ARLINGTON COUNTY CLIMATE ACTION RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, climate change is an existential threat to the planet and humanity, and (a) according to a 2018 statement by the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, ("IPCC") unprecedented transitions in all aspects of society are necessary to limit the global temperature increase to 1.5ºC compared to preindustrial levels, and (b) in a 2023 Special Report the IPCC emphasized that limiting global warming to 1.5ºC and achieving sustainable development will be difficult if not impossible without swift societal transportation and ambitious Greenhouse Gas ("GHG") reduction measures, and (c) according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration 2024 was the planet's warmest year on record; and

WHEREAS, climate mitigation (*e.g.,* GHG emission reductions and clean energy), climate adaptation (*e.g.,* adjusting to current and projected impacts of climate change) and climate resiliency actions (*e.g.* impact preparations, natural infrastructure enhancements) are essential and mutually reinforcing to comprehensively confronting climate change; and

WHEREAS, the two most significant contributors to GHG emissions generated by Arlington activities are from the building and transportation sectors; and

WHEREAS, Arlington County is already experiencing the impacts of climate change with increasingly extreme storms, devastating floods, and heatwaves that threaten local residents, businesses, visitors, and natural and built environments; and

WHEREAS, climate change affects us all, but the effects of climate change are not distributed equally and the greatest burden of an inadequate response to the climate crisis will be experienced by communities who: (a) are vulnerable to climate change, (b) are predisposed to adverse climate change effects, and (c) lack capacity to cope and adapt with climate change; and

WHEREAS, in 2019, the Arlington County Government ("County") adopted an Equity Resolution that seeks to ensure its actions and policies equitably implement the County's vision, and in 2024, adopted Regional Equitable Development Principles that identify environmental justice among other community conditions that affect individual opportunity and wellbeing, and also in 2019, passed a Biophilic Cities Resolution to conserve and enhance natural resources, incorporating biophilic design principles, and recognizing nature as vital in addressing the climate crisis; and

WHEREAS, the County developed and is implementing innovative policies that have advanced the County's climate goals while providing other economic and community benefits. These policies include the County's Community Energy Plan (CEP) to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050, operationalizing this commitment through the Carbon Roadmap as well as the:(a) General Land Use Plan, (b) Forestry and Natural Resources Plan, (c) Public Spaces Master Plan, (d) Affordable Housing Master Plan, (e) Master Transportation Plan, (f) Carbon Neutral Transportation Master Plan, (g) Transit Strategic Plan, (h) Risk Assessment Management Plan, (i) Solid Waste Management Plan, (j) Energy Assurance Plan, and (k) Stormwater Master Plan; and

WHEREAS, the County is dedicated to realizing its vision of a sustainable community and strives to become a national leader in responding to the challenge of climate change. The County is well-positioned to advance comprehensive climate resilience, mitigation, and adaptation policies and strategies that are effective, just, and equitable due to our: (a) comprehensive strategic land use, transportation, and energy planning, (b) economic and fiscal strength, (c) staff expertise, and (d) availability of local support from residents, businesses, civic organizations, education institutions including Arlington Public Schools ("APS"), the faith community, and nonprofits; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the County Board of Arlington County, Virginia, ("County Board") that the County will endeavor to:

1. Advance a "whole-of-community" and "whole-of-government" comprehensive energy and environmental strategy that: (a) uses a common framework for decision-making and to develop policies, programs, and practices that result in measurable progress towards County goals, (b) fosters cooperation at all levels of government on greenhouse gas reduction, (c) supports sustainable infrastructure and identifies new strategies for the transition from fossil fuels-based energy resources to cleaner sources of energy, (d) to the extent permitted by law, enhances public-private partnerships in energy efficiency and electrification, (e) supports waste reduction and recycling, (f) conserves and expands tree canopy and natural resources, (g) improves stormwater management, (h) integrates nature into the built environment, (i) enhances local heat resilience, and (j) ensures accountability for environmental impacts of hazardous substances, and consider this strategy for the following actions:

    a. Incorporate sustainability and climate mitigation, adaptation, and resilience goals in the Comprehensive Plan update.

    b. Prioritize system-wide climate solutions that offer co-benefits to ensure environmental, economic, and social well-being.

    c. Continue to implement the current CEP while developing a comprehensive Climate Action Plan ("CAP") that identifies pathways to cost-effectively and equitably expedite the County's carbon-neutrality goal. The CAP may include: (a) a decision support tool to explore the feasibility, affordability, primary benefits, and co-benefits of various programs ("Programs"), (b) programs that address climate mitigation, adaptation, resilience, engagement, education, advocacy, and/or research and development, (c) strategies and actions necessary to implement the Programs, (d) targets and measures to track CAP progress.

    d. Annually disclose to the County Board: (a) progress towards achieving the goals of the CAP, (b) information regarding any barriers to achieving the goals of the CAP, and (c) planned action steps to address any disclosed barriers.

2. Foster a safe, livable, and sustainable future in Arlington County through collective action,

to include the following:

a. Mobilize the entire community in a climate protection and resiliency effort through expanded and sustained outreach to Arlington residents and businesses, recognizing that vulnerable communities, community organizations, and allies, are integral to and in the leadership of the mobilization effort.

b. Continue to build transparent, collaborative, and lasting partnerships with educational institutions (including APS) as well as other local, regional, state, and national stakeholders from the private, public, and non-profit sectors to intensify support of a comprehensive, just transition to a safe and livable future.

c. Partner with the private sector, non-profits, faith community, and organizations including APS to promote green practices that achieve carbon neutrality and foster innovation in the green economy. Continue to explore opportunities to support the growth of industry clusters, talent pipelines and workforce development focused on innovations in green technology designed to reduce negative impacts on the environment, conserve, enhance and expand tree canopy and natural resources, and promote renewable energy and eco-friendly practices.

3. Develop questions to be used in the Operating Budget process, beginning in Fiscal Year 2027, to support sustainability and climate-related decision-making.