

Hartford Climate Emergency Resolution^[1]

Drafted for the Consideration of the Court of Common Council of the City of Hartford

WHEREAS human activities based on the extraction and use of fossil fuels have warmed the Earth sufficiently to end the 12,000-year period of climate cycle that allowed agriculture and human civilization to develop and flourish; and

WHEREAS the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) – the world's most respected organization for study of research on climate change – noted in its 2014 Fifth Assessment Report, “Continued emission of greenhouse gases will cause further warming and long-lasting changes in all components of the climate system, increasing the likelihood of severe, pervasive, and irreversible impacts for people and ecosystems”; and

WHEREAS the burning of fossil fuels has increased atmospheric CO₂ concentration to 414 parts per million (ppm) – well in excess of the 350 ppm level long thought to be the safe upper boundary and substantially higher than the global 800,000-year maximum of 280 ppm – causing increasingly numerous, intense, and destructive wildfires, floods, storms, and droughts, as well as sea-level rise and the spread of novel diseases; and

WHEREAS climate-fueled droughts, famine, disease, and war have already killed millions of people around the world and displaced millions more; and

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, pledging to work to keep warming “well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels” and to “pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C”; and

WHEREAS in October 2018, an IPCC special report projected that limiting warming to the 1.5°C target this century will require an unprecedented transformation of every sector of the global economy by 2030; and

WHEREAS in March 2020, climate scientists calculated that global warming has already exceeded pre-industrial average global temperatures by over 1.2°C, accelerating self-reinforcing changes (“feedback loops”), including the exponential increase in the release of sequestered methane, a greenhouse gas with some twenty-five times the global-warming potential of carbon dioxide; and

WHEREAS human impacts on the environment including climate change, pollution, overfishing, and habitat loss are causing the sixth major extinction, and World Wildlife Fund's 2018 Living Planet report finds that there has been a 60% decline in global wildlife populations since 1970; and

WHEREAS in November 2019, 11,258 scientists around the world declared, “clearly and unequivocally that planet Earth is facing a climate emergency”; and

WHEREAS Connecticut's Governor's Council on Climate Change (GC3) established in its Phase 1 Report that Connecticut could expect by 2050 serious adverse changes, including increase in mean sea level in Long Island Sound of 20 inches, an increase in flood risk by a factor of 5 to 10, high water levels comparable to those of Superstorm Sandy every 5 to 10 years, a temperature increase of 5F compared to the 1970-1999 baseline, resulting in a quintupling of above-90F days per year from 5 to 25 and a 30% reduction in days with frost from 124 to 85, increased drought risk and resulting increased risk of low

water availability, increased risk of extreme precipitation events, and stronger hurricanes with faster winds and higher precipitation; and

WHEREAS emissions reductions targets set by the governor's executive orders (45% greenhouse gas reduction by 2030 and 80% greenhouse gas reduction by 2050), the Transportation Climate Initiative (transportation emissions reduction of 30% by 2032), and the Integrated Resources Plan (zero emissions from electrical generation by 2040) require dramatic expansion of renewable energy systems at a rapid pace; and

WHEREAS the Millstone Power Plant, which currently provides 41% of Connecticut's electricity and the vast majority of Connecticut's low carbon electricity, is scheduled to be decommissioned in 2032, necessitating dramatic expansion of renewable energy systems at a rapid pace to meet emissions goals; and

WHEREAS the Governor's Council on Climate Change (GC3) working groups have produced 61 recommendations of vast scope and scale requiring significant investment and societal mobilization to achieve; and

WHEREAS since 2001's Climate Change Action Plan, over 20 bills, 35 reports and inventories, 10 designations and authorities, 6 plans and strategies, 8 declarations and initiatives, and 2 summits, Connecticut has established climate change as an urgent problem but not yet taken the action necessary to address its own recommendations and predictions; and

WHEREAS quickly restoring a safe climate requires a comprehensive emergency mobilization to reduce greenhouse gas emissions across all sectors, to remove greenhouse gases from the atmosphere, to adopt measures to protect wildlife from the consequences of abrupt climate change, and to make it possible for human beings to enjoy long, healthy, satisfying, and productive lives free of conflict, fear, and shortages of critical resources; and

WHEREAS Black, indigenous, other communities of color, and low-income communities in the United States and around the world have suffered the gravest consequences of the extractive economy since its inception and also suffer first and most acutely from climate disruption and environmental hazards, including air, water, and land pollution; and

WHEREAS Hartford has a poverty rate of 30.1% and has been designated an "environmental justice community" by the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, indicating that a critical number of its residents experience systemic racial, social, and economic injustices and disproportionate exposure to the effects of climate change and environmental degradation; and

WHEREAS more than 100 municipalities and other governments in the U.S. have declared climate emergencies, including Middletown, New Britain, and New Haven; and

WHEREAS it is vital that the City of Hartford rise to the challenge of the greatest crisis in history by joining local and global efforts to transition to a just and sustainable economy not based on fossil fuels;

NOW BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the Common Council of the City of Hartford declares there to be a climate emergency that threatens the existence of our civilization and the natural world; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this resolution provides the foundation upon which the City of Hartford shall develop future priorities, legislation, policies, plans, budgets, and actions including for state and federal grants within the City; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Hartford Common Council will work with the Mayor to establish an emergency mobilization effort that, with ongoing City funding and appropriate financial and regulatory assistance from state and federal authorities, will aim to end City - generated greenhouse gas emissions by December 31, 2030, to adopt techniques to safely reduce emitted carbon, and to achieve or exceed the goals laid out in the city's Climate Action Plan in the areas of energy, food, landscape, transportation, waste, and water; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Common Council urges the Mayor to direct all City department heads, committees, and commissions to establish plans by December 31, 2021 for reducing greenhouse gas emissions by both the City and the wider community, placing the highest priority on providing the benefits of a clean-energy economy to all community members on an equitable basis; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City of Hartford recognizes that environmental injustice is a racial justice issue, understands that an equitable transition to a fossil-fuel-free economy requires full community participation, and commits to keeping the concerns of vulnerable communities central to a just transition; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City of Hartford and its task force commit to work with local organizations and communities to include job creation, environmental justice, and public health in project development and to prioritize equitable outcomes, particularly for poor and marginalized communities; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City of Hartford will advocate for coordinated climate, air, land, and water policies and actions at the regional, state, and federal levels to ensure a safe climate, protect environments and ecosystems, and align with Governor's Council on Climate Change (GC3) recommendations; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City of Hartford supports the development of carbon pricing legislation, such as carbon fee and dividend; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City of Hartford will commit at least 0.1% of its budget to critical climate actions and investments and will increase its investment at a rate of ___% of budget expenditures per year until the city's climate goals are met; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City of Hartford shall divest its employee pension funds from fossil fuels.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a transition to a green economy means employing local workers in a mobilization effort building and installing renewable energy infrastructure, growing local healthy food, restoring ecosystems, supporting and expanding parks and other green spaces, improving air quality, and retrofitting and redesigning our built environment, electric grid and transportation systems to secure a just and vibrant future for all.