

**RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF ALEXANDRIA TO
DECLARE A CLIMATE EMERGENCY**

RESOLUTION NO. 2909

WHEREAS, global warming over the past century of approximately 1°C has triggered devastating changes to the earth, such as accelerating the collapse of the West Antarctic Ice Sheet, the thawing of the Arctic permafrost, an increase in droughts, heatwaves, forest fires, super storms, flash flooding, the migration of insect-borne diseases, the melting of glaciers, coral bleaching, the mass extinction of species, ocean oxygen loss, and sea level rise; and also is contributing to human migration; and

WHEREAS, global warming is caused by our emissions of carbon dioxide, methane, and other greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, primarily from burning fossil fuels; and

WHEREAS, carbon dioxide concentrations in the atmosphere reached 415 ppm on March 13th of this year, a level last reached roughly 3 million years ago, when global average temperatures and sea levels were significantly higher; today's carbon emissions rates are likely unprecedented over the last 50 million years; and any amount of carbon over 350 ppm causes the earth's temperature to rise; and

WHEREAS, the acceleration of carbon into the atmosphere has increased at a faster rate in the last 100 years than prior centuries; and

WHEREAS, 18 of the 19 warmest years on record for the planet have occurred since 2000, with extreme highs occurring around the world, including temperatures in the arctic ocean reaching 84°F; and

WHEREAS, there is a consensus among scientists, as described in the recent United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report, that we must reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 45% from 2010 levels by no later than 2030—in just eleven years—and reach net zero around 2050, in order to stabilize a 1.5° C (2.4° F) temperature increase to have a chance at avoiding profound and disastrous impacts on global climate, ecosystems, and human societies; and

WHEREAS, meeting these goals will require annual emissions reductions of roughly 4-5% each year and Alexandria's greenhouse gas emissions declined by 1.4% between 2012 and 2015; and

WHEREAS, the Environmental Action Plan 2040 passed by Council in July 2019 commits us to cut in half all city-wide emissions by 2030, with reductions of 80-100 percent by 2050; and

WHEREAS, the city government's emissions account for 4 percent of our community's emissions and residents and businesses account for 96 percent and thus community education and engagement is critical; and

WHEREAS, the costs of addressing this climate emergency are far less than the costs of not addressing the climate crisis; and solving the crisis will take significant public investment, education, commitment and resolve; and

WHEREAS, the recent Global Climate Strike, led by Swedish activist Greta Thunberg, American activist Isra Hirsi, and other youth, may be the largest mass protest for action on global warming in history with an estimated four million participants in 2,500 events across 163 countries on all seven continents demanding climate action and climate justice for all; and

WHEREAS, marginalized populations in Alexandria and worldwide, including people of color, immigrants, indigenous communities, low-income individuals, and people with disabilities, and the unhoused are already disproportionately affected by the effects of climate change, and will continue to bear an excess burden as temperatures increase, oceans rise, and disasters worsen; and

WHEREAS, justice calls for climate resilience that addresses the specific experiences, vulnerabilities, and needs of marginalized communities within Alexandria, who must be included and supported in actively engaging in climate resilience planning, policy, and actions; and

WHEREAS, Alexandria's location along the Potomac River makes it particularly susceptible to rising sea levels and the Northern Virginia Regional Commission estimates that between \$100 million to \$250 Million of Alexandria property will be affected by a rise in sea level of one to five feet, respectively, with many residents displaced; and

WHEREAS, each of us has a moral duty to safeguard the planet for future generations and we need to take strong and unprecedented action to lead and enable community-wide greenhouse gas emissions reductions and prepare Alexandria for the effects of climate change;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE CITY COUNCIL OF ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA

declares that a climate emergency threatens our city, region, Commonwealth, nation, civilization, humanity and the natural world; and

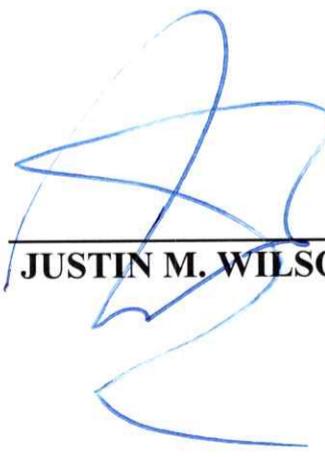
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the City Council commits to a citywide just transition and climate emergency mobilization effort to reverse global warming, which, with appropriate financial and regulatory assistance from the Commonwealth of Virginia and Federal authorities, reaffirms our commitment to the goals, targets, and actions set forth in the City's Environmental Action Plan 2040, ends citywide greenhouse gas emissions as quickly as possible, immediately initiates an effort to safely draw down carbon from the atmosphere, and accelerates adaptation and resilience strategies in preparation for intensifying climate impacts; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the City of Alexandria commits to educating our residents and businesses about the climate emergency and underscores the need for full community participation, inclusion, and support, and recognizes that the residents and businesses of Alexandria, along with community organizations dedicated to faith, youth, labor, academic institutions, civic participation, and the rights of marginalized populations, along with other such allies will be integral to and in the leadership of the mobilization effort; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the City of Alexandria will pursue a reduction in the community-wide greenhouse gas emissions from our energy use by advocating for the Commonwealth of Virginia to adopt policies and/or regulations that will decarbonize the statewide electricity supply, or that will allow for community choice over electricity supply purchasing; and

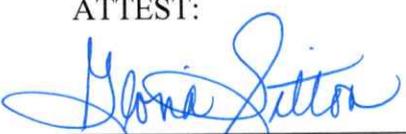
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the City of Alexandria calls on the Federal Government, Congress, the Commonwealth of Virginia, and other local governments to declare a Climate Emergency; and to initiate a just transition and climate emergency mobilization effort to restore a safe climate and build a sustainable economy; and to convey the urgency to citizens.

Adopted: October 22, 2019



JUSTIN M. WILSON MAYOR

ATTEST:



Gloria A. Sitton, CMC City Clerk

October 1, 2019

The Honorable Justin Wilson, Mayor
The Honorable Elizabeth B. Bennett-Parker, Vice Mayor
The Honorable Canek Aguirre
The Honorable John Taylor Chapman
The Honorable Amy Jackson
The Honorable Del Pepper
The Honorable Mohamed Seifeldein
City of Alexandria
301 King Street
Alexandria, VA. 22314

Dear Mayor Wilson, Vice Mayor Bennett, and Members of Council:

We are writing to ask that Alexandria government begin cutting its greenhouse gas emissions on an annual basis commensurate with the reductions needed to avoid catastrophic climate change.

This July 9th, City Council voted unanimously to adopt the Environmental Action Plan 2040 (EAP-2040). Coincidentally, on July 8th Alexandria received more than three inches of rain in less than an hour, resulting in extreme flash flooding causing millions of dollars in damages. The weekend of July 20th and 21st annual events in the city were canceled because of extreme heat, something that will happen with growing frequency, as annual average U.S. temperatures are expected to rise roughly 2.5°F by mid-century relative to the recent (1976-2005) average.

Similarly, on May 22nd of last year Council held a work session which included discussion of the Environmental Policy Commission's recommendations for the phase 1 update of the Environmental Action Plan. Just three days before this, a CSX freight train derailed in Alexandria after several inches of rainfall over the previous week washed out rocks supporting the track. Again, millions of dollars in damages occurred.

These incidents show the critical importance of Council adopting a goal of reducing community-wide greenhouse gas emissions by 50% by 2030—achieving roughly 5% emissions reductions each year for the next ten years—as part of the EAP 2040. They also show that the future impacts and unexpected costs we will face if we don't rapidly phase out greenhouse gas emissions will be far larger than the investments needed to do so. Swiftly ending our greenhouse gas emissions isn't ambitious, it is instead the only logical, moral choice we have.

Making these changes will not be easy. To quote from the recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change special report on the impacts of warming of 1.5°C, "All pathways [to provide at least a one-in-two to two-in-three chance of avoiding catastrophic climate changes] begin now and involve rapid and unprecedented societal transformation." In other words, it will not be

enough simply to have an energy and climate plan to reduce emissions, or to marginally improve our emissions reduction efforts. Rather, we must make sure we meet or exceed the 2030 emissions reduction target if humanity—including current and future Alexandrians—is to have a fighting chance of maintaining a recognizable, habitable environment.

We are hopeful that the Energy and Climate Change Task Force called for by the EAP-2040 will lead the development of an action plan to enable our community's rapid transition away from fossil fuel use. More immediately, however, we believe Alexandria city government must begin this transition for its own operations starting now.

We urge you to instruct the City Manager to develop a budget proposal for 2021 that reduces Alexandria City government's aggregate greenhouse gas emissions from all sources by at least 5% by the end of the 2021 fiscal year, and reduces electricity use by 5%. As Mayor Wilson stated upon the EAP-2040's adoption, "Alexandria must do its part to combat the climate crisis...we intend to lead by example." City government planning to achieve substantial, steady emissions reductions will raise awareness among the city's residents and businesses of energy use changes, help inform private sector initiatives, and demonstrate the city's commitment to live up to its Eco-City aspiration. It will be difficult to convince residents and businesses to reduce emissions on pace to meet the 2030 objective if Alexandria City government is not practicing what it preaches.

The climate change-related impacts referenced above are not the "new normal" for our city, they are instead a glimpse of our future as our continued emissions of greenhouse gases lock in even more extreme weather—heat waves, flash floods, sea level rise, dangerous storms, and public health risks—far longer into the future than recorded human history.

We cannot wait any longer to take aggressive action. We urge you to direct City government to take strong steps to adequately respond to the climate crisis.

Sincerely,



Scott Barstow



Stephen Koenig

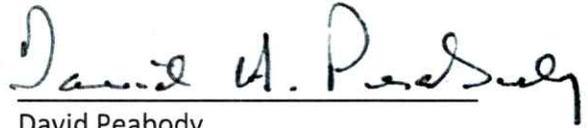


Boyd Walker



Steve Banashek


Kathie Hoekstra


David Peabody


Alexander Clark


Pamela Sams


Paul Kaplowitz


James Durham


Bill Pugh


Melissa McMahon