



CITY OF
GRAND RAPIDS
 IT'S IN MINNESOTA'S NATURE

REQUEST FOR COUNCIL ACTION

AGENDA DATE: January 24th , 2022

AGENDA ITEM: Consider adopting a resolution declaring a climate emergency in Grand Rapids, Minnesota.

PREPARED BY: Matt Wegwerth

BACKGROUND:

Grand Rapids has just this past year experienced numerous climate change related impacts including a record June heat wave, dangerous air quality from drought-fueled forest fires where even healthy people were encouraged to remain inside, and water restrictions from the same drought, making it clear that the climate crisis is not only a future issue — it is affecting us here and now. Recent scientific research indicates that to achieve the goal of limiting temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius, carbon emissions must be halved by 2030 and reach net zero global emissions by 2050. Transition to a clean energy economy, if not carefully planned, would have a disruptive effect on impact on the livelihoods of many in our community while a well-planned transition may provide expanded job opportunities for local residents;

Attached is a resolution declaring that a climate emergency threatens our city, region, state, nation, humanity and the natural world and that the City commits to working for a just transition and climate emergency mobilization efforts and will:

- Complete and Implement a Climate Action Plan
- Fully Implement our autonomous electric vehicle shuttle pilot program
- Continue serving as a regional leader and share our experience with the Grand Rapids Solar Garden project and autonomous electric vehicle project so other communities may learn from us and implement similar ideas

REQUESTED COUNCIL ACTION:

Make a motion to adopt a resolution declaring a climate emergency in Grand Rapids, Minnesota.

Council member introduced the following resolution and moved for its adoption:

RESOLUTION NO. 22-

RESOLUTION DECLARING A CLIMATE EMERGENCY IN GRAND RAPIDS, MINNESOTA

WHEREAS Grand Rapids has just this past year experienced numerous climate change related impacts including a record June heat wave, dangerous air quality from drought-fueled forest fires where even healthy people were encouraged to remain inside, and water restrictions from the same drought, making it clear that the climate crisis is not only a future issue — it is affecting us here and now;

WHEREAS extreme weather will create new challenges for Grand Rapids' infrastructure and finances and will pose a threat to the economic vitality of our residents and businesses;

WHEREAS the greatest burden from an inadequate response to the climate crisis will be felt by historically marginalized or underserved communities as well as the youngest generation, including the children and grandchildren of Grand Rapids;

WHEREAS in Minnesota, the ten warmest and wettest years ever recorded have all occurred since 1998, warming surface waters are leading to a significant loss of fish habitat for many prominent species as well as increasing the risk of harmful algae blooms, forests are changing as native northern species are strained by warming temperatures, crops are stressed by cycles of drought and floods, home insurance rates are rising far faster than the national average from an average of \$368 in 1998 to \$1348 in 2015, and faster warming winters are leading to new pests as well as shorter winter recreation seasons;

WHEREAS, the bi-partisan Next Generation Energy Act, passed by the Minnesota State Legislature and signed by then Governor Tim Pawlenty in 2007, committed our State to achieving to an 80% reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2050 and with interim goals of 15% and 30% below 2005 GHG emissions levels by 2015 and 2025, respectively, with cities being key drivers of achieving these goals;

WHEREAS, our State did not meet its 2015 goal, and is not yet on track to reach our future targets;

WHEREAS, in April 2016 world leaders from 175 countries, including the United States, recognized the threat of climate change and the urgent need to combat it by signing the Paris Agreement, agreeing to "pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius";

WHEREAS, we have already reached a temperature increase of nearly 1.1 degrees Celsius (nearly 2 degrees Fahrenheit) as compared to pre-industrial times and the death and destruction already wrought by this level of global warming demonstrate that the Earth is already too hot for safety and justice, as attested by increased and intensifying wildfires, floods, rising seas, diseases, droughts, and extreme weather;

WHEREAS, in August 2021 the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the United Nations body responsible for assessing the science related to climate change, released a report that

stated “It is unequivocal that human influence has warmed the atmosphere and land,” and that “Human influence has warmed the climate at a rate that is unprecedented in at least the last 2000 years,” and “with every additional increment of global warming, changes in extremes continue to become larger”;

WHEREAS, recent scientific research indicates that to achieve the goal of limiting temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius, carbon emissions must be halved by 2030 and reach net zero global emissions by 2050;

WHEREAS, a transition to a clean energy economy, if not carefully planned, would have a disruptive effect on impact on the livelihoods of many in our community while a well-planned transition may provide expanded job opportunities for local residents;

WHEREAS, 2,012 jurisdictions in 34 countries including Minnesota leaders Duluth, Minneapolis, and Crystal Bay Township, have already declared climate emergencies in order to focus attention on the need for rapid action to address climate change;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that Grand Rapids declares that a climate emergency threatens our city, region, state, nation, humanity and the natural world.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, Grand Rapids commits to working for a just transition and climate emergency mobilization effort and will:

- Complete and Implement a Climate Action Plan
- Fully Implement our autonomous electric vehicle shuttle pilot program
- Continue serving as a regional leader and share our experience with the Grand Rapids Solar Garden project and autonomous electric vehicle project so other communities may learn from us and implement similar ideas

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, Grand Rapids calls on the Minnesota legislature and executive branch to immediately and aggressively support cities of all sizes around Minnesota to both mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change including providing funding and resources for the development and implementation of climate action plans.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, Grand Rapids calls on the federal government to immediately commit resources to support the climate mitigation and adaptation efforts of cities large and small, to invest in the infrastructure needed for a sustainable future, to ensure that investment is at the scale needed, and to provide the necessary global leadership to keep global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit).

Adopted by the Council this 24th day of January, 2022

Dale Christy, Mayor

ATTEST:

Kim Johnson-Gibeau, City Clerk

Council member seconded the foregoing resolution and the following voted in favor thereof: ;and the following voted against the same: ; whereby the resolution was declared duly passed and adopted.