



City Council

Approval of a Resolution to Respond the Climate Emergency, Declaring Olympia's Intent to Electrify City-Owned Facilities and Olympia's Built Environment

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Title

Approval of a Resolution to Respond the Climate Emergency, Declaring Olympia's Intent to Electrify City-Owned Facilities and Olympia's Built Environment

Recommended Action

City Manager Recommendation:

Move to approve a resolution declaring Olympia's intent to electrify city-owned facilities and Olympia's built environment.

Report

Issue:

Whether to approve a resolution to respond the climate emergency by declaring Olympia's intent to electrify city-owned facilities and Olympia's built environment.

Staff Contact:

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Presenter(s):

Pamela Braff, PhD, Climate Program Manager

Background and Analysis:

Background

In February 2021, Olympia City Council passed a Climate Emergency Resolution, declaring that the climate crisis poses an urgent threat to the health and well-being of our city, country, and planet and that mitigating climate change requires immediate action and long-term commitment.

In February 2021, Olympia also accepted the Thurston Climate Mitigation Plan (TCMP) as the regional framework to substantially reduce local contributions to climate change. The plan identifies more than 70 actions to reduce regional greenhouse gas emissions 45% below 2015 levels by 2030 and 85% below 2015 levels by 2050.

While all actions in the plan are important to achieving regional climate mitigation targets, the TCMP identifies a few strategies with the greatest potential to substantially reduce greenhouse gas emissions through local action. These strategies include:

- Reducing natural gas use (i.e., electrifying buildings).
- Reducing the amount that people drive and increasing fuel efficiency for when they do.
- Storing carbon in soil and plants.

Olympia Council first considered this resolution on January 11, 2022. In response to comments by Council, the resolution has been modified to better address Council Concerns. These changes include considerations for cost constraints and the effective date in Section 2, as well as the date for the work session in Section 5.

Building Electrification

Multiple studies, including Washington's Deep Decarbonization Pathways Analysis, have found that building electrification is the most cost-effective strategy to decarbonize residential and commercial buildings.

Building electrification means using electricity, rather than fossil fuels such as natural gas, for space heating, water heating, and cooking in homes and buildings. As electricity is increasingly produced by non-emitting, renewable sources, such as wind and solar, replacing fossil fuel use in buildings with efficient, all-electric buildings will substantially reduce greenhouse gas emissions from buildings.

Washington already has one of the cleanest, electric grids in the country, and the state is currently on a pathway towards a fully decarbonized electric grid by 2045. Under the Clean Energy Transformation Action (CETA), passed by the state legislature in 2019, utility providers must eliminate coal-fired electricity by 2025, become greenhouse-gas neutral by 2030 (using offsets if necessary), and provide 100 percent renewable energy by 2045.

Supporting state action to generate electricity from 100% renewable sources (i.e., Green our Grid), and electrifying homes and businesses to take advantage of this renewable energy supply (i.e., Shift Energy Sources), are key elements of the TCMP framework. Without a substantial reduction in residential and commercial natural gas consumption (20 percent by 2030 and 50 percent by 2050), it is highly unlikely that Olympia will be able to achieve its greenhouse gas reduction targets.

Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):

Since the Declaration of Climate Emergency and Acceptance of the Thurston Climate Mitigation Plan in February 2021, community members have continued to urge the City to take immediate action to address climate change. Many community members and advocacy organizations have provided written and/or verbal comment, specifically requesting that Olympia phase out or ban the use of natural gas in all new buildings.

Options:

1. Approve the Resolution to respond to the climate emergency, declaring Olympia's intent to electrify city-owned facilities and Olympia's built environment.
2. Modify the Resolution declaring Olympia's intent to electrify city-owned facilities and Olympia's built environment to better address City Council Concerns.

3. Do Not Approve the Resolution declaring Olympia's intent to electrify city-owned facilities and Olympia's built environment.

Financial Impact:

This resolution does not create new expenditures or allocate funds for future projects. Availability of funding for specific projects will be determined through typical budgeting procedures.

Sections 1 and 2 provide guidance on requirements for new capital projects, These requirements may incur additional costs, which will be evaluated when new capital projects are planned and adopted.

Section 3 directs staff to inventory city-owned facilities that use fossil fuels and evaluate the feasibility of retrofitting existing buildings to become all-electric by 2030. The inventory and preliminary feasibility recommendations will be completed by facilities staff at no additional cost.

Attachments:

Resolution
Thurston Climate Mitigation Plan