utility bills to keep heating or cooling on. Funds flow from HHS to the states and then to localities. In Fairfax, the Department

[00:07:26] of Family Services coordinates this program. In recent years, LIHEAP has helped about 1,500 Fairfax households each year, with the assistance totaling about \$900,000 a year. LIHEAP also provides funds for the installation of air conditioning equipment for households who meet strict criteria. A new OEEC program called AC Rescue has begun providing room air conditioners to needy households who do not meet the LIHEAP cooling assistance criteria. This is above and

[00:08:05] beyond merely helping keep their electricity on. As shown in the graphic on this slide, the County AC Rescue Program has nearly doubled the number of households receiving room air conditioning to deal with excessive summer heat. But even this program cannot come close to satisfying the 1,500 households who receive bill-paying assistance from LIHEAP if LIHEAP is indeed eliminated. On to renewable energy. The Inflation Reduction Act extended the investment

[00:08:40] tax credits for large renewable energy projects out to the year 2032. HR1 abruptly shortened that time horizon to requiring construction to begin on these projects by July 4, 2026. This is a significant blow to the large utility-scale projects planned around the country, which are also vital to meet the growing needs of electricity users. Similarly, the 30% tax credits available to households for solar and other clean energy projects now end at the end of this calendar year

[00:09:19] instead of running through 2032. Once the bill was signed, we spread the news widely over the past two months, urging any who were on the fence about whether or not to get solar to act quickly if they wanted the new or if they wanted the tax incentive. Just as the IRA provided funds for state-administered energy efficiency programs, it also provided funds for the Solar for All programs at the state level. Solar for All would work with low and moderate income households

[00:09:58] and the agencies that serve them to make solar electricity accessible to as broad a constituency as possible. In early August, the U.S. EPA terminated this program nationwide. Virginia was on the verge of launching its program, but loses about \$156 million that would have helped about 15,000 households. With regard to county operations, the expiration of the investment tax credit hurts the cost effectiveness of future solar power purchase agreements. We believe that

[00:10:34] the seven PPA projects we have in our development queue right now remain viable. Also, the IRA introduced a direct pay option for non-taxed entities, including local governments, for investments in clean energy projects. Instead of a tax credit, the county will receive 30% of eligible costs. The county has filed a tax return for our past solar, geothermal, and electric vehicle purchases, but the ending of the tax credits means these payments to the county will

[00:11:12] also end for future investments. On electric vehicles, instead of offering tax credits for electric vehicles through 2032 as the IRA intended, H.R. 1 ends the EV tax credit two weeks from today. Similarly, there were tax credits available through 2033 for individuals and businesses installing EV charging and other alternative fuel infrastructure, but now those incentives end

[00:11:47] June 2026. In addition to ending incentives, the administration's general posture toward electric vehicles has contributed to many manufacturers slowing plans to expand production, and they are retreating from earlier commitments to completely electrify or offer broader options among their models. On that point of manufacturers backpedaling on electric vehicles, today what we see on the horizon for electric vehicles to meet the needs of the county fleet is much less robust than the

[00:12:25] horizon we envisioned five years ago. Five years ago, there were multiple firms, domestic and overseas, building electric buses, exploring heavy-duty, electric heavy-duty equipment, and promising a wide range of electric vehicles. Today, the options are more limited and cautionary.

[00:12:44] For example, we still don't see a credible EV option for public safety emergency equipment. One piece of good news is, fingers crossed, the \$2.5 million federal grant received earlier this year for EV charging for public use remains intact. So in the face of this rather dire outlook, what is the county doing and what is OEEC doing? I mentioned at the outset that I was offering here a qualitative overview of the new challenging times we are in. We have begun a quantitative

[00:13:23] assessment of the prospects for achieving our carbon reduction goals in the face of this shifting landscape. And that would be presented to you in the first half of calendar 2026. We will build that upon the program results to date, as well as constant monitoring of the market and federal situation. And we will outline where we would see the most benefit from limited resources. Beyond the matter of funding projects, one thing is clear is that

[00:14:01] our work needs to be focused on the needs of the public. And in that spirit, we are pleased to introduce to you the Energy Compass program in the next presentation. We are also doubling down on our pursuit of partnerships with community groups as well as our neighbors. Our office's staff is in regular communications with staff from all of our neighbors to avoid reinventing the wheel and with the realization that when it comes to the residential market, it really is one market and that we can help each other with programming.

[00:14:42] We will continue to update our energy and climate dashboards. I'm very pleased that the county strategic plan dashboard for the environment and energy outcome area is live now. And I'd also offer that growing and supporting resiliency to the extreme heat, sudden storms, flooding, and general emergency preparedness is always timely and essential work for local government.

[00:15:13] And with that, I'd be happy to take any questions. Well, thank you so much, and thank you for being very efficient with that presentation. You know, it's one step forward, two steps back these days.

[00:15:29] And aside from the negative, very negative impacts that our most vulnerable residents are feeling and will continue to feel, what's really harmful is that it takes months or even shorter than that to eliminate research and projects and programs that we may never get back.

[00:15:48] We may never be able to bring some of these programs that are helping our residents back. And this is a time, though, for our local elected officials and staff to shine because we do have options and

we do have opportunities and ways to partner with groups, as you mentioned, and work with one another to find ways at the local level to push forward on some of these initiatives.

[00:16:12] So, again, John, thank you for that presentation. I have to say this is disappointing. What was pitched as a big, beautiful bill looks from the county's perspective as disastrous. It undermined years of progress and momentum. We know how urgent our climate goals are, and the path forward relies on exactly the tools that are now being weakened or stripped away.

[00:16:36] Efficiency, incentives, renewable energy tax credits, and EV support. These were opportunities waiting to be seized, and instead this bill closes those doors. At the county level, we are left trying to fill enormous gaps, especially for our most vulnerable residents who relied on programs like LIHEAP for basic cooling and heating needs. This federal pullback makes our work harder, more expensive, and less certain, just as we've been trying to deliver on the commitments to the community. This isn't just about meeting lofty climate goals. It's about

[00:17:12] public health, economic security, and fairness. Fairfax residents deserve better than this. I have one question, and then I'll pass it to the chairman. John, if these changes remain in place, how significantly do they set us back on our CCAP and operational carbon neutrality goals?

[00:17:36] That question is what we are looking to quantify now. There's no question that the goals were extremely ambitious. They were stretch goals to begin with in what was seen as relatively encouraging activity at the federal level. Now, we're going to be doing the analysis And I imagine that it puts the accomplishment of those goals at risk and certainly makes the job much harder.

[00:18:13] And we'll be doing an analysis to see what that trajectory now looks like. Thank you. And the problem is both nationally and internationally, we're back to where we were in a certain period where we're not the leaders anymore.

[00:18:29] We're barely participating if participating at all. And that is, that's not where we should be. That's not where we once were. We once led on these issues. We once led and were seen as leaders when it came to facing tough environmental challenges. We were at a point for a while where it wasn't disputed whether climate change was real or wasn't. It was a matter of fact, it was just a question of how we work together to look at the issues facing our communities, especially the most vulnerable communities. Now we're back to having a discussion, which I find to be absolutely ridiculous, on whether climate change is actually

[00:19:05] real. So again, one step forward, two steps back currently. It's very disappointing. I do appreciate your presentation, as tough as it might be for some of us to watch. And looking forward, unfortunately, short term, it's not looking good. It's not looking good for us, and it's not looking good for our children. With that, Mr. Chairman, I give up the. Thank you. I'll just say I find this

[00:19:35] sickening, not the work of staff and the messenger, but the message behind this. And to be honest, as you mentioned, you know, our goals were ambitious, but they were ambitious based on a premise that we had the partnerships in place to help be successful. And we felt like we weren't in this alone, but we had a lot of federal support, glimmers of hope at the state level. And, you know, now we're left with this mess that we have here. So I do have a few questions. I mean,

[00:20:12] first of all, I appreciate that the quantitative assessment is coming in 2026, and I'm hoping that, you know, some of the conversation we have here will help kind of guide, give you some guideposts on

what to look at. But one thing that does jump out at me is there's a couple pieces in here, glimmers of hope, where there's still opportunities to make things happen, where, you know, for example, the \$2.5 million, you know, the direct pay option for non-tax entities, the \$2.5 million piece, the \$2.5 million in the CFI grant. I guess my question is where that money is still there,

[00:20:52] you know, first my advice is obvious, which is let's get on our horse. I mean, we got to get these things done and get that money and get these projects in place. And when I think about, for example, the 25 EV charging sites and over 150 plugs on county property for public use being tied up in that. My fear is if we're not immediately ready to deliver those things and put all of our resources into squeezing out every last dollar for the projects that we had programmed, we're going to run the risk of that being clawed back. Because I think, you know, as this administration gets

[00:21:27] organized, these are the hatchets that we know have happened. But now the scalpel is going to come out and grab up anything that's left. And so a big piece of advice for me is where there's glimmers of hope out there and remaining money. Let's make sure in line with the conversation we just had on transportation that our own policies and procedures, procurements, whatever, permitting is not causing unnecessarily delays that put any of that money at risk. So that I would say should be one of our pivot points here as we move forward. The other pivot point I would say in

[00:22:02] looking at the quantitative assessment is we had had, I believe, almost at all of our environmental meetings, a very good presentation of progress we were making, including kind of a cost-benefit analysis of here are the things that we're making the most progress on that aren't necessarily the biggest cost drivers, some of the low-hanging fruit pieces. And I would suggest that, you know, that should be the driver of where we go moving forward, that we're not going to be able to fill all of these federal holes. So pivoting back to the things that get the most return on investment, The best return on environmental sustainability with the lowest cost is going to be a really important thing that we have to do.

[00:22:42] I also think on the third bullet point, greater reliance on local leadership and local and regional partnerships for program success is absolutely right. But as we've seen what I think is a very backwards movement at the federal level on these, come January of next year, it is possible that we have a very positive step forward at the state level.

[00:23:04] And I would say when I think back of our partners, you know, our federal partners have been strong for us the last couple of years. Our local effort has been strong. Our regional partnerships have been strong. In some cases, our state partnerships have been less strong. And clearly, there's going to be an administration change and maybe an opportunity to double down on Virginia as a state helping to fill some of these holes that now have been created by this, you know, reaction at the federal level.

[00:23:34] And so as one scale goes up, maybe, you know, one goes down, maybe another scale goes up. And so I think we need to add to our county response here a greater reliance on our state partners to deliver on some of these long-term goals as well because there are things at the state level that could happen.

[00:23:50] And so as depressing as this is, I think it's really important for us to our community to signal that we are not backpedaling on our environmental goals. We're taking a very scientific focused look at they may take longer.

[00:24:07] We may have to rely on other new partnerships as we get through what could be the next couple of years of challenges. And it redoubles our focus on the things that have the most meaningful impact. Lastly, I would say on the human services elements of this, while they're environmental and human services, they kind of straddle those two things.

[00:24:27] You know, some of the things that we're seeing in here are most surely going to be conversations that we have in human services committees and other things, too. For example, the utility support, you know, sure, it's an environmental piece, but it's also an emergency human services piece.

[00:24:44] And so I think for your office, John, I think making sure we're providing that data and that input to human services agencies in the county, what we're seeing. But I think your focus needs to be squarely on the sustainable things that maybe are outside of the human services realm and get some of those emergency human service items into the human services realm.

[00:25:04] Because for us, it was about doing two things, providing more sustainable resources to people who are financially struggling. But the piece that worries me the most right now is the emergency public health component of that. And at some point, you know, that becomes a responsibility of other partners of yours outside of your office directly.

[00:25:28] And so hopefully that gives you, you know, some guideposts when we're looking at what we do with the quantitative assessment, not shooting the messenger here by any means. I think this has been actually excellent to show us the state of what's going on and really to help us understand the things that we might need to do.

[00:25:46] But in closing, I think it's really important that we don't back away from our core philosophy on these issues. And while our goals may be ambitious, I don't think now is a time to necessarily change those goals, but maybe talk about them in a different way and look at some pivot points as we move forward.

[00:26:05] We always knew they were ambitious. We've lost a key partner. There's going to be an effect on that, but we can still make a difference here at the local level. So thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have Supervisor Palchek-Lusk-Bierman.

[00:26:22] I'm so sorry. Palchek-Lusk-Stork. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you so much, John, and your team. Very briefly, and I think following up with what the chairman said, you know, where there's unfortunate challenges and opportunity, and, you know, beyond just state partners, you know, I've been learning more about the Empire State Buildings, energy efficiency, 54% cut, and work they did back in 2010, and I think they've done much more since that and then created, I believe, an Empire State Building Challenge as well.

[00:26:59] And so as we have more urbanizing areas here in the county and new partners in construction happening as well as places to retrofit, I think there's an opportunity for us to maybe start and then encourage the state next year to follow. If the federal government's not going to do it, let's tap into our private sector partners, whether it's, you know, resource sharing, visiting some of these projects that have been built very efficiently, both here and externally, and think about having a conversation

[00:27:34] with them as they look at their, you know, balancing their sheets, and are there new opportunities for us to focus on and encourage on the construction side as well as transportation. So hopefully some, I like, I need the silver lining.

[00:27:52] So that's the one I'm going to focus on, some opportunities there. Supervisor Lusk. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll just say the presentation is very sobering and somewhat heartbreaking in some respects as it relates to the removal of some of these very important assistance programs to our most vulnerable residents.

[00:28:13] I just wanted to maybe lift up and just thinking about the AC Rescue Program. This is the program I know that Allison Homer was very instrumental in helping to bring to fruition and just acknowledging how important that program has been in providing AC units for those also who live in mobile home units.

[00:28:34] And what's a really weird thing about the mobile home unit is the insulation is not the same as the level of insulation in your house. So when you're inside of one of those units and it doesn't have AC and it's 90-plus degrees outside, it's a lot hotter inside that mobile home unit.

[00:28:52] So this is an issue we've got to, you know, obviously continue to work on. I guess the question I wanted to ask is, you know, in terms of where we are right now, and I know we don't have a lot of funding, but just what is your assessment of this AC rescue program going forward?

[00:29:10] and maybe if you can give us some indication of how many people it might serve in this upcoming year. Thank you, Supervisor Lusk. It served 31 households last year, and they have about that many inquiries already this summer, and I think they might be matching that figure. I can report back on what the specific numbers are but yes we have we have made that a fixture in our office

[00:29:45] with existing funding right and uh it it stood up now as a program so we see that continuing and hopefully uh county-wide um just with and we're working in partnership with family services they provide uh many of the referrals okay you know i again just want to acknowledge the importance of that and appreciate the effort that is continuing with that program.

[00:30:11] And I just want to wish you continued success in your work. And I know this is a little bit trickier. It makes it a lot harder. But I think the comments that were made by my colleagues, we're going to have to look for other partnerships, private sector, other ways to support some of the initiatives that we have before us.

[00:30:32] And again, just wish you well in that effort. Thank you. Thank you so much. Is there anyone else who would like to be recognized? Mr. Stork? Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[00:30:49] And no doubt discouraging at a minimum. And the reality is we have to move past this because our objectives haven't changed, which is, and we have to find a way to meet them.

[00:31:07] And I'm not saying that with any illusion or delusion, maybe someone accused me of that, of the degree of difficulty but i think that what i'm looking for really is how do we still meet those goals in spite of or because of or you frame it in whatever you want but i'm looking for recommendations that enable us to still meet our goals and what those would be that's not to say that the board only would choose to do whatever that is but i i at least from my perspective it's

[00:31:46] It's critical that we not let go of those goals until we know there's no other reasonable way to meet them. And I don't think we're there yet because for most of them, we still have a lot of time. And I realize, as we all recognize, time is money, as we've been hearing often today.

[00:32:05] So we know the degree of difficulty meeting those goals gets harder the longer it takes us. But I also know that most of the, maybe the innovations and other kinds of things that could enable us to meet those goals could still be in front of us.

[00:32:20] So I'm looking for ways to do that, and I know that there's some steps that we can take. I know the chairman of the board identified, you know, potentially some things that could happen at the state level that can enable us to get a stronger partner and in turn achieve that more successfully.

[00:32:39] And maybe the court decisions at the federal level will enable us to keep some of what we believe should be things that we could keep. That may also work in our favor. And I realize that with any recommendations, any work that you do, there's always assumptions in those.

[00:32:57] So I understand that those recommendations could have assumptions that could qualify whether something's possible or how the degree of likelihood of possibility. So on all those things, I understand. And then I know we've looked before at the county and, yes, some financial support on the county side, but other things that we could do to incentivize or streamline, you know, more use of net zero sources of energy and or reductions in energy utilization.

[00:33:30] So I think those are things we clearly can control. control. I realize some of them may have some cost to us, but the cost may be frankly incidental to the outcomes that we get. So I look at those as all the kinds of opportunities and hopefully potentialities that we can exploit or explore to do better. And then finally, the private and not-for-profit groups that are out there. I brought this up before, and I don't mean for a lot of reasons we weren't quite ready to do it, but maybe this is one of those situations where we could take a dollar and leverage that dollar into four, five, or six other dollars.

[00:34:10] We have our community consolidated funding pool, and that's really what that funding pool does. We put up a number of millions of dollars, and in return, not-for-profits leverage not only their workforces and some of their lower costs of doing that, but also donations and others to try to make those things happen.

[00:34:30] I think we need to revisit that and look at that, and then internally, what are some things that each of us in our own offices can do to try to improve that outcome, and what is clearly a discouraging and disappointing landscape at the moment.

[00:34:49] But it's not going to last because climate change is happening, and people can deny it all they want, but just like the flat earthers, I mean, there's still flat earthers around too, right? And so I recognize that we'll never convince 100% of anybody.

[00:35:05] But I also recognize that the flat earthers maybe aren't so visible as they once were. And I would say even now, some of the people who don't believe in climate change sure aren't speaking as loudly as they once did because most of those folks are feeling it right in their own backyards with floods and windstorms and everything else.

[00:35:24] So we have to stay at it and know that we're right and know that we will be successful, even if it means we're going to have to work a little bit harder and may take us slightly longer to get there. So thank you. I enjoy your positive attitude, Roger Stork.

[00:35:41] Thank you. Hey, I'm an entrepreneur, man. You always got to believe that the next hill is going to be downhill, not uphill. Thank you for that, sir. Does anyone else want to have a moment to ask a

question or comment? With that being said, John, thank you so much.

[00:35:58] We really appreciate it. Very insightful. And we will now have our last presentation of the day around Energy Compass, the Energy Compass program. So if we want to set up for that, that would be fantastic. Thank you. Well, welcome.

[00:36:26] And we are ready to begin. So I will let the presentation begin. And thank you so much for being here today. And we're looking forward to hearing about the Energy Compass program. Thank you. Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and members of the Board of Supervisors.

[00:36:42] I'm Maya Diwali. I am a senior community specialist with the Office of Environmental and Energy Coordination, and I'm joined today by Maggie Biedstra, a community specialist in the same office, and John Morrill, who you just heard from, as well. Today we'll be providing an update on our new program, Energy Compass.

[00:37:03] So in this presentation, I'd like to introduce the program as well as the goals, a little bit about how it works along with information on the timing of the program, what we've done to date, and our next steps with this program. And then Maggie will take you through some of the survey research.

[00:37:20] I'll be referencing it quite a bit in this presentation. So what is Energy Compass? It's a new program. It's part of our CCAP implementation, specifically our CCAP residential building energy sector goal. The program is designed with a concierge approach.

[00:37:38] What this means is that it's a way for residents to receive individual targeted information and recommendations. It's essentially designed to provide assistance for homeowners that are interested in pursuing energy-efficient upgrades and retrofits for their homes, but they don't know exactly where to start, or they need help analyzing what steps make sense for their specific situation.

[00:38:00] As part of the survey research, we identified that residents need information on their home systems and what upgrades make sense for their specific situation. So this program is essentially matching the needs the residents have with the services that we can provide. Reducing barriers that homeowners might have on moving forward with energy efficient upgrades.

[00:38:20] The program is going to connect residents with energy navigators. And those energy navigators will give individualized technical assistance as well as information on available incentives. And that landscape is constantly changing. As well as connections to qualified contractors who can perform the work.

[00:38:37] This program focuses on single-family homeowners and reducing barriers for those residents. We'll talk a little bit about more about that in the survey research. And then aside from this concierge-style individual technical assistance for residents, we would like it to be a resource for all of our residents.

[00:38:57] So we'll have information that residents can use to understand their home energy systems and electrification options. That's on our website. We'll have updates on new information on home energy systems and any incentives that are either going away, as we heard in the last presentation, or ideally we might have some new incentives in the future.

[00:39:19] And we also would like to build a long-term relationship with residents of Fairfax County. So having the resident be aware that this program exists and maybe this time is not the time that they need some help, like maybe their system is old but hasn't broken down quite yet.

[00:39:36] We'd like them to know about that we exist and we can provide help. for them to peruse the information the resources that we have and then when they need help to understand how to contact us and to work with the energy navigator and to get their specific information for their situation I did okay I wanted to talk a little bit about the program goals for our pilot program so we want this program as we previously mentioned to serve the exact needs of the

[00:40:10] residents so the big the big pieces here are providing access to resources and reducing any barriers that the resident might have to making changes to their home and a major program goal for our pilot is also to continue to fine-tune the offerings that we're providing to make sure that we're providing maximum benefit for the residents and we also saw a need for a program that fits this specific situation and also complements existing programs both within OEEC as as well as those external to Fairfax County.

[00:40:41] So there are existing state and nonprofit and utility programs that target residential energy efficiency retrofits. The state program is just launching. We were on very similar timelines. We've been coordinating with them during the development of their program as well as ours, and we want to be in alignment with the offerings that they have.

[00:41:01] The state program is slightly different. There are a lot of resources available for residents of Virginia, but the concierge approach is not part of their program. Utility programs are available. Some have age or income qualifiers in order to participate, and they're not specifically focused on Fairfax County.

[00:41:20] Residential energy nonprofits are amazing, but they're typically smaller or more focused in scope. So we wanted a program that could really focus on the needs that have been identified for the residents of Fairfax County, focused on Fairfax County-specific resources, and as well as one that's promoting some of these deeper, more substantial energy efficiency retrofits.

[00:41:47] I want to talk a little bit about the program concept and the components of the program. There's five steps in the process when the resident is ready to use the Energy Compass program.

[00:42:03] In step one, the resident becomes aware of the program through our marketing outreach efforts, either ours or our partners, and they contact us through our website, phone call, email, sort of thing. Once they contact the program, they'll receive an intake form, and that intake form has questions about their home and the energy systems that are part of their home, and then a scheduling link so they can set a time that's convenient for them to meet with the energy navigator. On step two, the energy navigator is going to review that intake form and research any specific areas that the resident has indicated they want to talk about so that they're fully ready to answer any questions.

[00:42:43] With step three, the energy navigator and the resident have that scheduled call. And this is the opportunity for the resident to ask any questions about their home, about any systems, their appliances, and they get the individual technical assistance that's based on their specific situation.

[00:42:59] The energy navigator provides resources, information, as well as recommendations that are specific to that resident, information on any incentives that might be available and might be relevant for the specific situation, as well as information on qualified contractors that can perform the recommended work if there's any that's needed.

[00:43:19] The energy navigator can also provide referrals to other county programs, for example, like AC Rescue or other programs that the resident has questions about, as well as external resources if necessary.

We want this to be as seamless for the resident as possible.

[00:43:37] And step four, the energy navigator will send a summary of the information that was discussed in that call to the resident for further consideration. There's a lot of information that they'll be having to go over. So we want in step five to make sure that we continue to build on that long-term relationship and follow up in a few weeks to see does the resident have additional questions.

[00:43:58] If they've done more research and something's not squaring, we want to make sure that we can address any of their concerns. And then we also want to follow along with their decisions that they're making to determine did they pursue an energy efficiency project, and what did they choose to do.

[00:44:19] Okay, so there are three phases of Energy Compass. In phase one, we focused on research and design for the program. Phase one was conducted from January through April of this year, and we did research. A lot of interviews with jurisdictions across the country, as well as in Virginia.

[00:44:36] We looked at a variety of different models for program delivery beyond the concierge model, and we also wanted to, as mentioned earlier, align with the state energy office when they were developing their program, and we wanted also to talk to other jurisdictions in Virginia to understand how they were going to align with the state energy program.

[00:44:58] This work was supported by our consultant, ACF. Following that, we started Phase 2 in May of this year, and this is the pilot program. So from May through August of this summer, we spent time getting their website prepared, determining different resources we wanted to make available for residents, setting up the online public survey that we've talked about, and then working to develop partnerships with the state energy office, local jurisdictions, and energy-focused nonprofits.

[00:45:30] Phase 2 to date has really focused on the behind-the-scenes preparation for a strong program as well as coordinating with our partners to ensure our program complements theirs and there's no duplication of efforts. Again, with the state energy office, Virginia Energy Connect, we're putting our timetables in alignment, making sure that the statewide information is the same as what we're providing in Fairfax County.

[00:45:51] And should the state retrofit rebates become available, ensuring that there is a seamless transition from state information to local information. um coordinating with local jurisdictions and non-profits has been helpful we've had a lot of lessons learned there's a lot of innovative approaches going on that we've been able to see and watch their development and there's a lot of potential for collaboration and uh traditionally without um marketing and outreach where we are right now is the blue arrow uh in september of 2025 we've kicked off our program and we are working with our consultant and this time it's

[00:46:28] also ICF. And they are serving as our energy navigators. So beginning this month, we have our soft launch of the program. We're using residents who indicated interest in the online survey as a bit of a guinea pig. And they're going to go through the program and give us some feedback on that. The pilot program runs approximately nine months from now until May of next year. The goal for phase three is to take what we've learned in the pilot and launch a full program. So the pilot is really a lot of program evaluation to make sure that the program that

[00:47:06] we're providing matches what's needed and addresses the concerns of the residents. So while we are doing that program evaluation, we'll be updating and modifying for the launch of the full program with phase three. So a little bit about our progress and next steps. So this summer I mentioned we did a lot

of behind the scenes work. Our website went live on July 1st and the survey was open all summer long. The program was kicked off and the soft launch is starting in September and two energy

[00:47:41] navigators have been selected and are being trained to be ready for our residents. Going forward, the next steps for our pilot. Like I said, it will continue through May and focus very heavily on program evaluation. Adjustments will be made continuously throughout the pilot. We are also going to continue working with our regional partners and evaluating other program components, which might be very helpful. Two that we're specifically interested in, and we've seen with some of our local partners, are group coaching. So there may be people who are ready to talk but not really ready to fill out intake forms and really get deep into their specific situation,

[00:48:18] but we'd like them to have the opportunity to ask questions and start to understand our program and what it can do for them, as well as demonstration sites. A demonstration site is a home that's had electrification or energy efficiency retrofits done, and so people can see the systems and ask questions and put it into a little bit more concrete terms so they understand what they might be doing with their own home.

[00:48:41] We're preparing for that full program launch. And as a note, the full program goal is to assist 1,000 unique households with 200 of those choosing to complete energy upgrade projects. So that's a little bit about what we're doing with the progress and the next steps.

[00:49:00] At this point, I'm going to turn it over to Maggie for the survey research. Thank you, Maya. I'm Maggie Biestra, and I'm also from the Office of Environmental and Energy Coordination. So before launching the Energy Compass Program, we wanted to get more formalized feedback from residents about their home energy efficiency and electrification needs, better understand their barriers to taking action, and identify program components that would offer the greatest utility to residents. We launched a public survey in June using the county's Engage Fairfax platform, and residents from all supervisor districts participated in the survey, as you can see on

[00:49:37] the map on the slides. So residents shared that they faced numerous barriers to action, including uncertainty about taking action given that their current systems and appliances are still operational, uncertainty about who to hire to perform home upgrades, concerns about high upfront costs, the complicated nature of doing home upgrades, their home having limited electrical capacity for electrification projects and concern about that, and also uncertainty about the benefits of undertaking energy efficiency work.

[00:50:12] So Energy Compass was designed to address the vast majority of these resident-identified barriers, as you can see in those yellow columns in the figure. We're also working closely with our consultant, ICF, to address that tallest striped column and to consider trade-offs of upgrading still operational systems in order to help inform residents' decision-making.

[00:50:38] We were also curious which home systems residents are most interested in upgrading to make more energy efficient and which topics they would appreciate getting more information about. So insulation, windows and doors, heating and cooling systems, water heating systems, and solar systems and battery backup storage topped the list.

[00:50:58] With this program, we hope to encourage these larger changes within one's home. So we are encouraged by the interest in these more systemic upgrades like insulation and heating and cooling

systems. Prior to the launch of the program, we have over 50 residents who are already lined up to engage with the Energy Navigator and with those appointments starting this month.

[00:51:19] And the broader program promotion will begin in October. We also asked an open-ended question for residents to share more about their home energy questions. And this information helps to inform the energy navigators about the breadth of questions they might expect to receive from residents. And we got quite a few responses, ranging from really simple informational questions to highly technical ones, illustrating the need for both basic community education about energy efficiency and electrification, but also this more technical support. Typically, they range from questions about getting a home energy audit and what that

[00:51:58] means and how to interpret it, to specific questions about their home energy systems. A lot of cold basements were brought up, and trying to understand the changing incentive landscape. We also received comments about things like receiving support for paying electricity bills.

[00:52:15] While that is not the exact purpose of this program, as Maya described, we did design this program to efficiently refer residents to other county programs and services and external programs and services as appropriate. So for the program structure, the vast majority of respondents indicated the usefulness of receiving individual technical guidance, which is what this program is designed to offer.

[00:52:38] All of the most requested program features, which included guidance about contractor selection, information about financial incentives, basic home energy information, and identification of local contractors, those are all incorporated into this program's design. So we are excited about the launch of this new program that was intentionally designed in response to resident needs, both from the survey, but also things we've been hearing for a long time throughout OEC's engagement with residents.

[00:53:10] The program complements existing OEC programs, and it creates a pathway for residents to receive support to complete deeper home retrofits and upgrades. We look forward to the launch of the pilot this month, and we're excited to continue to listen to resident feedback and make adjustments to the program over time to best suit community needs.

[00:53:31] Thank you for your time and attention, and we welcome any questions or comments. Well, thank you so much, Maya and Maggie, for that presentation. Really informative. And this program, it's clear, has a lot of potential to make a real difference for our residents by lowering the barriers to energy efficiency upgrades.

[00:53:49] Before I pass it over to the chairman, what is the capacity when it comes to the number of residents that can use this program, especially at a pilot level? Because I think you said there was 52 current residents, is that right?

[00:54:06] Yes, there are 52 residents that indicated interest, or maybe there's more at this point, but there are 52 when we wrote this presentation that have filled out the survey and said, yes, we really want to be part of it. So they're first in line, and they're our soft launch population. So, there are two energy navigators, and part of what we're evaluating with this program is how many people they can get through, what's the appropriate time for an appointment, should it be 30 minutes, should it be an hour, what staffing levels do we want to have.

[00:54:39] So right now we have some pretty variable time that we can do, so we can explore those variables and make sure that we have enough capacity for all the residents who are interested. Have you

asked the 52 residents at any point kind of how did they hear about this? Just because I'm interested to see, like, what are ways in which we can, you know, if this were to continue, what are ways in which we can expand and make sure that all communities are looking at and have the opportunity to participate?

[00:55:11] Sure. Thank you for the question. Yeah, so we, this initial group of residents, our communications team advertised this new program through some of our typical channels, including like our newsletter and there, I think there was some social media. We had the website up, things like that.

[00:55:28] And it was mentioned by word of mouth in a couple of events. But we have a much more thorough marketing and outreach and engagement strategy planned for this program. So it will include those channels, but also engagement on other things like podcasts and news articles.

[00:55:48] And if we move into this space of having these larger events where we have at homes where we're doing demonstration sites and things like that, that is all very, will be very helpful. We haven't yet worked through our partners to advertise this program, and so that is also something we'll be moving into with this.

[00:56:11] And we have, in the past couple of days, gotten requests for lots of materials about this program to start advertising. But so far, the outreach was limited to get that first group of residents, so we're excited to expand that here in the coming weeks. Yeah, I mean, podcasts and kind of some of the ways you mentioned are great.

[00:56:28] I would just highly recommend going to where the residents are, meeting them where they're at. A lot of times, you know, a lot of our residents, for many different reasons, aren't on social media or aren't on podcasts. And so making sure that we're making it easier for them to make this information as accessible as possible, I think, would be really helpful.

[00:56:49] And with that, Mr. Chairman, I hand it over. Yeah, thank you. Actually, I'll start just by following up on that. The 52, not to focus overly on them, but on slide seven, are those red dots, are those the 52? Or is that showing me something different?

[00:57:05] I just want to be clear. Yes, so the 52 are included in there. The red dots reflect those who have, a portion of those who filled out the survey. We have gotten additional responses since these slides were created. But just to illustrate that we did hear from residents in all of the different supervisor districts.

[00:57:24] But the 52 are included in those dots. I mean, I ask the question because obviously there, I'm sure, within those 52 are varying degrees of housing types, ages. I mean, to the earlier point, I mean, obviously we wanted to start with a smaller group.

[00:57:41] I'm not sure that 52 is necessarily representative just because it's geographically spread out through the county, representative of all the other elements that we need to be aware of. And so I just point that out as a statement of fact, not really anything actionable. I guess the question, you know, a couple questions I have first, I mean, this sounds like a great program.

[00:58:00] I'm all on board with every element of it. I'm just wondering two things. One, we just had a presentation on HR1, so I'm wondering if, you know, we did two things with this. One, do a check to make sure that this doesn't rely on resources that otherwise we thought we had that we don't have anymore.

[00:58:19] And number two, I know this has been in the works for a long time, but as we move forward beyond the pilot, I would presume that continuation or modification of this is going to be looked at under

our new constrained resources and understanding as this one of those elements that has a high ROI in terms of achieving our environmental benefits because we are in this new world.

[00:58:43] we just had this presentation. So I'm wondering, before the presentation today, did we take a look at this and think through how it relates to the earlier presentation? And does that guide you at all in thinking about what the next steps are? Thank you, John Morrill from OEEC. We have been mindful of that. And this program is funded with existing funding, and we're taking it year to year, and essentially we have FY26 to really run it through its paces

[00:59:21] and then be able to evaluate its return. Overall, given that this does not rely on incentives from the county but rather serves as a referral service, We're thinking that this is the kind of limited investment, high return kind of program because it's really a bit of hand-holding.

[00:59:50] So it's for people who want to do things. They're already motivated. They just have questions. And so our approach here is to help them get to where they want to be with their homes. Okay. I appreciate that.

[01:00:06] And to that end, the summary email of resources, what you described was a concern of mine, which is how far does that summary of resources go? Because I think a frustration point is you go through this whole process, you know what you need to know, but you don't know how to do it.

[01:00:23] And so you mentioned this went so far as identifying contractors, et cetera. And I'm just wondering, I am delighted to hear that. I'm not sure if Beth is, because for the longest time, you know, I was kind of told being careful about referring private sector contractors to people.

[01:00:42] So help me understand how we're doing what I think we should be doing, which is saying, hey, these are reputable firms in the area without running into a legal problem of suggesting or endorsing the products and services that they provide. Absolutely. That's a really big and very insightful question because we do have that constraint as county government.

[01:01:04] So what we've done for establishing our contractor list for this program is to look for industry certifications or contractors that have been approved by utility programs. So, for example, Dominion maintains a list of contractors for some of their residential retrofit programs. And so we are going to provide the contractors who specialize in a specific area.

[01:01:25] So not all contractors would be provided if it's a solar project and they're HVAC, that sort of thing. But being as neutral as possible, looking only at external accreditation or professional associations, and then working with some of our partners to – there's a number of regional partnerships where contractor lists have been discussed and seeing if there could potentially ever be reviews on other sites or pointing people towards information for people who have done other projects, but being very mindful in the county that we're not recommending any specific firm over another

[01:02:05] just based on external criteria. Okay, but I hope we are going far enough to do some listing or something, and at a minimum, hey, here's some common questions and things you might want to inquire, knowing to maybe even ask for licenses, things like that. Some hints for folks I think would be helpful.

[01:02:23] And then the very last thing is, you know, we have a lot of properties that are commercially owned but residentially occupied, and we have a lot of properties in the county where people rent their units but don't own them, and so a lot of these things are geared towards the owners looking to make an

investment in the property that they own, and I guess I bring that up because we have some communities that were all built around the same time that might have some of the same chronic deficiencies in terms of efficiency, and I'm just wondering if we've given any thought to when we take these 52, are you in a townhome community where all the units were built around the same time and similar, where this information

[01:03:02] can be expanded to the entire community on behalf of the person who entered the program? Are we in a position where we're reaching out to particularly some of our more vulnerable lower-income communities that might have commercial owners, do we have the capacity to talk to the commercial owners of those properties to induce them to make some of these improvements? Because they may not benefit from the utility bill themselves, but their residents do. And I'm going way back in time, and I'll give you an example of why I'm asking this question. We had

[01:03:36] a community, it was in the Franconia District, Sequoia, that was built at a time where energy efficiency was the last concern. And what we found out was there were some residents in that community whose utility bills were more than their rent every month. And obviously, you know, some things have happened since then where that is not still the case, but we had one community that had a chronic energy efficiency problem that existed in every unit in that community.

[01:04:05] And so I think we need to give some thought to how you can expand this with a little effort to looking at where those are, what type of building, when was it built, and can that information be shared more globally to that community either through a direct mail, hey, we evaluated one of your neighbor's properties in your own neighborhood. Here's some things that we found that you might want to be mindful of to expand this a little bit that way. And so I would hope we give some thought to that as we move forward and looking at low cost ways to maybe spread the message. Yes, absolutely.

[01:04:38] So we have, so for the contractor piece, there is currently guidance on our website from LDS on how to choose a contractor, and we wanted to update that with information on the industry certifications and other specific questions to ask if they've done this type of work before, or, you know, is the bulk of their work, you know, not in the energy efficiency sphere.

[01:05:01] So, that absolutely is under consideration and will be done. Regarding the ideas that you suggested for alerting similar homeowners, I think that that's fantastic. That's something that we can definitely test in the pilot. We do have a lot of outreach ideas, and so that falls right in line with a lot of the things we're planning to do.

[01:05:20] So, thank you. MR. You know, a thought when there's a fire in a community, many times the Fire and Rescue Department go door-to-door and say, hey, there was a fire in the community, does your smoke detector work? I'm not suggesting we go door to door, but hey, there's somebody with a similar house of yours in your same subdivision who just went through this, and here's a whole lot of things they found you might want to consider is this might be a simple direct mail piece. We have the DTA data, we know the subdivision boundaries, we know the years the units were built, and you're probably going to find a lot of the same issues door to door in those selected areas. Well, thank you so

[01:05:57] much, Chairman. And now I'd like to open it up to questions, and we're going to start with Supervisor Stark. Thank you. And I'm going to start with what I really heard the chairman of the board say about leveraging, because I think this is really what this is about, is how do we leverage two people who it's not possible that they could do all that we potentially would want them to do, or even all that I think we'll

get in terms of people raising their hand and wanting help. So in my mind, that's so the outreach and visibility parts, I'm all in, and I think we need to do more, but I

[01:06:33] else, I think that'll be quickly overwhelmed because there's so much need. And then the other part that relates to that, the leverage part of it, is the partners and particularly the green business partners and where and how we are with them and how that is moving forward.

[01:06:52] And hopefully, if we have green business partners, anybody can be part of that, if you will. And there are some criteria I think we should have, personally, but some kind of gold stars. So we're not saying you can't be in, but the county has – I've talked to others before about this with the county, and my understanding is we clearly can do this.

[01:07:17] Gold stars relate it to certain kinds of things that they do. Obviously, we would not do that for folks who clearly have had problems with the work that they've done with the county. We would know who those are, and we'd have enough data that we could support whatever it is, and that's clearly where the county attorney can help define that a little bit more.

[01:07:38] But I think our green business partners and program is clearly a place to go, and if nothing, get referrals that we can use out of that and ones that meet certain star standards, five-star, four-star, whatever that is.

[01:07:53] It's Internet-related kinds of ratings that people do, but they're not exclusive. Anybody can get them as long as they do certain things. But the most important thing to me and the most powerful thing to me is to kind of tag on to what the chairman of the board was saying about certain types of housing models in certain communities because many, many communities here were built.

[01:08:18] In fact, nowadays, most developers, builders, use certain models to build their homes. And there's got to be a way that we can take that and use that and leverage, if you will, the limited time that people have here to do that. And in my mind, the no-brainer way of doing that is there's got to be some kind of AI resource or way of development that you all could do.

[01:08:44] I absolutely urge you, and we don't have to create the models, but maybe we create the questions, right? And maybe those questions go out to homeowner, contacts us, and says XYZ. You know where they live. you can see what other kind of models, and maybe we have for that particular model kind of house, here's a set of, you know, AI prompts that you could put in.

[01:09:05] So, again, we're not telling them what to do, but we're giving them tools. And, yes, I know many of the people that you interact with are not going to be maybe comfortable enough, and they may have other, they may be older, and that's not what they do. But even if they don't do that, we can do that, and maybe then those AI responses then could be put in, could be tied into certain contractors or others who do this kind of work.

[01:09:30] And in other words, make it simple, keep it simple, stupid, which means, you know, just have these templates out there that can be used for a particular kind of community or housing. And again, I see us being able to use just a few elements and leverage the two people into doing far more than they otherwise could do. So I'm happy to work with this pilot and pick a couple communities where there's kind of models of housing. I think of duplexes in a lower income area of community that we could take and do a duplex and see how that might work in this

[01:10:08] particular community. And then use that to then broadcast it with flyers or whatever, or even door to door and say, here, here's what you can do. Here's what it takes. Yes, it may take a little bit of money or may not even take a little bit of money, but here's the step-by-step, which to me, as somebody who never has any time to do all the things I want to do, it would give me the formula that I could go one, two, three, and reduce the amount of time it would take me to achieve the kind of energy savings that I would want and hopefully make a difference.

[01:10:42] So please involve me and my office. I can think of several lower-income areas that I think would be ripe for this kind of one-to-one kind of relation. And I know Supervisor Luskin would steal a little bit of your thunder because that is absolutely a key part of our manufactured home community where we could do something like this, much like we did with the fire alarms and the smoke alarm, smoke detectors.

[01:11:12] Same kind of thing. So let me know how I can help because I'm all in. Thank you. Thank you so much, Supervisor Stork. Supervisor Smith? So, Supervisor Jimenez talked about, you know, how do you get people and how do you contact people.

[01:11:31] And I think it's really hard because we have ways that we in this room communicate and use certain kinds of communication. We have to be aware that not everybody does that. On slide three, it talks about the emphasis is on assisting low to moderate income households.

[01:11:51] And I'll be curious when you do your evaluation how you're tracking that, what the 52 are that are in right now. You know, an issue with this is not just because you said you want to deal with people that are interested in doing this. They also have to have the resources to be able to do it.

[01:12:09] So I don't know if there's a conflict in this statement of an emphasis on low to moderate. How do we get there? How do we do that? And then, you know, you talked about reaching 1,000 and getting to 200 people. I think part of that evaluation needs to be that cost-benefit.

[01:12:26] What's the cost to reach those people? You know, what is the effect there? Because we are at a time that we have to be really careful how we use resources. So these things that we started and sounded great six months ago, a year ago, we're in a tough place right now.

[01:12:43] But if our goal is to reach those parts of the community, especially that have trouble getting the information, this is a great resource from people that could maybe figure it out themselves, but it makes it easier. That's great. But part of that weighing limited dollars is how we use that.

[01:13:00] Thank you. Are there any other colleagues who would like a chance to comment or ask a question at this point? All right, seeing as there is no one left to ask a question, thank you so much for coming and presenting, and I think we all learned a lot today, so thank you so much for that.

[01:13:25] All right, and keeping with our time and what time it is, we will be starting off or at some point ending the next environmental meeting with the discussion of NIPS.

[01:13:41] So for now, thank you to our staff and our colleagues for their presentations and discussion today. These conversations are central, keeping Fairfax County on track for our climate and sustainability commitments, and they highlight the importance of collaboration at every level of government and in our community. With that, this meeting of the Board of Supervisors Environmental Committee is adjourned.



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