

**MOTION:**

\_\_\_\_\_, 2023  
**Regular Meeting**  
**Res. No. 2\_-**

**SECOND:**

**RE: CLARIFY CLIMATE MITIGATION GOALS TO FACILITATE COMMUNICATION AND PLANNING**

**ACTION:**

**WHEREAS**, the Prince William County Board of Supervisors (BOCS) authorized the creation of a Sustainability Commission (Commission) to guide the county on developing policies and programs for greenhouse gas emission reduction, clean energy, and climate resilience through development of a Community Energy and Sustainability Master Plan (CESMP); and

**WHEREAS**, the objective of the CESMP is to develop a roadmap for the county to reach its climate mitigation and resiliency goals ([MOTION: \(pwcva.gov\)](https://pwcva.gov)), including the climate mitigation goals of (1) reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 50 percent reduction by 2030, compared to 2005 levels, and (2) for Prince William County Government to be 100% carbon neutral by 2050; and

**WHEREAS**, the Commission and County staff require clarity in terms of how to express and articulate the scope of the 2005 GHG levels that set the GHG target for 2030, as well as the definition of 100% carbon neutrality by 2050; and

**WHEREAS**, trees can be carbon dioxide emission sources if deforestation occurs, or can result in removals of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere – effectively negative emissions – when tree growth exceeds tree losses, with the net effect being referred to as “net GHG flux”; and

**WHEREAS**, the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG) has recently (December 2022) developed a methodology to estimate net GHG flux, and applied this method to jurisdictions in the region, including Prince William County; and

**WHEREAS**, due to the large forested areas in the County (including Prince William Forest Park, Manassas National Battlefield, and the Occoquan Reservoir Protection Area) the positive impact of trees is significant and has resulted in an increase in removals of carbon dioxide in Prince William County between 2005 and 2020, offsetting the growth in emissions from some other source categories; and

**WHEREAS**, land use change is an important factor in determining overall GHG emissions insofar as it affects emissions and removals associated with trees, and Prince William County has important land use trends that should be reflected within the GHG inventory and forecasting framework; and

**WHEREAS**, notwithstanding earlier MWCOG inventories that excluded net GHG flux because local methods were not yet available, the international standard for GHG inventories (developed by the Framework Convention on Climate Change, operating with the Intergovernmental

Panel on Climate Change) and the official approach of the United States in its annual “Inventory of US Emissions and Sinks of Greenhouse Gases” is to include net flux in calculating and expressing total emissions; and

**WHEREAS**, including net flux from the GHG baseline and the emission reductions target would result in a more complete and comprehensive basis for the GHG goals; and

**WHEREAS**, some of the most important GHG emission reduction strategies in the CESMP are likely to involve tree-planting (rural, suburban, and rural areas); and

**WHEREAS**, if the targets for emission reductions in 2030 and carbon neutrality in 2050 are inclusive of net GHG flux, then the forecast for 2030 and 2050 should include net GHG flux; and

**WHEREAS**, the forecast for 2030 and 2050 could be most clearly communicated and analyzed if the forecast accounts for foreseeable state and federal regulations and market forces as part of the reference case (i.e., the situation prior to Prince William County’s own actions); and

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Prince William Sustainability Commission requests confirmation from the BOCS that the GHG goals for 2030 and 2050 should be expressed in terms of net emissions (that is, including net GHG flux from forests and trees outside forests), rather than omitting this critical source category by expressing goals in terms of gross emissions (excluding net GHG flux); and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that for purposes of calculating the emission reductions needed for purposes of the CESMP, the Prince William Sustainability Commission requests confirmation from the BOCS that the reference case for the forecast should incorporate foreseeable regulatory and market forces that are beyond Prince William County’s control, in order to clearly analyze and communicate the emission reductions needed through County actions.

**Votes:**

**Ayes:**

**Nays:**

**Absent from Vote:**

**Absent from Meeting:**

**ATTEST:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Sustainability Commission Clerk**