



# CITY COUNCIL STAFF REPORT



**March 1, 2022**

## **ITEM TITLE**

Sustainability Commission: Adopt a Resolution Declaring a Climate Emergency in the City of Chula Vista

**Report Number:** 22-0052

**Location:** No specific geographic location

**Department:** Economic Development

**Environmental Notice:** The activity is not a “Project” as defined under Section 15378 of the California Environmental Quality Act State Guidelines; therefore, pursuant to State Guidelines Section 15060(c)(3) no environmental review is required. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the activity qualifies for an Exemption pursuant to Section 15061(b)(3) of the California Environmental Quality Act State Guidelines.

## **Recommended Action**

Adopt a resolution declaring a climate emergency and the need for accelerated action to address the climate crisis.

## **SUMMARY**

Over the years, the City of Chula Vista has adopted numerous climate related policies, plans, and programs to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. While these actions have started to reduce our community’s carbon footprint, more action is needed locally and globally. We have already begun to see the impacts of climate change through record breaking heat waves, droughts, and wildfires locally, with many more varied impacts seen globally. The creation of this climate emergency declaration resolution is intended to update our GHG reduction goals by adopting a Science Based Reduction Target for 2030 and a carbon neutrality goal for 2045 to strengthen existing efforts such as the update to the City Operations Sustainability Plan and encourage new city actions and voluntary actions by residents and businesses. The sooner emissions are reduced the more options local governments will have for policies that create gradual reductions instead of emergency actions that can be more costly and impactful to daily life. Led by community members on the Sustainability Commission, this resolution was created to align with the more than 2,000 jurisdictions around the world and about 50 in California that have already adopted similar resolutions and showcase the need for more action at all levels of government and society.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

The proposed activity has been reviewed for compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act

(CEQA) and it has been determined that the activity is not a “Project” as defined under Section 15378 of the state CEQA Guidelines because it will not result in a physical change in the environment; therefore, pursuant to Section 15060(c)(3) of the State CEQA Guidelines, the activity is not subject to CEQA. Notwithstanding the foregoing, it has also been determined that the activity qualifies for an Exemption pursuant to Section 15061(b)(3) of the California Environmental Quality Act State Guidelines. Thus, no environmental review is required.

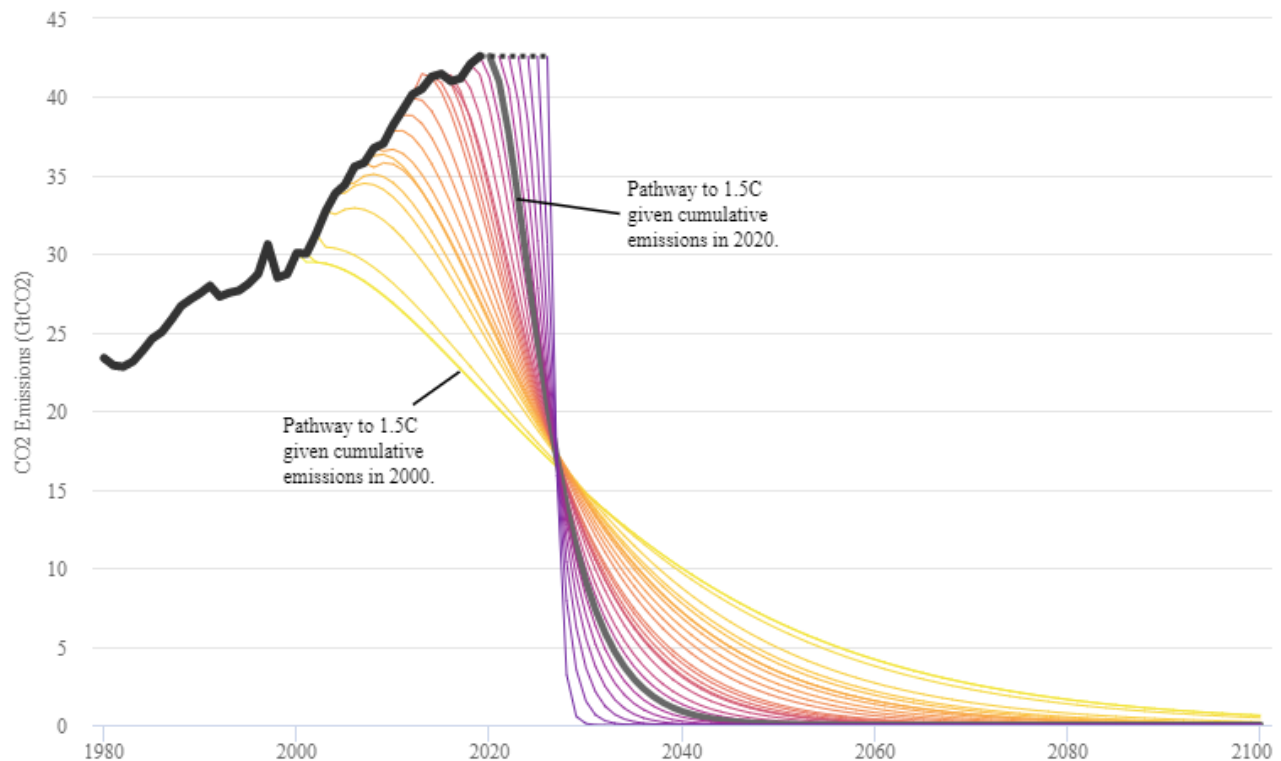
## **BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION**

The climate emergency resolution was presented to the Sustainability Commission on October 11, 2021 meeting and was unanimously recommended for adoption by City Council.

## **DISCUSSION**

The climate crisis is one of the greatest threats to our quality of life. The proposed Resolution Declaring a Climate Emergency shows that the City of Chula Vista recognizes the multiple dangers posed by climate change and that urgent action is required. Learning about COVID-19 and following the proper science-based actions to reduce virus spread is instrumental to protecting Chula Vista from Covid-19 and the same principals are true for climate change. Unless we act quickly and decisively, our civilization will be more and more impacted by a climate crisis characterized by unprecedented droughts, hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, famines, fires, heat waves, and sea-level elevations. Adverse events such as these are already occurring.

The City of Chula Vista has been proactive about mitigating climate change by creating the first Climate Action Plan in San Diego County in 2000 and regularly updating it with new science and programs to mitigate and adapt to climate change. Some of the key implementation actions include being a founding member of San Diego Community Power to bring 100% renewable electricity to Chula Vista; creating and implementing the Active Transportation Plan; adopting a multi-family and commercial benchmarking and building performance ordinance; and creating a Zero Waste Plan. While these actions have reduced Chula Vista’s community wide greenhouse gas emissions, and in spite of wide-ranging scientific evidence and consensus, meaningful global action has been too little, too late. The rate of GHG emissions has been modestly reduced, but concentrations are still increasing, not decreasing. Considering the magnitude of the problem and what we stand to lose, progress has been inadequate. Global leaders, including Chula Vista Mayor Salas gathered in Paris in 2015 for the United Nations Conference of Parties or COP21 and set a goal to limit global temperature increases to 1.5 degrees Celsius because anything above that will significantly increase the likelihood of far worse climate catastrophes that could exacerbate hunger, disease, and conflict. The graph below shows that with each year global emissions are not reduced; it becomes more challenging to reach the goal of limiting warming to 1.5 Celsius. The sooner emissions are reduced the more options governments will have to gradually reduce emissions versus taking costly emergency actions.



Source: [www.carbonbrief.org/unep-net-zero-pledges-provide-an-opening-to-close-growing-emissions-gap](http://www.carbonbrief.org/unep-net-zero-pledges-provide-an-opening-to-close-growing-emissions-gap)

Over 2,000 jurisdictions around the world have declared Climate Emergencies, including more than 160 in the United States. California jurisdictions include Los Angeles, Oakland, Sacramento, San Diego, Del Mar, Encinitas, La Mesa, Solana Beach, San Francisco City and County, San Jose, San Mateo County, Santa Barbara City and County, Santa Cruz City and County, and Sonoma County. The State of Hawaii has declared a Climate Emergency as well as multiple countries including Canada, Japan, New Zealand, and Mauritius. While largely symbolic in nature, these emergency declarations help to build support for existing climate mitigation and adaptation measures and encourage residents and businesses to take voluntary actions that go beyond the minimum requirements local governments require. The proposed resolution was led by the Sustainability Commission working closely with City staff and some of the key elements included are:

1. Updates the City's GHG reduction goals based on science-based reduction targets of 57% below 2018 levels by 2030 provided by ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability.
2. Alert all staff to the City's concern for the climate crisis and commits to updating the City Operations Sustainability Plan to ensure all practical sustainability practices are taken at facilities and in procurement.
3. Continued and increased efforts to bring to residents' awareness and concern for the gravity of the climate crisis. The City's Chula Vista Climate Action Challenge ([www.cvclimatechallenge.com](http://www.cvclimatechallenge.com)) is a good start, but not enough residents know about it.

4. Collaboration with climate, environmental, and educational organizations such as the San Diego Regional Climate Collaborative, Local Government Sustainable Energy Commission, Living Coast Discovery Center, Chula Vista Elementary School District, Sweetwater Union High School District, South Bay 350 and others.
5. Ensure environmental and economic justice and equity in climate action by actively seeking input from representative organizations like the Chula Vista Climate Equity Index working group and other stakeholders.
6. Work with larger jurisdictions (e.g., county, state, federal) to increase concern about the severity of the climate crisis and to lobby for an appropriately prompt and positive action.

The climate crisis is undoubtedly one of the greatest natural threats facing mankind and all life on the planet. Climate change is impacting local gardens and canyons to the largest national ecological or wilderness reserves, but the good news is that it is caused by human actions and can also be stopped by human actions. But given that we've known about the hazards of climate change for decades, given that our past and current actions are not impactful enough to mitigate the serious adverse effects, given the irreversibility and effective permanence of climate change and given our responsibility to ourselves and to our future generations, urgent and emergency action is imperative. Although it is all too common to exaggerate and overuse superlatives, our climate crisis is truly serious and existential to the quality of life for everyone around the globe. That fact is verified by countless scientists, as exemplified by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change of the United Nations and by our local experts at the Scripps Institute of Oceanography. Therefore, the Sustainability Commission recommends that the City of Chula Vista declare a Climate Emergency.

#### **DECISION-MAKER CONFLICT**

Staff has reviewed the decision contemplated by this action and has determined that it is not site-specific and consequently, the real property holdings of the City Council members do not create a disqualifying real property-related financial conflict of interest under the Political Reform Act (Cal. Gov't Code § 87100, et seq.).

Staff is not independently aware, and has not been informed by City Council member, of any other fact that may constitute a basis for a decision-maker conflict of interest in this matter.

#### **CURRENT-YEAR FISCAL IMPACT**

There is no new, current-year fiscal impact due to the climate emergency declaration. Implementation of the Climate Action Plan is being implemented using existing departmental budgets.

#### **ONGOING FISCAL IMPACT**

There is no new, ongoing fiscal impact due to the climate emergency declaration. Implementation of the Climate Action Plan is being implemented using existing budgets. Any climate mitigation or adaptation measures will be presented to City Council for consideration in the future along with any associated fiscal impact.

## ATTACHMENTS

None.

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