



Legislation Text

File #: RES. 2020-R024, **Version:** 1

To recognize the effects of global warming caused by human activity and to establish a climate action goal to achieve a 45 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 from the 2008 baseline.

WHEREAS, by Resolution No. 2012-R69-103, adopted July 9, 2012, the City adopted a sustainability plan for the City of Richmond entitled “RVAgreen: A Roadmap to Sustainability,” which builds on existing sustainability efforts and priorities of the City of Richmond divided into five focus areas: Economic Development, Energy, Environment, Open Space, and Land Use and Transportation; and

WHEREAS, the Council believes that the City must remain committed to the sustainability goals articulated in the aforementioned plan as the City develops a new equity-centered, integrated climate action and resilience plan; and

WHEREAS, upon information and belief of the Council, global temperatures have already risen by one degree Celsius from pre-industrial levels, and the effects of climate change are evident in, among other things, extreme weather conditions, rising air and water temperatures, changes in precipitation, and declining surface water quality; and

WHEREAS, upon information and belief of the Council, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released a special report in October 2018 concerning global warming that concluded that if global temperatures rise above 1.5 degrees Celsius relative to pre-industrial levels, worldwide risks for flooding of major coastal cities, the breakdown of agricultural systems, mass migration, and catastrophic weather events that pose significant threats to human society will increase; and

WHEREAS, upon information and belief of the Council, the said special report of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change concluded that carbon dioxide emissions must be reduced by 45 percent from 2010 levels by 2030 and reach net zero by 2050 in order to stabilize a 1.5 degrees Celsius

temperature increase to prevent disastrous effects on global climate, ecosystems, and human societies; and

WHEREAS, upon information and belief of the Council, the City of Richmond's greenhouse gas emissions account for four percent of the community's total emissions and residents and businesses account for 96 percent, thereby making community education and engagement on issues of climate change critical; and

WHEREAS, upon information and belief of the Council, the overwhelming weight of scientific evidence indicates that global warming is caused by emissions of carbon dioxide, methane, and other greenhouse gases into the atmosphere from human activities, primarily from the combustion of fossil fuels; and

WHEREAS, in addition to the environmental effects of climate change, the Council believes that the City must also address how climate change affects communities within the city of Richmond and worldwide as climate change relates to race, socio-economic status, and inequity for people of color, immigrants, indigenous communities, low-income individuals, and persons with disabilities; and

WHEREAS, the Council believes that homeless persons are disproportionately affected by climate change, and will continue to bear an excess burden from increasing temperatures, the rise of sea levels, the spread of disease, and the economic consequences of inaction on the climate crisis; and

WHEREAS, the Council believes that, in order to benefit all communities within the city of Richmond, the City must maintain its commitment to climate action, climate resilience, and sustainability policies that address the specific experiences, vulnerabilities, and needs of the most defenseless communities within the city of Richmond by engaging such communities in climate mitigation and climate resilience planning; and

WHEREAS, the Council believes that the costs of addressing the climate crisis are far less than the costs of not addressing the climate crisis and that solving the crisis will take significant public investment, education, commitment and resolve; and

WHEREAS, upon information and belief of the Council, the City has taken steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and prepare for the local impacts of climate change, including adopting the Paris Climate goals to limit the global temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius on the municipal level and setting a target for

municipal and community-wide greenhouse gas emissions reductions of 80 percent by 2050; and

WHEREAS, the Council believes that, even with these commitments, the impacts of climate change globally and locally require greater action and leadership in order to reach global net-zero emissions by 2050; and

WHEREAS, the Council believes that developed economies, which are well-equipped to rapidly transition to renewables, may need to increase their sustainability efforts as the climate crisis progresses; and

WHEREAS, upon information and belief of the Council, the City would be joining other jurisdictions within the Commonwealth of Virginia that are leading by example, including Albemarle County, Alexandria, Arlington, and Charlottesville, in the commitment to carbon neutrality by or before 2050, and the Commonwealth of Virginia, which is committed to 100 percent of Virginia's electricity from carbon-free sources by 2050; and

WHEREAS, the Council believes that each individual has an obligation to participate in sustainability efforts, mitigate the effects of climate change for future generations, take unprecedented action to lead and empower community-wide greenhouse gas emissions reductions, and prepare the city of Richmond for the effects of climate change; and

WHEREAS, the Council believes that, in light of the foregoing, it is in the best interests of the citizens of the City of Richmond that the Council recognize the effects of global warming and establish a climate action goal for the City of Richmond to achieve a 45 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and net zero gas emissions by 2050 from the 2008 baseline;

NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF RICHMOND:

That the Council hereby recognizes that global warming caused by human activity increases emissions of greenhouse gases and has resulted in a climate crisis that threatens communities within the city of Richmond, the Richmond region, the Commonwealth of Virginia, communities around the nation, and civilizations and

ecosystems worldwide.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That the Council hereby establishes a climate action goal for the City of Richmond to achieve a 45 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 from the 2008 baseline.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That the Council calls on the United States Government, Congress, the Commonwealth of Virginia, and other local governments to recognize that global warming caused by human activity that increases emissions of greenhouse gases has resulted in a climate crisis; to initiate a just transition and mobilization effort to restore a safe climate and build a sustainable economy; and to convey the urgency of global warming awareness to the public.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That the Council hereby supports the commitment to a citywide just transition and mobilization effort to reverse global warming and is dedicated to utilizing any financial and regulatory assistance from the Commonwealth of Virginia and the United States Government, to the extent permitted by law, for the purpose of ending citywide greenhouse gas emissions as quickly as possible, initiating efforts to safely draw down carbon from the atmosphere, and accelerating adaptation and resilience strategies in preparation for intensifying climate impacts.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That the Council hereby supports the climate resilience goal for the City of Richmond to prepare for, adapt, and improve its resilience to the local impacts of climate change.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That the Council hereby supports the development and implementation of an equity-centered, integrated climate action and resilience plan to advance the climate action and resilience goals; the education of residents

and businesses on matters related to the climate crisis; and full community participation, inclusion, and recognition of the residents and businesses within the city of Richmond, along with community organizations dedicated to faith, youth, labor, academic institutions, civic participation, and marginalized populations, and other such community allies, who will be integral to the climate action plan development and implementation and mobilization effort.