

MOTION:

August 27, 2026

SECOND:

Regular Meeting

Res. No. 26-xxx

RE: SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK TO MITIGATE DATA CENTER IMPACTS AND ADVANCE CESMP GOALS

ACTION: APPROVAL

WHEREAS, the Prince William Board of County Supervisors has adopted Climate Mitigation and Climate Resilience (CM/CR) goals, including reducing the county's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, by 2030, to half of 2005 levels; and

WHEREAS, the Sustainability Commission has been tasked with monitoring progress and updating recommendations for the Community Energy and Sustainability Master Plan (CESMP), which is designed to meet those CM/CR goals; and

WHEREAS, the County's climate mitigation goal for 2030 is total GHG emissions of 2.1 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (MMTCO₂e); and

WHEREAS, the CESMP warns of a substantial gap between the emissions reductions needed to achieve the 2030 goal and the reductions projected from full implementation of the CESMP's 25 high-priority actions; and

WHEREAS, the Sustainability Commission has repeatedly identified the GHG emissions associated with rapidly growing electricity demand from data centers to be the greatest risk to the County's achievement of its climate mitigation goal; and

WHEREAS, regarding achieving the CESMP goals, the impacts of data centers extend far beyond GHG emissions, to include air quality, noise, water withdrawals, and other aspects of sustainability and resilience that are typically affected by heavy industry; and

WHEREAS, one possible solution to the large GHG footprint of data centers already exists – generating or purchasing zero-carbon electricity – and is already being employed by many leading data center companies; and

WHEREAS, many other key measures exist that can mitigate impacts of data centers, as specified by the Sustainability Commission in Resolution 26-011, "[Guidance for Evaluating Mitigation Measures Proposed in Data Center Proffer and Special Use Permits](#)"; and

WHEREAS, in April 2024, the Sustainability Commission passed (by acclamation) Resolution 24-008, "[Sustainability Commission Recommendations to Manage Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Data Centers in Prince William County](#)," which urged the Board of County Supervisors (BOCS) to

- (1) Examine ways to pause approvals on new data centers, including eliminating the opportunity zone and targeted industry status, until (a) the County can adequately analyze and manage cumulative impacts of data center development, including effects of additional data centers on the climate mitigation goal, and (b) the County can devise a method to condition approval of any additional data centers on binding commitments by the applicants to use at least 90% zero-carbon electricity by 2030,
- (2) Immediately prioritize *CESMP Action E.3: Encourage Renewable Energy Use in Energy-Intensive Commercial Buildings*, including developing a program to encourage, and if possible, require all existing and fully permitted data centers to commit to use at least 90% zero-carbon electricity by 2030, and
- (3) Prioritize the CESMP foundational initiative on “*assessments for climate mitigation and resiliency impacts*,” to be performed by the County to provide data on a project’s impact on GHG emissions, renewable and fossil energy mix, and climate resiliency metrics. These assessments should apply not only to new data centers, but also to road projects, residential/ commercial development, and other projects that could materially affect accomplishment of the CM/CR goals to ensure that the goals are not further at risk; and

WHEREAS, the BOCS has initiated a zoning text amendment that could substantially reduce the area within the county’s Data Center Opportunity Zone Overlay District (DCOZOD), but otherwise has not yet implemented the recommendations in Resolution 24-008; and

WHEREAS, the County has one of the largest pipelines of new data center projects in the US, and will be faced with many more potentially high-impact decisions in coming months, so the need for action is more urgent than ever; and

WHEREAS, actions taken by other Virginia localities demonstrate that local governments may use zoning amendments, special-use review, temporary pauses, performance standards, and other land-use tools within the authority granted by Virginia law, subject to the specific facts of each jurisdiction and review by legal counsel;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Sustainability Commission recommends that the BOCS adopt a strategic framework for mitigation impacts from data centers by implementing the recommendations contained in Resolution 24-008, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that in light of recent developments, the Sustainability Commission expands on these recommendations by urging that the County (1) change the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance to tightly constrain the locations where data centers can be sited, such as those classified as heavy industrial; (2) continue modifying its approval process to eliminate by-right development and to require a Special Use Permit (SUP) for all data centers; and (3) approve only those SUPs that (i) include substantially all

of the mitigation measures in Resolution 26-011, "[Guidance for Evaluating Mitigation Measures Proposed in Data Center Proffer and Special Use Permits](#)" and (ii) explicitly commit to not construct on-site, non-emergency fossil fuel-fired electricity generation.

Votes:

Ayes:

Nays:

Absent from Vote:

Absent from Meeting:

ATTEST:

Clerk of Sustainability Commission