



BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY ADVISORY COMMITTEE (BEEAC)

Draft Webinar Meeting Summary: June 18, 2026

BEEAC Local and State Government Members in Attendance:

- Mati Bazaruto, City of Bowie (Chair)
- Al Carr, DC (Co-Vice Chair)
- Valerie Amor, City of Alexandria (Co-Vice Chair)
- Allie Shepard, Arlington County
- Amanda Campbell, City of Rockville
- Dale Medearis, NVRC
- Allison Homer, Fairfax County
- Drew Stilson, Arlington County
- Denzel John, City of Rockville
- Drew Stilson, Arlington County
- Britta Hahn, Howard County MD
- Sheena Oliver, Montgomery County
- Kevin Milstead, Prince William County
- Kurt Lawrence, Prince William County
- Lindsey Robinett Shaw, Montgomery County
- Luisa Robles, City of Greenbelt
- Maggie Beetstra, Fairfax County
- Matt Meyers, Fairfax County
- Najib Salehi, Loudoun County
- Rich Dooley, Arlington County

- Samantha Heitsch, City of Alexandria

Additional Attendees:

- Dr. Sanya Carley, University of Pennsylvania
- Bob Soule, Go Electric DMV
- Ella Schmitt, Howard County
- Kathie Hoekstra, Alexandria Environmental Policy Committee Member
- Vanessa Bertelli, Electrify DC

COG Staff:

- Alissa Boggs, COG DEP
- Caroline Sherman, COG DEP
- Heidi Bonnaffon, COG DEP
- Leah Boggs, COG DEP
- Maddie Stoddard, COG DEP
- Maia Davis, COG DEP



1. CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS

Valeria Amor, Energy Manager, City of Alexandria and BEEAC Co-Vice Chair

Co-Vice Chair Valerie Amor called the meeting to order and welcomed participants to the April BEEAC meeting. COG staff provided brief reminders on virtual meeting procedures, including use of the chat for comments, muting when not speaking, and the ability to raise hands for questions. Participants were asked to enter their name and affiliation in the chat for attendance tracking.

2. APPROVAL OF THE APRIL 16, 2026 MEETING SUMMARY

Valerie, BEEAC Co-Vice Chair

Valerie Amor provided time for committee members to review the April 16, 2026 meeting summary and invited comments or proposed revisions. After a brief review period, no changes were raised either verbally or in the chat. Hearing no objections, the April 16, 2026 meeting summary was approved.

3. JURISDICTION UPDATES AND ROUNDTABLE PEER EXCHANGE

BEEAC Committee Members

COG staff opened this segment with an Energy Affordability Primer to provide context. The primer outlined key definitions (e.g., energy burden and insecurity), summarized utility shut-off policies in the region, and reviewed the current legislative landscape on energy affordability (noting, for instance, that the District of Columbia recently enacted a 90-day moratorium on utility disconnections for customers with arrears under \$1,000 during a period of high energy prices). Following the primer, BEEAC members shared jurisdiction updates focusing on programs to address energy insecurity. Local representatives highlighted a wide range of initiatives: cooling assistance programs (including free air-conditioning unit installations for vulnerable households up to 80% of area median income and “senior cooling” outreach) to protect residents during extreme heat, home energy retrofit and weatherization projects for low-income and senior households (one city’s program was recently expanded to all residents and increased to up to \$15,000 in efficiency upgrades per home), and development of community solar projects to provide discounted electricity subscriptions (e.g., a Maryland county’s planned solar array offering a 25% bill reduction for low-to-moderate-income subscribers). Committee members also described leveraging emergency assistance funds to help residents avoid utility shut-offs and working with utilities (and state-administered energy assistance programs like LIHEAP) to offer payment plans or financial aid when bills become unaffordable. COG staff emphasized that this is a nascent area of research for the committee and invited further member input on how jurisdictions address energy affordability challenges and needs, to help inform future regional strategies.

4. ENERGY INSECURITY AND ENERGY AFFORDABILITY

Dr. Sanya Carley, University of Pennsylvania – The Energy Justice Lab

Dr. Carley provided a research overview on the prevalence and impacts of energy insecurity, defined as households struggling to afford sufficient energy for basic needs. National data indicate approximately one in three U.S. households faces energy insecurity each year, a share that has grown compared to five years ago. She highlighted new federal estimates showing 13.4 million U.S. households had their electricity disconnected for non-payment in 2024 (15 million including gas)—an

order of magnitude higher than previously reported figures, underscoring the severity of the issue. Dr. Carley explained that loss of energy access has dire consequences: families unable to pay utility bills may experience a lack of lighting, refrigeration, and heating/cooling, which can lead to health and safety risks (such as spoiled food, inability to power medical devices, heat-related illness, and even life-threatening situations). She noted that energy burden is unevenly distributed, with low-income households and communities of color disproportionately affected (Black households are roughly three times more likely, and Hispanic households four times more likely, to be disconnected than White households, while families with young children or members relying on electronic medical equipment also face higher risks). Many vulnerable households resort to risky coping strategies to manage energy costs, such as keeping homes at unsafe temperatures or forgoing necessities like food and medicine to pay utility bills.

Dr. Carley then outlined a spectrum of policy and program interventions to reduce energy insecurity and improve affordability. Preventative measures include energy efficiency and weatherization upgrades and distributed energy resources (like rooftop solar) to lower household energy costs, noting that a recent study by her team found that homes with solar were significantly less likely to receive disconnection notices or fall behind on bills. Temporary relief can be provided through bill assistance initiatives such as the federal Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), though Dr. Carley observed that LIHEAP is underfunded – reaching only a fraction of eligible households – and in need of modernization (e.g., adjusting allocation formulas to account for rising summer heat vulnerability). Consumer protection policies can mitigate the worst outcomes of energy insecurity: she cited disconnection moratoria (especially temperature- and season-based protections), extended notice and payment plan requirements before shut-offs, and reduced fees/penalties for reconnection as tools to keep struggling households safely connected. Dr. Carley emphasized that tackling energy insecurity will require coordinated action across multiple stakeholders – from utilities and state regulators to local, state, and federal governments – using both immediate assistance and long-term structural solutions to ensure an equitable, affordable clean energy transition. During Q&A, members inquired whether rooftop solar adoption could reduce residents’ motivation to conserve energy, and Dr. Carley clarified that while solar lowers bills and helps households avoid extreme curtailment, her research does not show a “rebound effect” of wasteful energy use due to solar installations. Members also discussed why relatively few households in need take advantage of energy assistance programs; Dr. Carley noted persistent barriers – from limited awareness and trust to stigmas and bureaucratic hurdles (e.g., complicated applications or difficulties reaching utility representatives) – that discourage eligible consumers from seeking available support.

5. UTILITY DISCONNECTIONS IN METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON REGION

Leah Boggs, COG Staff

Maddie Stoddard, COG Intern Staff

COG staff (Leah Boggs and intern Maddie Stoddard) presented preliminary data analysis on electric and gas utility disconnections in metropolitan Washington, reinforcing trends highlighted in Dr. Carley’s presentation. Drawing on data from the U.S. Energy Information Administration (via the University of Michigan’s Energy Equity Project) and the University of Pennsylvania’s Energy Justice Lab disconnection dashboard, staff showed that utility shut-offs have risen sharply since the end of pandemic-era moratoria in 2021. In 2024, the District of Columbia experienced nearly 15,000 household disconnections (about 12,000 electric and 3,000 gas), with only ~54% of those cases reconnected within the same year. In Maryland, data from utilities serving COG jurisdictions indicated

approximately 50,000 disconnections (combined electric and gas) in 2024, with a reconnection rate around 83%. Virginia utilities saw disconnections remain relatively stable through the late 2010s but then surged in 2024 (with an estimated ~375,000 cumulative disconnections reported by regional utilities for that year); however, Virginia does not require reporting of reconnections, making post-shutoff outcomes harder to assess. Staff also noted evidence of changing seasonal patterns in disconnections: for example, median monthly disconnections in Virginia were higher in 2017–2018 during specific extreme weather months, whereas in 2024 disconnections occurred more evenly throughout the year, suggesting that climate-driven temperature extremes outside traditional winter/summer peaks are contributing to year-round affordability challenges. Gas service disconnections showed a downward trend in all three jurisdictions (possibly due to fuel-switching from gas to electric heating), but electricity shut-offs continue to increase across the region. Staff emphasized a growing gap between disconnections and reconnections, particularly in D.C., as fewer households are able to restore service after falling behind on bills. The presentation concluded by noting potential policy interventions to mitigate disconnections, including recommendations from COG’s Environmental Justice Toolkit (e.g., eliminating reconnection fees, forgiving past-due utility debt, and expanding shut-off protections during extreme weather events). In discussion, members considered the influence of weather on disconnection trends – noting that severe cold or heat can trigger surges in non-payments and eventual shut-offs – and suggested the importance of anticipating seasonal spikes with enhanced assistance funding. Staff acknowledged these points, observing that broader outreach and proactive planning (including partnerships with utilities and even non-profit organizations) will be crucial as the region continues to monitor and address energy affordability concerns going forward.

6. 2026 MEETING SCHEDULE AND ADJOURNMENT

COG staff confirmed the 2026 BEEAC meeting schedule, with sessions remaining on September 17, and November 19. Before adjourning, Staff also announced the launch of the 12th annual Climate and Energy Leadership Awards, noting that additional information would be shared with members following the meeting. With no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

All meeting materials including speaker presentations and video recording can be found on the MWCOG website by clicking the link below –

<https://www.mwcog.org/events/2026/6/18/event-built-environment-and-energy-advisory-committee/>

Reasonable accommodations are provided upon request, including alternative formats of meeting materials. For more information, visit: www.mwcog.org/accommodations or call (202) 962-3300 or (202) 962-3213 (TDD)