



County of San Mateo

Inter-Departmental Correspondence

Department: BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
DISTRICT 1
File #: 16-275

Board Meeting Date: 6/27/2017

Special Notice / Hearing: None
Vote Required: Majority

To: Honorable Board of Supervisors
From: Supervisors Dave Pine and Carole Groom
Subject: Affirmation of San Mateo County's Commitment to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change

RECOMMENDATION:

Adopt a resolution affirming San Mateo County's commitment to the Paris Agreement by continuing to prioritize greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reduction efforts, clean energy investment, and improving resiliency to the effects of climate change.

BACKGROUND:

According to a majority of climate scientists, an increase of greenhouse gas emissions trapped in the Earth's atmosphere is responsible for global temperature increase and associated climate risks, such as sea level rise. To address this issue on a global scale the United Nations initiated an international treaty, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement followed.

On December 12, 2015, the Paris Agreement (Agreement) was adopted with the purpose of bringing nations together to globally combat climate change by agreeing to reduce GHG emissions.

On November 4, 2016, the Agreement was ratified when the required vote of 55 countries, accounting for 55 percent of global GHG emissions, was achieved. To date, 195 countries have entered into the Agreement (148 ratified), pledging to mitigate GHG emissions, increase adaptability and resilience, and limit the global average temperature growth to less than 2°C above pre-industrial levels. Former President Barack Obama committed the United States to a goal of lowering emissions 26-28 percent below 2005 levels by 2025. These targets were intended to become more stringent over time.

On June 1, 2017, President Donald Trump announced that the United States will withdraw from the Paris Agreement.

San Mateo County is Vulnerable to the Effects of Climate Change

San Mateo County is among the most vulnerable counties in United States to the impacts of climate change, particularly when considering the assessed value of property and the population at risk; in fact the County has been referred to as “ground zero” for sea level rise impacts due to the value of infrastructure and number of people at risk. A recent study found that San Mateo County is one of six counties in the nation and the only county in California with more than 100,000 people living in areas at risk from three (3) feet of sea level rise (Hauer et. al 2016). According to the County’s own Sea Level Rise Vulnerability Assessment (2017), the assessed value of parcels at risk to near-term flooding may exceed \$1 billion. The value of assets exposed to long-term flooding and erosion may exceed \$39.1 billion.

Many assets within the County have high economic, public, private, and environmental significance vulnerable to sea level rise and other negative impacts of climate change within the next 10-60 years. These include, but are not limited to, the wide-spread inundation of roads, natural habitats, wastewater treatment facilities, energy infrastructure, and other valuable community assets. Furthermore, approximately 7,000 acres of wetlands, 380 miles of roads, and over 100,000 people are expected to be negatively impacted by sea level rise in San Mateo County in the latter part of the century if no action is taken.

Besides increased flooding and erosion, other risks associated with climate change include: drought, heat waves, the spread of infectious diseases, and a potential increase in the severity of storms and extreme weather events. While these trends stand to influence the health and well-being of every San Mateo County resident, the disadvantaged communities are expected to be the most vulnerable to flooding and sea level rise. Without attention to this long-term planning challenge and without decisive action, those with less education, income, and those with chronic health conditions may be disproportionately affected by climate change.

DISCUSSION:

San Mateo County’s Existing Climate Action Goals

The County of San Mateo is a known leader in efforts to combat the impacts of climate change. The County has committed to the reduction of GHG emissions, resource conservation, and environmental stewardship, as supported by the County’s Shared Vision 2025 and Climate Action Plans. The County adopted a Government Operations Climate Action Plan focused on reducing GHG emissions from (among others) its vehicle fleet, building energy use, and employee commute on September 11, 2012, and an Energy Efficiency Climate Action Plan focused on reducing GHG emissions from the unincorporated areas of the county by promoting (among others) renewable energy, more efficient construction, encouraging low emission vehicles, and sustainable agricultural practices on June 4, 2013.

The Board of Supervisors further demonstrated its commitment to uphold these goals by creating the Office of Sustainability on July 1, 2014. The Office of Sustainability champions the design, development, and implementation of a multitude of climate change initiatives. These initiatives include energy efficiency programs, a sea level rise vulnerability assessment and adaptation initiative, the program launch of Peninsula Clean Energy (offering a higher content of renewable electricity to county ratepayers), waste diversion efforts, electric vehicle charging station installations, and hybrid vehicle purchases.

By means of the Climate Action Plans, the County has committed to reducing GHG emissions from its government operations to 15 percent below 2005 levels by 2020. Unincorporated San Mateo

County already *exceeded* its GHG reduction goal (17 percent below 2005 levels by 2020) by achieving an emissions reduction of 18 percent below 2005 levels in 2013. The County's Climate Action Plans are in the process of being updated to approximate an intermediate-term target of 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2030 and a longer-term goal of 80 percent below 1990 levels by 2050.

With the launch of Peninsula Clean Energy (PCE) in 2016, which provides cleaner, more renewable electricity to County residents and businesses, the County and the cities and towns in San Mateo County are in a better position to meet existing and future emissions reduction goals. Currently over 98 percent of residents and businesses in the County are receiving ECOplus energy, which is 75 percent carbon-free and 50 percent renewable. Additionally, more than 3,350 accounts opted up to ECO100, which supplies 100 percent renewable and carbon-free energy. The County is in the process of transitioning its municipal facilities to ECO100 energy from PCE, which will greatly reduce County facility emissions and keep it on target with its GHG reduction goals.

In addition, energy efficiency projects at major County facilities, as outlined in the County's Strategic Energy Master Plan, have reduced energy consumption by 17 percent over the past five years.

Commitments by Others

As of June 7, 2017, 274 U.S. mayors, including mayors representing the cities of Los Angeles, Boston, New York City, Chicago, and San Francisco, have pledged to adopt, honor, and uphold the goals outlined in the Paris Agreement. Furthermore, on June 7, 2017, the State of Hawaii became the first state to formally sign a bill adopting the goals of the Paris Agreement, with at least 10 other states expected to take similar actions. Further, numerous Fortune 500 companies, including Google, Apple, and Intel, have joined state and local governments in committing to upholding the goals of the Paris Agreement.

The State of California has been and continues to be a national leader in protecting the environment and establishing GHG emission reduction goals to mitigate the effects of climate change. Currently, California is on target to meet the goals of the California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 (AB 32), which requires reducing GHG emission to 1990 levels by the year 2020. The state also established goals to further reduce GHG emissions by 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2030 (SB 32) as an intermediate goal and a longer-term goal of 80 percent below 1990 levels by the year 2050 (Executive Order S-3-05).

By adopting this resolution, the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors joins many other local jurisdictions, elected officials, and large businesses across California and the United States in affirming the Paris Agreement and in continuing efforts to mitigate the negative impacts of climate change.

FISCAL IMPACT:

No Net County Cost with the adoption of this resolution.