



**TOWN OF LOS GATOS  
COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT**

MEETING DATE: 12/17/2019

ITEM NO: 2

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DATE: December 11, 2019  
TO: Mayor and Town Council  
FROM: Laurel Prevetti, Town Manager  
SUBJECT: Adopt the proposed Green Monday Resolution

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Adopt the proposed Green Monday Resolution.

**BACKGROUND:**

Green Monday is a social enterprise group that aims to reduce climate change and global food insecurity while promoting the health benefits of a plant-based diet. It was founded by David Yeung in April 2012 in Hong Kong. Green Monday has programs in restaurants, corporations and municipalities, and advocates a once-a-week, plant-based meal philosophy. Examples of Green Monday materials may be found as Attachment 1 to this report.

The Green Monday program has two components:

1. Feature vegan, plant-based meals on Mondays (or another day of the week) and
2. Educate the community on the impacts of their food choices on climate change and the environment.

Vegans eat a plant-based diet and do not consume animal meat or animal products, including dairy and eggs. Protein is instead acquired through other sources, including soybeans (e.g., tofu, tempeh, and edamame), lentils, chickpeas, seitan, quinoa, oats, wild rice, peanuts, almonds, seeds, beans, green peas, broccoli, spinach, potatoes, asparagus, etc.

The Green Monday movement does not try to convert people to veganism. The goal is to promote a sustainable food system and educate the public about reducing carbon footprint and other benefits of giving up meat for one day per week.

**PREPARED BY:** Holly Zappala  
Management Analyst

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Reviewed by: Town Manager, Assistant Town Manager, Town Attorney, and Finance Director

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BACKGROUND (continued):

On August 20, 2019, the Town Council approved the draft General Plan 2040 Guiding Principles which include an objective to “identify and provide opportunities to enhance the Town’s sustainability policies and practices.” A Green Monday program is an opportunity to work towards the sustainability goal by helping to mitigate climate change and conserve resources.

DISCUSSION:

**Climate Change and Agriculture**

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (UNFAO) estimates that the livestock sector contributes 14.5% of anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions, which is more than cars, trucks, trains, and planes combined. Based on the UNFAO research, animal agriculture is one of the leading causes of climate change and puts considerable strain on the earth’s land, water and energy resources. Cows are ruminants, meaning that microbes in their stomachs ferment their food, which in turn generates methane, which is released into the air. Manure from livestock also emits methane in addition to nitrous oxide. By comparison, methane gas accelerates climate change faster than carbon dioxide because, although it breaks down more rapidly, it is much more efficient at sealing in heat.

According to the UNFAO, an estimated 18 million acres of rainforest are lost every year and animal agriculture is responsible for between 75 and 80 percent of this deforestation. Animal agriculture is the biggest driver of rainforest destruction, as areas are cut and cleared to provide room for grazing cattle and growing grain to feed animals in large scale farms. Rainforests are crucial to mitigating climate change by absorbing carbon dioxide and exchanging it for oxygen.

In addition, animal products have a larger water footprint than crop products as significantly more water is needed to grow food to sustain the livestock than would be needed for direct human consumption. Large scale animal farms also use more energy than crop farms for lighting, heating, cooling, automated machinery for feeding and watering, and ventilation.

Over one-third of global agriculture is not fed to people, but to livestock in order to satisfy the demand for meat in developed countries.

The overarching goals of Green Monday are to minimize carbon footprint, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, lessen deforestation, conserve water, reduce global food insecurity, and increase sustainability. An Oxford University study published in March 2016 in the Proceedings of National Academy of Sciences found that a switch to a plant-based diet can reduce an individual’s food-related greenhouse gas emissions by up to 70%, while improving health and providing substantial savings in health care costs and avoided costs of climate change impacts.

DISCUSSION (continued):

**Municipalities Adopting Green Monday**

On September 13, 2018, Berkeley became the first city in the United States to adopt a Green Monday resolution (see Attachment 2). Berkeley's resolution includes provisions that state all City-managed programs will provide plant-based meals on Mondays; City Council members will procure vegan food for their meetings; the City will work with Green Monday to schedule educational programs in libraries, community centers, and private homes; the City will incentivize restaurants to include vegan items on their menus by providing "Green Monday approved" certificates to be displayed; and libraries, schools and community centers are encouraged to display Green Monday posters and literature. According to Berkeley Councilmember Kate Harrison, the Green Monday adoption is more symbolic than impactful, as the once a week move to vegan menus applies to City functions only and Berkeley does not have a lot of events or provide food to a lot of people. For everyone else and all other occasions, observance is strictly voluntary.

On July 23, 2019, Emeryville became the second US city to adopt a Green Monday resolution (see Attachment 3). Emeryville's resolution includes two provisions: that all City-managed programs will provide either a fully plant-based offering or an attractive plant-based alternative offering one day a week and that the City Council will procure plant-based food for their meetings. This is impactful for the community, as Emeryville's Community Services Department provides food service to the public at their Child Development Center, Senior Center, and Recreation Center.

On October 22, 2019, the city of Mountain View adopted a Sustainability Action Plan for FY 2019/20 through 2021/22, which included a plant-based diet initiative. Mountain View dedicated \$30,000 over the three years to this initiative and plans to leverage resources and volunteer support provided by organizations such as Green Monday to support the effort (see page 18 of the staff report in Attachment 4).

Other municipalities across the country have adopted similar programs. Oakland, New York City, Los Angeles, Pittsburgh, and Cleveland have all adopted some form of a "Meatless Monday" initiative.

CONCLUSION:

The Town already has a goal in place to identify and provide opportunities to enhance sustainability policies and practices. The community has expressed an interest in taking actions to mitigate and reverse climate change. The Green Monday program provides a valuable opportunity to model for and educate the community on choices they can make that will positively impact the environment. Given the Town's existing sustainability goal and the fact that eating a plant-based vegan diet is a powerful action that an individual can take to combat

CONCLUSION (continued):

climate change, staff recommends that Council adopt the draft Resolution in Attachment 5 to this report. The Green Monday program is flexible and can be customized to fit the Town's needs.

With the adoption of the proposed resolution, the Town would participate in the two major components of Green Monday as follows:

Sustainable Meal Choices

- Town meetings and events, including Town Council meetings, that include a meal or food feature either a fully plant-based offering or an attractive plant-based alternative.
- Local restaurants are recognized for including vegan menu choices by displaying Green Monday certificates in their windows or badges for their websites from the Town (provided at no charge by Green Monday).

Community Education

- Educational tables can be set up at community events using free materials provided on the Green Monday website and monitored by volunteers from Green Monday.
- Educational programs can be held at the Library regarding environmentally responsible plant-based food choices. Green Monday can send volunteer speakers at no charge.
- Green Monday posters and literature can be displayed at the Library and Town administration offices.

COORDINATION:

This report was coordinated with the Town Manager's Office and Town Attorney.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Green Monday has volunteered to provide many of the services needed to run the program. The anticipated costs would include staff time for any Library programming and printing costs for posters and flyers.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT:

This is not a project defined under CEQA, and no further action is required.

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SUBJECT: Adopt the Proposed Green Monday Resolution

DATE: December 17, 2019

Attachments:

1. Green Monday sample materials
2. Berkeley Green Monday Resolution
3. Emeryville Green Monday Resolution
4. Mountain View Sustainability Action Plan Staff Report
5. Draft Town of Los Gatos Green Monday Resolution