



## **The Falls Church Village Preservation and Improvement Society**

Mayor Tarter and City Council Members  
City of Falls Church  
300 Park Avenue  
Falls Church, Va., 22046

May 14, 2021

### **SUBJECT: Strengthen Efforts to Meet Climate Change Goals**

The Board of the Village Preservation and Improvement Society urges you to strengthen the City's efforts to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases that cause warming of the planet. Across the United States, a changing climate is contributing to more extreme weather, droughts, wildfires, heat events, flooding, and sea level rise.

The City Comprehensive Plan recognizes the threats that climate change poses for the City:

“The changing climate jeopardizes human health and well-being. Both flooding and high temperatures pose risks to human health and safety. Severe weather also impacts economic stability. Storms and increased precipitation can disrupt power supplies, transportation and commercial operations. Higher average temperatures and temperature extremes may overload building cooling systems and the electrical grid.”

The United States recently rejoined the Paris Climate Agreement with a pledge of reducing net emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases that cause the warming of the planet by 50-52% from 2005 levels by 2030 and reaching net zero emissions by 2050. These targets reflect the latest scientific understanding of the actions needed to avoid the worst consequences of a changing climate by keeping the increase in warming from pre-industrial levels to under 1.5°C.

We recognize that meeting ambitious targets for reducing emissions of greenhouse gases will require major new national investments. And, individuals need to take responsibility for their carbon footprints. In addition to national and individual efforts, however, local governments must play a leading role in meeting climate change goals.

Falls Church has adopted a long-term climate goal and taken some good first steps, such as promoting energy efficient buildings. We believe, however, that the City must recognize that the new science requires stronger action and that it is time to step up its contribution to meeting climate goals.

A key first step is for the Council to update the existing City climate change policy to align it with national goals. Specifically, the existing goal of reducing greenhouse gas reductions by 80 percent by 2050 should be revised to at least match the new national target of net zero emissions by 2050. The City should also adopt the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments regional goal of a 50 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030.

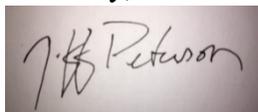
In addition, the City needs to work with stakeholders to develop a plan of action for making progress toward the 2030 and 2050 climate change goals and measuring progress over time. Communities around the country are considering a wide range of programs and policies that best fit their specific circumstances and capabilities. Some of the policies that the City should consider as part of a new climate plan include:

- Making greenhouse gas reductions a priority for major new development projects by taking measures such as achieving stringent environmental design standards, activating rooftops with solar power, and increasing electric vehicle charging stations;
- Converting City vehicles to electric and expanding charging stations at City-owned buildings;
- Converting existing City buildings to electric or geothermal heating and cooling, increasing building energy efficiency, and adding solar power where possible;
- Creating incentives to shift residential and commercial heating and cooling away from natural gas and toward renewable electric systems while improving building energy efficiency and promoting solar power opportunities;
- Renewing and expanding the City commitment to protecting mature trees throughout the City, expanding the tree canopy, and requiring new developments to include significant trees and green space in their plans;
- Adopting a climate literacy program for the City schools to provide students with the climate change knowledge they will need as citizens of a country working toward the challenging goal of net zero carbon emissions by 2050; and
- Developing new design goals that promote more walkable environments and support low carbon forms of transportation.

Falls Church has an active citizenry, a first-rate school system, and effective local government. We have a responsibility to demonstrate the vision needed to adopt new climate targets and the determination to find the right mix of programs and policies that will meet climate goals. We urge the Council to meet this critical challenge with promptness and resolve.

We would like to support this effort in any way we can and look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

A rectangular image showing a handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored background. The signature appears to read "Jeff Peterson".

Jeff Peterson

On behalf of the Board

Village Preservation and Improvement Society

cc: Wyatt Shields, City Manager  
Environmental Sustainability Council  
Urban Forestry Commission