

Proposed City of Alexandria Emergency Climate Mobilization

WHEREAS, the current global warming of approximately 1 degree Celsius has triggered devastating changes to the earth such as: accelerating collapse of the West Antarctic Ice Sheet, the thawing of the Arctic permafrost, an increase in mega 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;

WHEREAS, these climate crisis changes will cause an increase in water and food shortages, civil unrest, state failure, civil war and terrorism throughout the world with no region or nation being immune to these effects, including the City of Alexandria;

WHEREAS, there is a strong consensus among scientists as described in the United Nation's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the US National Climate Assessment that we must cut greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 45% no later than 2030 and reach net zero by 2050 in order to stabilize at or near 1.5 C (2.4 F) threshold believed to provide a reasonable chance for the survival of human civilization and other complex life forms on this planet;

WHEREAS, the current federal government, state and local governments, national media and civil society including most climate organizations have drastically underestimated the urgency of the climate and ecological crisis, failed to accept that we face an unprecedented global emergency, and relied on failed strategies of gradualism; and

WHEREAS, the costs of addressing this climate emergency are far less than the costs of not addressing the climate crisis:

The City of Alexandria states that

- 1) we must together implement a massive emergency global mobilization effort to successfully eliminate greenhouse gas emissions and a plan for the removal of excess carbon from the atmosphere;
- 2) each of us has a moral duty to safeguard the planet for future generations; and
- 3) that although the City has been a leader in responding to the challenge of the climate crisis, including establishing the Eco-City Charter in 2008 and an Environmental Action Plan in 2009 which established a number of goals to reduce GHG emissions, we now need to do more, much faster while encouraging our citizenry to individually do more and much faster.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alexandria City Council calls upon the national administration, the Congress, the state administration, each of our state legislators and other local governments to join Alexandria to use all available powers and resources to:

1. declare a climate emergency and initiate a massive global mobilization to restore a safe climate and build a sustainable economy; and
2. transform the climate by reducing greenhouse gas emissions by the city and the entire Alexandria community by 45% no later than 2030 and eliminate GHG emission for both no later than 2050.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Alexandria City Council calls upon the City Manager, the City Public Schools and the Alexandria Environmental Policy Commission to advise the Council no later than the end of FY 2020 on specific methods and their return on investment (best estimate of costs vs. GHG emission reductions) for meeting and accelerating the above GHG emission goals.

Scott Barstow comments on Environmental Action Plan 2040

Good morning Mayor Wilson, Vice Mayor Bennett-Parker, and members of Council, and thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today on the proposed Environmental Action Plan-2040.

I'd like to commend city staff and the Environmental Policy Commission for their months and months of hard work and late nights in putting the update together.

By far the single most important goal in the update is reducing our community's greenhouse gas emissions by 50 percent by 2030. As part of this effort I urge Council to adopt the Environmental Policy Commission's recommendation to extend the 100% carbon-free electricity by 2030 target for City operations to also include Alexandria City Public Schools and AlexRenew, which use as much electricity as the rest of City operations combined. Council should also consider adapting the 100% carbon-free electricity target to apply to community-wide electricity use by 2035.

Targets are great, but follow-through is better. Council must treat climate change like the emergency that it is. A considerable fraction of the carbon we've emitted to date and that we'll emit over the coming decades will remain in the atmosphere for tens to hundreds of thousands of years. To quote a recent journal article "[T]he next few decades offer a brief window of opportunity to minimize large-scale and potentially catastrophic climate change that will extend longer than the entire history of human civilization thus far."ⁱ So we've now established a world where year-round forest fires, heat waves reaching 120 degrees, storms like Hurricane Maria and Sandy, and weather events dropping several inches of rain in the space of hours happen regularly. And the weather will get hotter, more chaotic, and more damaging as long as we continue emitting greenhouse gases.

I'd like to read another quote, for context, from the book *A Perfect Moral Storm*.

[A]ssuming a benchmark [of greenhouse gas emissions] based on current practices encourages the perception that cuts in emissions from that paradigm are appropriately seen as a *sacrifice* made by the current generation...of something to which they are otherwise entitled. But this is surely not a good way to think about the issue. If current practices impose large costs on the world's poor, future people, animals, and the rest of nature, it seems bizarre to assert that the current generation has an overriding claim to, or even a legitimate expectation of, continuing with them indefinitely into the future. So, why take that situation as the relevant benchmark against which to calculate "costs"?ⁱⁱ

I ask you to realize that you are political leaders at a pivotal time in human history. You and your recent colleagues have succeeded in launching the RiverRenew project, requiring the spending of tens of millions of dollars and planning for the financing and spending of hundreds of millions more to get the job done. Let's roll up our sleeves and start doing the same thing on climate change.

ⁱ Clark, P. U., Shakun, J. D., Marcott, S. A., Mix, A. C., Eby, M., Kulp, S., ... & Schrag, D. P. (2016). Consequences of twenty-first-century policy for multi-millennial climate and sea-level change. *Nature climate change*, 6(4), 360.

ⁱⁱ Gardiner, S. M. (2011). *A perfect moral storm: the ethical tragedy of climate change*. Oxford University Press.