

## Arlington County Board Candidates Questionnaire on Environmental Issues

Name: Audrey Clement

- 1. Achieving the County goals for renewable energy and carbon neutrality: This year has seen some of the most brutal heat waves of all time across the globe, massive wildfires and unprecedented flooding in the United States and around the globe, all tied to climate. How should Arlington address climate change and reduce its greenhouse gas emissions to achieve its goals of 100 percent renewable electricity by 2035 and carbon neutrality by 2050 and what policies would you promote to meet those goals?**

In 2019 Arlington County updated its Community Energy Plan (CEP), mandating net zero carbon emissions by 2050. While I support this ambitious goal, it is prescriptive rather than pragmatic. For example, the chart on page 25 of the CEP indicates that the County plans to achieve net zero through:

- reduction/elimination of fossil generated electricity,
- increased reliance on renewable energy,
- more energy efficient buildings, and
- EV transportation initiatives.

<https://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/13/2019/09/Draft-CEP-Update-post-July-13-CB-mtg-marked-up-for-Sept-CB.pdf>

All of these goals are arguably achievable. However there's another category in the CEP that posits a reduction of 1 million metric tons of carbon equivalents between 2030 and 2050 through "Future Opportunities to Achieve Carbon Neutrality." This is purely aspirational and has no place in a concrete plan.

According to Blue Virginia, which critiqued the CEP, Arlington gets virtually all of its energy from 2 sources, Virginia Dominion Power and Washington Gas, neither of which is committed to renewable energy on a scale that would make the CEP more than a pipe dream.

<https://bluevirginia.us/2019/07/arlington-county-struggles-with-how-to-reach-ambitious-net-zero-carbon-emissions-with-limited-tools-to-get-there>

Although Virginia has a mandatory renewable energy portfolio standard adopted by the General Assembly in 2020, its carve out for renewable energy is anemic by comparison with other states. For example New York mandates: 70% renewables by 2030; 100% zero-emissions electricity requirement by 2040. Maryland's requirement is: 30.5% in 2020; 50% in 2030. By contrast Virginia's renewable energy requirement is: 14% by 2025, 30% by 2030, 65% by 2040, and 100% by 2050.

<https://www.ncsl.org/research/energy/renewable-portfolio-standards.aspx>

Also while the Virginia Clean Economy Act (VCEA) permits customers to enter into power purchase agreements (PPAs) that would enable them to circumvent Dominion, which is heavily invested in natural gas generated electricity, it appears that such agreements limit purchases to 3 megawatts of electricity, which is a fraction of Arlington's energy needs. See VCEA Section 56-596.2.D.1.b.

<https://lis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?201+ful+HB1526ER>

If elected, I will stop misleading the public about the potential for net zero carbon emissions by 2050. Rather I will lobby the legislature to adopt a more aggressive mandatory renewable energy portfolio standard and increase the amount of power that customers can purchase from third parties.

- 2. Incorporating nature into development and protecting green spaces: As Arlington develops, the detrimental impact to our tree canopy, streams and waterways, and open spaces is increasing. In 2020, Arlington joined the Biophilic Cities Network, committing to integrate nature into its urban environment. What strategies and policies would you pursue to improve and protect Arlington's natural resources, expand its tree canopy, and incorporate nature into its urban design and how would you ensure equitable access to these resources for all Arlingtonians?**

Arlington's own actions belie its commitment to biophilic principles. Even after adoption of the 2019 CEP, the County permitted the destruction of an entire grove of majestic hardwoods behind the new Reed School in Westover to accommodate a wheelchair accessible walkway and geothermal infrastructure.

In March, 2021 it authorized the destruction of 83 mature trees on either side of Donaldson Run Tributary B as part of a streambed restoration project using so-called Natural Channel Design techniques. In both cases the objective was to promote some other worthy environmental objective, but the outcome will be the opposite—more runoff, erosion and heat island effect and less carbon uptake.

Further evidence of the County's lip service to biophilic principles is its new Green Buildings Incentive Policy (GBP), which will award additional bonus density for LEED Gold construction. Encouraging densification of already congested urban corridors via bonus density is truly perverse, because it forces more people to enjoy less green space as a reward for making their new buildings more energy efficient.

If elected to County Board, I will mandate a LEED Gold standard not as an option but as a requirement for all new site plan development projects—thus eliminating the need for a bonus density incentive. I will also require the County to perform an environmental cost benefit analysis for County capital investments that promise environmental benefits but may not deliver.

- 3. Moving to more sustainable transportation options: Transportation accounts for almost 40 percent of Arlington's greenhouse gas emissions. How can Arlington meet the transportation needs of those who live and work in the County while reducing the climate and environmental impacts that current transportation modes create?**

As a former member of the Transportation Commission and avid multimodal commuter, I can't say good enough about ART Bus. But even ART Bus needs improvement. First, ART's fleet is powered by natural gas, when it should run on electricity. Second, ART's ridership on nights and weekends is virtually nil. This is a waste of taxpayers' money.

If elected I will accelerate the conversion of the ART bus fleet to EV and fund an advertising campaign to promote ART buses to county residents.

Currently APS subsidizes discounted fares for students. I will seek full subsidization of APS students on ART buses and recoup the cost by reducing/rerouting school bus service near ART bus routes.

One of the standards implemented in the Green Buildings Incentive Policy (GBP) is 4% EV charging stations and 15% EV-ready spaces in site plan projects.

[https://arlington.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view\\_id=2&clip\\_id=3836&meta\\_id=199698](https://arlington.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view_id=2&clip_id=3836&meta_id=199698)

If elected I will up the ante to 10% EV charging stations and 25% EV-ready spaces.