

Passing a Climate Emergency Resolution

This revision: May 14, 2019

"We are careering towards the edge of the abyss ... every day that passes means the world heats up a little more and the cost of our inaction mounts. Every day we fail to act is a day that we step a little closer towards a fate that none of us wants – a fate that will resonate through generations in the damage done to humankind and life on earth." – UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres

The climate crisis represents a real and immediate threat to the future of life on earth. In the face of federal pushback, we need to get our local jurisdictions fully engaged.

A **Climate Emergency Resolution** is the best way to get them engaged. A **Climate Emergency Resolution** is an umbrella that makes possible – and accelerates – a kinds of immediate actions (eg: zero waste ordinance, all-electric reach code, Evergreen for municipal facilities, etc...) and forces the jurisdiction to start updating the General Plan, zoning ordinances, and other guiding documents.

Here's what worked in Petaluma.

- First, get two or three people to commit to the effort. You can't do it alone!
- Reading up on climate issues is helpful but is not essential.
- Review the attached Letter, Resolution, and List of Actions. Revise as needed.
- Schedule meetings with your Mayor and councilpeople: express your concerns, reference the other jurisdictions in Northern CA that have passed Resolutions, listen to their concerns, gauge the sentiment. Find your allies.
- Spread the word in the community. People will want to join you in this effort!
- Write letters to the editor, send emails to council members, and make *public* comments at council meetings. Talk it up!
- Solicit endorsements for the Resolution from local non-profits and businesses.
- Circulate an online petition in support of the Resolution.
- Submit the Resolution at the direction of your Mayor (if s/he is amenable).
- Pack Council chambers on the day the Resolution comes up for discussion. Acknowledge the efforts of your electeds.
- Celebrate an interim victory!

Please feel free to contact me: Pete Gang, pete@commonsensedesign.com

Attachment A: Model List of Actions

This revision: May 3, 2019

*The following actions are to be considered for **immediate implementation following passage of a Climate Emergency Resolution**. They are excerpted from a longer List of Actions to be considered by the newly-formed Climate Action Committee or similar body.*

Overall

- **Be up front about it:** Prominently feature the City/County's goals of zero GHG emissions/drawdown/adaptation on its website. Include accessible, visually-appealing educational information, local resources, volunteer opportunities, etc.
- **Follow through on existing commitments:** Direct RCPA staff to clearly define the City's existing climate commitments and commit City staff to fully implement those commitments. [See RCPA's Climate Action 2020 Table 5.4-5, pages 5-64 through 5-67]
- **Get community input:** Participate in a series of community-led town hall meetings to solicit suggestions from the community for additional immediate and effective climate actions.
- **Create a "suggestion box:"** Solicit ongoing input from City/County employees, city residents, and from the wider community for energy-saving, community-building, climate-smart actions for consideration by the Climate Action Committee.
- **Hire or designate a Sustainability Director** or other responsible individual to coordinate the City/County's climate-related efforts.

Land Use

- **Revise or re-write the current zoning ordinance** in order to remove barriers to development of the dense, compact, fiscally-stable, pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly, zero-emissions city/county that our community envisions. [Examples of current barriers: minimum parking requirements, required setbacks, height limits, Level of Service (LOS) standards, exclusionary zoning, etc.]

Transportation

- **Electrify the fleet:** Replace all city-owned fossil-fueled vehicles (eg: automobiles, light-and heavy-duty trucks, transit vehicles, police vehicles, and others) with vehicles that run fully on electricity. Include 10-year operating costs when considering vehicle purchases.
- **Encourage the switch to clean vehicles:** Expand electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure by directly installing public charging stations and/or incentivizing the private sector to do so. [Carbon Free City Handbook]
- **Finish what we started:** Commit to full implementation of the existing Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan (assuming one exists).
- **Improve what we started:** Begin the process of re-evaluating the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan (assuming one exists) with the goal of making non-automobile transportation safe for all ages and abilities. Align with the congruent goals of "Complete Streets," "Safe Routes to School," and others.
- **Change the mindset:** Pass an anti-idling ordinance prohibiting vehicle idling on city streets for more than 90 seconds (see Santa Cruz Ordinance #2015-05, passed February 24, 2014). Such an ordinance would not be enforceable in privately-owned parking lots, but would be useful in raising awareness.

Building Energy

- **Let the people know what's currently available to them:** Publicize all the resources now available to City and County residents through PGE, Sonoma Clean Power (SCP), the County's Energy and Sustainability Division, and other entities including: home energy audits, tool lending library, Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) tax bill financing for energy efficiency improvements, rebates, incentives, and more.
- **Educate the public:** Provide handouts at the Building and Planning counters on zero net energy (ZNE) residential and commercial best practices (including all-electric), home performance best practices, green building best practices, and more.
- **Educate the public:** Actively and widely promote the RCPA's Community Climate Challenge.
- **Push beyond current energy code:** Join the 40+ other California jurisdictions currently on track to implement a 'reach code' requiring all-electric (no natural gas) new residential construction starting January 1, 2020.

- **Future-proof new residences:** Require that all new construction be “all-electric ready,” which means easily convertible to all-electric (no natural gas or propane) and involves installing electric wires to locations of all gas appliances. Cost to builder is estimated to be \$200 or less.
- **Decarbonize the existing building stock:** Work with local utilities and the State to provide incentives for electrification of existing housing and other building stock -- both appliance-by-appliance and as whole-building retrofits.
- **Solar PV on municipal facilities:** Evaluate the potential for installing PV systems on all municipal facilities, including wastewater treatment ponds.
- **Get City/County staff on board:** Implement training for all City/County employees in basic climate science and climate-smart best habits and practices that result in immediate cost savings.

Electricity

- **Commit to 100% clean electricity:** Purchase Sonoma Clean Power’s Evergreen 100% clean and renewable electricity for all City- or County-owned and -leased facilities.
- **Encourage 100% clean electricity:** Encourage wide use of Evergreen among local households and businesses.

Solid Waste

- **Zero waste ordinance:** Pass a zero waste ordinance similar to City of Sebastopol’s Resolution #6214, passed October 16, 2018. (Recommended by SCWMA. Reference SCWMA Model Ordinance)
- **Polystyrene ban:** Pass a ban on polystyrene food service containers. (Recommended by SCWMA. Reference SCWMA Model Ordinance).
- **Cut down on disposable foodware:** Pass an ordinance limiting the use of single-use serviceware similar to City of Berkeley’s Single Use Foodware and Litter Reduction Ordinance, passed January 22, 2019.
- **Make it easy to recycle:** Install recycling containers for metal, paper, and plastics at **all** trash container locations in the jurisdiction.

Other

- Engage community members in the search for **funding sources for climate mitigation** and adaptation efforts. Possibilities include:

Cap and Trade dollars: [California Climate Investments \(CCI\)](#)
Meeting CA's food waste mandate:
[ReFED Food Waste Investment Report, CalRecycle](#)
A carbon fund: [Statewide Energy Efficiency Collaborative Webinar](#)
[California Cities Create Carbon Funds to Support Climate Action](#)
A carbon energy tax: [Smart Growth America: Carbon Energy Tax](#)