



Legislation Text

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City of Alexandria, Virginia

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MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** OCTOBER 3, 2018

**TO:** THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

**FROM:** MARK B. JINKS, CITY MANAGER /s/

**DOCKET TITLE:**

Consideration of the Phase One Update to the Environmental Action Plan 2030 (EAP).

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**ISSUE:** Consideration of the goals, targets, and short-term action items comprising the Phase One Update to the Environmental Action Plan 2030 (EAP).

**RECOMMENDATION:** That City Council receive the proposed Environmental Action Plan 2030 (EAP) Phase One Update which includes short-term strategies for incorporating new sustainable practices in five focus areas, and set this EAP Update for public hearing and adoption on Saturday, October 13.

**BACKGROUND:** The EAP is a foundational document of the Eco-City Alexandria initiative. Adopted by City Council in 2009, the full report was the result of a two-phase collaborative process from December 2008 through June 2009 with the Environmental Policy Commission (EPC), City staff, Virginia Tech, and substantial public input. The final version contained 363 action items in 10 principle areas - Transportation; Green Building; Air Quality; Water Resources; Environment and Health; Energy; Land Use and Open Space; Solid Waste; Global Climate Change; and Implementation.

The current EAP update process is guided by leadership from the Eco-City Steering Committee co-chaired by Councilmembers Del Pepper and John Chapman, and mirrors both the schedule and two-phase structure of the 2009 EAP's development. The Phase One Update (see Attachment 2) recommends goals, targets, and short-term actions (to be completed between FY 2019 and the end of FY 2023) for five topic areas: Energy; Climate Change; Green Buildings; Land Use and Open Space; and, Solid Waste. Phase Two will build on Phase One by adding goals, targets, and short-term action items for the five remaining topic areas: Water Resources; Transportation; Air Quality; Environmental Health; and Implementation, Education, and Outreach. Additionally, mid and long-term targets and action items will be identified for all ten areas.

**DISCUSSION:** Significant advances in knowledge, technology, and best practices related to sustainability and climate change have occurred since the EAP's adoption in 2009. It is incumbent on the City to provide an updated framework for future environmental policies, programs, and projects that also accounts for current social, fiscal, political, and economic realities.

Staff has worked collaboratively with the EPC through regular meetings and smaller topical discussions on issues, as well as actively engaging public input to produce Phase One. Phase One Update launched with an Open House in December 2017, followed by an Eco-City Café in March 2018, and a second Open House in August 2018. Remote participation was made possible through social media and online feedback forms. Among the comments received from the community was the widely-supported request for greater outreach and education across the board. Comments received throughout Phase One informed the planning process and topic area priorities; however, particular attention is being given to the request for greater outreach. Staff has already initiated action to expand our environmental program metrics, improve the Eco-City website by adding informative online dashboards and new educational content, as well as increase our social media presence. Public engagement and participation are essential to achieving the targets and success for the process of updating the EAP and implementing the recommendations.

**KEY TARGETS:** Overall a key target for the public was to increase outreach and education. Staff has responded by incorporating education and outreach into the EAP Update's overall structure and is recommending several specific educational and outreach actions in the EAP Phase One Update.

Priority recommendations for Phase One include: updating the Green Building Policy; adopting a Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy (C-PACE) ordinance; increasing the City's tree canopy and open space acreage; offsetting conventional energy use through renewable energy mechanisms; accelerating the upgrading of lighting; developing an electric vehicle charging plan; updating the Energy and Climate Change Action Plan; enhancing Recycle Right campaign efforts; optimizing the organics composting program; and, reducing overall solid waste generation.

These recommendations will be coordinated with existing and updated strategic and master plans as the EAP update process moves forward.

**TIMELINE:**

The EAP Phase One Update recommends short-term actions to meet the Plan's nine goals and targets. Most actions and portions of actions are slated for completion by the end of the first two years of the short-term period: 28 in FY 2019, 23 in FY 2020, 14 in FY 2021, ten in FY 2022, and eight in FY 2023. The targets set for each goal are weighted towards the end of the five-year period and include:

- By FY 2019, update the Green Building Policy;
- By FY 2020, offset 100% of electrical energy use with renewable energy;
- By FY 2022, reduce per capita GHG emissions to 10 metric tons and 9.7 metric tons by FY 2023;
- By FY 2022, update the Energy and Climate Change Action Plan;
- By FY 2023, use 20% less energy per square foot in City buildings over FY 2018;
- By FY 2023, secure an overall tree canopy minimum of 40%;
- By FY 2023, maintain the ratio of 7.3 acres of publicly accessible open space per 1,000 residents;
- By FY 2023, reduce GHG emissions by 12% for collecting and processing solid waste over FY 2019; and,
- By FY 2023, reduce solid waste collected from City-served residential customers by 5% over CY 2018.

### **COORDINATION WITH THE EPC:**

EPC and staff are in agreement on almost all of the proposed recommendations. The EPC reviewed a near-final draft September 25, 2018 with staff. Subsequently, the EPC submitted a letter on September 26, 2018 expressing overall support and outlining five recommended changes to the Plan (Attachment 1).

These issues raised by the EPC are as follows:

1. Renewable Energy: The EPC asked to reduce the focus on onsite generation of renewable energy (a high capital cost), which resulted in changes to the cost estimates. In response, staff reduced the estimated cost to reflect this change in focus while leaving the option of pursuing multiple strategies open.

2. Energy Efficiency: The EPC asked for operational savings to be provided in the cost breakdown to demonstrate the economic benefits derived from the lighting upgrades. In response, staff has included a discussion of return on investment. The exact savings are not available at this time but will be developed as the projects move forward.

3. Climate Change: The EPC proposed moving the completion date of the Energy and Climate Action Plan update from FY 2023 to FY 2021. Staff recommends a compromise of FY 2022, considering that many other EAP actions are planned for the same staff in FY 2021.

4. and 5. Green Building and Land Use and Open Space: The EPC included recommended language for setting target dates and green building levels, as well as accelerating the timeline for reestablishing the Open Space Steering Committee. These sections were presented to the Planning Commission, including testimony by the EPC, for consideration on October 2, 2018 and action by the Commission was deferred until October 4, 2018. A summary of the Planning Commission recommendation will be provided to Council prior to the presentation to Council on October 9, 2018.

All targets and timelines included in the EAP are aspirational and will have to compete for resources during the budget process.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** Operating and capital cost estimates are preliminary (order of magnitude) and range from \$13.1 million to \$15.4 million. The costs associated with three actions within the energy section account for \$11.3 million to \$12.8 million of the total. This does not reflect the cost savings from energy efficiency investments. Additional staff resources are identified when required for each of the recommended actions (See EAP Phase One Update Appendix A for an overview of costs). As is the case for Small Area Plans and Master Plans which envision new City expenditures and investments, the cost of implementing action items will need to compete for resources with the action items and goals stated in other policy plans adopted by Council. Adoption of the Phase One Update is not a fiscal commitment to implement recommended actions. The decision to implement, when additional fiscal resources are required, would be determined annually through the operating budget and Capital Improvement Program decision making processes. In addition, action items for which planning efforts are envisioned will need to be considered as part of the annual Long Range Interdepartmental Planning Work Program process.

### **ATTACHMENTS:**

Attachment 1: Letter from EPC Chair Jim Kapsis to City Council, dated September 25, 2018

Attachment 2: Environmental Action Plan 2030 Phase One Update Report

Attachment 3: Environmental Action Plan 2030 Phase One Update Presentation

**STAFF:**

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