

RESOLUTION NO. M-2289

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF OLYMPIA, WASHINGTON, TO RESPOND TO THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY, DECLARING THE INTENT OF THE CITY TO ELECTRIFY CITY-OWNED FACILITIES AND OLYMPIA'S BUILT ENVIRONMENT

WHEREAS, climate change is an existential crisis posing one of the most serious threats to the existence of humanity and all species on the planet; a threat that intersects and compounds all other crises facing humanity and our earth; and

WHEREAS, the 11th United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (“IPCC”) report from October 2018 states that we must cut greenhouse gas emissions in half by 2030 to limit devastating global warming and avoid a climate catastrophe; and

WHEREAS, in 2018, the City of Olympia adopted Resolution No. M-1976 adopting common targets to reduce communitywide greenhouse gas emissions 45 percent below 2015 levels by 2030, and then 85 percent below 2015 levels by 2050. In 2019 these goals were placed in the Comprehensive Plan via amendment; and

WHEREAS, in 2019, in collaboration with Olympia High School students, Olympia approved a Resolution Expressing a Commitment to Protect the Youth of this Community from the Risks of Climate Destruction (M-2045), which among other things committed the City to achieve net zero emissions by 2040; and

WHEREAS, in February 2021, the City passed a Resolution Declaring a Climate Emergency (M-2194). A declaration that challenges our regional partners and community members to “to help further the Thurston County Climate Mitigation Plan through partnership with local jurisdictions and other entities” and to “adopt a lens of climate change and climate equity” in planning, zoning, permitting, budgeting, expenditures, ordinances, and all other city efforts, policies, and practices to further climate action efforts and our accepted regional climate mitigation plan; and

WHEREAS, in February 2021, the City accepted the Thurston Climate Mitigation Plan (TCMP), committing the City to working with Thurston County, the cities of Lacey and Tumwater and the Thurston Regional Planning Council to substantially reduce regional greenhouse gas emissions; and

WHEREAS, a Greenhouse Gas Inventory Report for Calendar Years 2015 – 2019 found that Thurston County greenhouse gas emissions have increased 15% since 2015, and the built environment was responsible for 63% of all emissions in 2019; and

WHEREAS, in Washington State, homes and buildings are the single fastest growing source of carbon pollution, up 50 percent since 1990, and now account for 27 percent of Washington’s carbon emissions; and

WHEREAS, natural gas consumption represents the second largest source of greenhouse gas emissions from the built environment in Thurston County and the Thurston Climate Mitigation Plan identifies reducing natural gas use as a key strategy to achieve the most substantial reductions in local greenhouse gas emissions; and

WHEREAS, methane leaks during the production, processing, transmission, and distribution of natural gas can be substantial, releasing a potent greenhouse gas with 84 times the warming potential of carbon dioxide; and

WHEREAS, the United States and other leading economies recently agreed to the Global Methane Pledge to reduce Methane emissions 30 percent by 2030; and

WHEREAS, in 2019, Washington State passed the Clean Energy Transformation Act (CETA), which sets milestones for electric utilities to transition toward a 100% clean electricity. Under CETA, utilities must eliminate coal-fired electricity from their mix by 2025, become greenhouse-gas neutral by 2030 (using offsets, if necessary), and provide 100 percent renewable energy by 2045; and

WHEREAS, Olympia must take additional measures to decarbonize, transitioning from fossil fuel powered space-heating, water-heating, and cooking equipment to all-electric buildings powered by affordable, renewable electricity; and

WHEREAS, electrification will improve indoor air quality and overall health, by eliminating natural gas combustion inside homes that produces harmful indoor air pollution; and

WHEREAS, there are well-documented risks to respiratory health from gas stove pollution, and infants and children are particularly vulnerable to respiratory illnesses associated with gas stove pollution; and

WHEREAS, lower-income households are more likely to suffer from health impacts from outdoor and indoor air pollution, which are exacerbated when exposed to pollution from gas stoves; and

WHEREAS, electrification is widely recognized as a powerful strategy to address both climate change and poor air quality in the frontline communities most vulnerable to climate impacts; and

WHEREAS, every new building relying on fossil fuels for heating, cooling, and cooking will have a negative impact on the climate for decades to come and require additional investments to be retrofitted to electric systems as the climate emergency worsens; and

WHEREAS, in June of 2021, the Olympia City Council supported a referral to require the electrification of all new City-owned buildings and major renovations of existing City buildings; and

WHEREAS, in June of 2021, the Olympia City Council supported a referral directing staff to develop a scope, schedule, and budget to conduct a regional cost assessment of requiring non-fossil fuel sourced heating and power in new commercial and residential development in the City; and

WHEREAS, the City has the opportunity to lead by example to make decisive, transformative, and sustainable changes in its municipal energy consumption, and can significantly lower the City's greenhouse gas emissions and overall carbon impact; and

WHEREAS, citywide building electrification is necessary to achieve Olympia's greenhouse gas reduction targets, and such actions will also improve public health and increase the quality of life throughout the City;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF OLYMPIA, that the City of Olympia recognizes the global and local benefits of accelerating the transition to all-electric buildings throughout the City; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED as follows:

Section 1. The City Manager is directed to electrify all newly constructed City-owned buildings and major renovations of existing City buildings, except where exemptions are necessary due to physical space limitations, availability of technology, or cost constraints. Additional upfront costs of five percent (5%) or less shall not be considered a cost constraint. Exemptions must be approved by the City Council and exempt buildings should be built in a manner to support the easy transition to electric systems at any time during the life of the building. This policy will become effective January 12, 2022.

Section 2. The City Manager is directed to require the electrification of all new projects and major renovations of existing buildings receiving City funding of \$50,000 or more, a donation of City property with an appraised value of \$50,000 or more, or a sale of City-owned property where the difference between the appraised value and sale price is \$50,000 or more, except where exemptions are necessary due to physical space limitations, availability of technology, or cost constraints. Council may consider the total cost of construction and operating costs in determining the issue of cost constraints. Exemptions must be approved by the City Council and exempt buildings should be built in a manner to support the easy transition to electric systems at any time during the life of the building. This policy will become effective following a work session to discuss citywide electrification on or before April 1, 2022.

Section 3. The City Manager is directed to inventory City-owned facilities that use fossil fuels and evaluate the feasibility of retrofitting existing buildings to become all-electric by 2030. The inventory and evaluation will make use of existing reports and data to prepare preliminary feasibility recommendations by January 1, 2024.


Section 4. The City of Olympia will encourage the Washington State Legislature and State Building Code Council, and other local entities, such as Thurston County, neighboring cities, school districts, and major institutions, to join in this step to address regional greenhouse emissions from our built environment, by adopting similar building electrification policies to invest in clean energy assets.

Section 5. The City Manager is directed to schedule a City Council work session no later than April 1, 2022, to discuss policy pathways and potential challenges to citywide electrification of all new buildings

PASSED BY THE OLYMPIA CITY COUNCIL this 18th day of January 2022.


MAYOR

ATTEST:


CITY CLERK

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

Mark Barber
CITY ATTORNEY