



County of San Mateo

Inter-Departmental Correspondence

Department: GOVERNING BOARD

File #: 19-847

Board Meeting Date: 9/17/2019

Special Notice / Hearing: None
Vote Required: Majority

To: Honorable Board of Supervisors

From: Supervisor Dave Pine, District 1
Supervisor Carole Groom, District 2

Subject: Declaration of a Climate Emergency in San Mateo County

RECOMMENDATION:

Adopt a resolution endorsing the declaration of a climate emergency in San Mateo County that demands accelerated actions on the climate crisis and calls on local jurisdictions and agencies to join together to address climate change.

BACKGROUND:

According to the Intergovernmental Plan on Climate Change (IPCC), increasing greenhouse gases (GHG) will cause global temperatures to rise 1.5 degrees Celsius by as early as 2030. For San Mateo County, rising global temperatures will cause sea levels to rise (up to six feet or more by 2100 under certain scenarios), contribute to increasingly extreme weather including intense rainfall, storms and heat events, and heighten risk of large wildfires. The consequences of climate change pose risks to life, safety and critical infrastructure in San Mateo County and throughout the world, and threaten physical, social, and mental well being. Climate change impacts will be most acutely felt by children, the elderly, those with preexisting physical and mental health conditions, low income or communities of color, and residents with unstable economic or housing situations. The County of San Mateo Sea Level Rise Vulnerability Assessment indicates that in the County, over 160,000 children under the age of 18 years, and over 100,000 older adults, are vulnerable to risks posed by sea level rise.

The County has taken a number of actions to address climate change. In 2015, the County reduced GHG emissions by 21.8% below 2005 levels. The County helped launch Peninsula Clean Energy and facilitates the Regional Integrated Climate Action Planning Suite (RICAPS) program that brings together the County and its 20 cities to plan and implement measures to reduce GHG emissions. To collaboratively prepare for the changing climate, the County launched Climate Ready SMC, and is facilitating the formation of the Flood and Sea Level Rise Resiliency District in partnership with the City/County Association of Governments (C/CAG).

In spite of local and international efforts, the current pace of climate actions may still fall short of reducing the projected harm to people and places. Accelerated actions need to be taken to reduce our GHG emissions and implement solutions to prepare and protect our communities.

DISCUSSION:

By declaring a climate emergency, the County of San Mateo will join the City and County of San Francisco, County of Santa Clara, Bay area cities including Berkeley, Alameda, Richmond, Santa Cruz, Hayward and Oakland, and over 1,000 national, international and local jurisdictions with similar declarations. All of these jurisdictions are committed to reducing GHG emissions and planning for climate change.

The County invites all cities and other local jurisdictions and agencies to also approve a Climate Emergency Declaration to create a unified Countywide voice around climate change and to strengthen the call for state and federal actions and funds to address the economic, social, public health, and national security threats posed by the climate crisis.

The County of San Mateo will continue to educate residents about the seriousness of climate change, invest in climate solutions, and address the current and future impacts of climate change. The County will include health, socio-economic and racial equity considerations in policymaking and climate solutions at all levels and across all sectors as the consequences of climate change have significant impacts on all County residents, but especially the young, the elderly, low income or communities of color, and other vulnerable populations.

The County commits to completing the Government Operations and Unincorporated Area Climate Action Plans that will include measurable climate-related goals and actions to attain carbon neutrality in advance of the State of California's 2045 goal. The County will also develop and enact resiliency policies and plans to ensure continuous operation of County services and facilities. Achievement of the County's climate goals will require cross departmental partnerships within the County.

The County will collaborate and coordinate with the 20 cities in the County, and other local partners like Peninsula Clean Energy and the Flood and Sea Level Rise Resiliency District, to achieve carbon neutrality throughout San Mateo County and to implement other actions to address climate change.

The Office of Sustainability will report annually to the Board, starting in April 2020, on progress towards meeting resiliency goals and achieving carbon neutrality in advance of 2045.

County Counsel has reviewed and approved the resolution as to form.

Adoption of this declaration contributes to the County's Shared Vision 2025 of being a healthy, prosperous, livable, environmental conscious and collaborative community by taking actions to keep our residents safe, protecting the economy and built environment, reducing our carbon emissions and forging local and regional partnerships to develop solutions to reduce these community-level risks.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no net County cost associated with adoption of the proposed declaration. However, there will be substantial future costs associated with the implementation of climate action and adaptation plans and local and countywide climate solutions.