



PGCPS Board of Education Climate Change Action Plan Focus Work Group

January 19, 2021 3:30pm-5:00pm

Topic: Subworkgroup Updates

Draft Narrative Summary

Board Member Boozer-Strother called the meeting to order. She thanked David Smith, Joseph Jakuta, Valerie Ervin and Kate Culzoni for their work every week on the logistics for each meeting and noted that today is a date to report out from subworkgroups. Board Member Boozer-Strother then called for adoption of the meeting agenda. Joseph Jakuta made a motion to amend the agenda to add a conversation with Highland Electric on electric buses and Lunch out of Landfills on composting prior to item 4.1 and Mr. Donald Belle seconded it. The agenda as amended was approved without objections. Board Member Boozer-Strother then called for adoption of the December 15, 2021 meeting minutes. Jamee Alston made a motion and David Hill seconded it. The minutes were approved without objections.

Board Member Boozer-Strother then reported on the progress with the writing of the Climate Change Action Plan. A few sections are still being drafted and some sections are still in rough form, but progress has been made and the draft has been shared. She thanked everyone for their patience in scheduling last minute meetings on Buildings in particular.

Mr. Jakuta then reviewed the upcoming schedule. The next full workgroup meeting is on February 23 (incorrectly noted during the meeting), where we will be discussing a final plan. Tonight is also the first of three Board of Education Committee Meetings, Operations, Budget & Fiscal Affairs Committee Meeting, followed by Academics and Policy & Governance, in that order. There will also be three online budget hearings during that time period. There will be a public comment period, with two town halls, one for students and one for the public at large, that have not yet been scheduled. The schedule is tight, but work is moving on.

Board Member Boozer-Strother then handed the discussion over to Ramon Palencia-Calvo who introduced Michael Manicelli and Gerry Chessman of Highland Electric Fleets, who have worked to bring electric school buses to Montgomery County. Mr. Chessman gave introductory remarks

explaining why it was important for the health of students to use electric buses and that was the impetus for founding the company. He then introduced Michael Mancinelli of Highland Electric Fleets, the Electric Design Manager, who then gave the presentation.

Electrification is about student, community, and climate health, in particular the density of diesel fumes is highest within the bus. There is adoption of electric buses throughout the nation, most particularly in neighboring Montgomery County. Progress has been made on the longevity of the buses with them lasting for a 12 year warranty period. The current technology meets 90% of the current PGCPs routes. Prices are also reducing, largely due to the reduction in battery costs. It is expected that with federal funds, districts that already have inhouse experience will be prioritized over grids. Vehicle to grid, where batteries are used to sell power back to grid during peak times and when not needed for transportation purposes, which can help with funding. Traditional procurement is problematic because of the need to install chargers and the upfront costs of electric buses, as well as other technical challenges for charging. The turnkey solution solves some of the financing problems by achieving economies of scale and amortizing the costs and this results in cost parity with diesel. It takes about 15 years to turn over a school bus fleet. Highland was founded in 2018 to develop a different approach to ease upfront costs for schools and take on some of the risk profile. They provided the buses and charging, but the school system maintains the drivers, maintenance staff, dispatch, etc. It allows for partial to full fleet replacement without the need for increased fundings such as issuing bonds.

Jamee Alston asked about what “shovel ready” meant in regards to utility approval and Mr. Mancinelli said that yes shovel ready does imply that the necessary power supply is available to charge buses among many other factors.

The process at Montgomery County started with signing of a contract in February of 2020 and the charging was set up by June 2020 and 13 out of the 25 buses of the initial deployment are now available. Supply chain can also be problematic for obtaining buses.

Michael Harris asked if this is similar to a solar PPA. Mr. Mancinelli said that the solar PPA was the inspiration for the business model so it is very similar. Mr. Harris then asked how the federal funding would figure in. Mr. Mancinelli said that the scale of the Montgomery County project allowed for it to be done without grant money, but grant money would be necessary to make a smaller scale deployment work.

Donald Goldberg asked about the financial turnover costs on the last slide. It appeared that the costs for the electric buses will often come in under diesel, in some years. Big hesitations involve the use of the new procurement model, lack of title ownership, and the unfamiliarity with the new technology.

Mr. Jakuta thanked Highland for the presentation and then turned the conversation over to Board Member Boozer-Strother then introduced Joe Richardson of Lunch out of Landfills.

A compost program began at 14 Frederick County Public schools. This project was volunteer led with funding from rotary clubs and other local organizations. By the end of the program they

were diverting waste at a rate of 87% by the end of the program. When they began the recycling was heavily contaminated with food and other bags. The program is a four to five bin program. Of the four bins: liquids with a screen, compost bin, recycling bin, and then landfill trash. The recycling was very limited since Howard County would accept very minimal. 50% of waste was food and 25% of the food was liquid. There was also an effort to recover edible food to provide to the Frederick Rescue Mission. The pilot was so successful and Frederick County was willing to fund 23 more schools, but only five participated. There were challenges with getting back into the schools post Covid and there were staff bandwidth issues due to Covid as well. HB 150/SB 124, which is currently being discussed in Annapolis, will provide enough money to allow for about 200 schools to begin composting and Prince George's County has the composting facility to allow for this. It is very likely that these will be student led programs through Green Teams. It is likely that PGCPs could get enough grants for 40 to 50 schools to start programs.

Mr. Jakuta mentioned that we can send emails using a Clean Water Action action alert to support HB 150/SB 124.

Mr. Richardson did mention that elementary schools are a better place to start since they throw out more food and the children are more receptive to learning. Kate Culzoni added that she understands why food waste is such an issue after being a lunch volunteer.

Ms. Culzoni then mentioned that we had worked on creating a "straw person" document based on the discussions of the subworkgroups and using the Prince George's County plan as a template. It is google docs now for collaboration. Workgroup members should review and help fill in the blanks. We are trying to acknowledge the same indicators that the Prince George's County plan used. Some sections are filled out and some are not. Electricity and Transportation are the most filled out at this point. Board Member Boozer-Strother added the need to talk to our experts on specific areas. She also noted the difference between Mitigation (reducing emissions) and Adaptation (being resilient to already existing climate change). Mr. Jakuta added that sometimes it is challenging to determine whether something is mitigation or adaptation, but people should focus on the primary purpose for an action, and it has been enjoyable to work on this document

Meeting Recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HK-o6YChDi4>

Action Items:

- The next meeting is February 23, 2022 at 3:30 to discuss a draft final Climate Action Plan.