

RESOLUTION OF THE MIDDLETOWN COMMON COUNCIL DECLARING A CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND CALLING FOR PROMPT LOCAL ACTION TO ADDRESS ITS CONSEQUENCES

WHEREAS human activities based on the extraction and use of fossil fuels have warmed the Earth sufficiently to end the 12,000-year period of climate cycles that allowed agriculture and human civilization to develop and flourish; and

WHEREAS the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the world's most respected organization for study of research on climate change, notes in its 2014 Fifth Assessment Report, "Continued emission of greenhouse gases will cause further warming and long-lasting changes in all components of the climate system, increasing the likelihood of severe, pervasive, and irreversible impacts for people and ecosystems"; and

WHEREAS the burning of fossil fuels has increased atmospheric CO₂ concentration to 414 parts per million (ppm) — well in excess of the 350 ppm level long thought to be the safe upper boundary and substantially higher than the global 800,000-year maximum of 280 ppm — causing increasingly numerous, intense, and destructive wildfires, floods, storms, and droughts, as well as sea-level rise and the spread of novel diseases; and

WHEREAS climate-fueled droughts, famine, disease, and war have already killed millions of people around the world, displaced millions more, and initiated the sixth major extinction of animal species; and

WHEREAS in April 2016 world leaders from 175 countries, including the United States, recognized the threat of climate change and the urgent need to combat it by signing the Paris Agreement, pledging to work to keep warming "well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels" and to "pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C"; and

WHEREAS in October 2018 an IPCC special report projected that limiting warming to the 1.5°C target this century will require an unprecedented transformation of every sector of the global economy over the next 12 years; and

WHEREAS in March 2020 climate scientists calculated that global warming has already exceeded by over 2°C pre-industrial average global temperatures, accelerating self-reinforcing changes ("feedback loops"), including the exponential increase in the release of sequestered methane, a greenhouse gas with some twenty-five times the global-warming potential of carbon dioxide; and

WHEREAS, restoring a safe climate urgently requires a comprehensive emergency mobilization to reduce greenhouse gas emissions across all sectors, to remove greenhouse gases from the atmosphere, to adopt measures to protect all species from the consequences of abrupt climate change, and to make it possible for all human beings to enjoy long, healthy, satisfying, and productive lives free of conflict, fear, and shortages; and

WHEREAS the United States has contributed disproportionately to the climate and ecological crisis and has repeatedly obstructed efforts by other countries to transition toward a sustainable economy, and thus bears a particular responsibility to address this crisis without delay; and

WHEREAS Black, indigenous, and other communities of color, as well as low-income communities in the United States and around the world have suffered the gravest consequences of the extractive economy since its inception and also suffer first and most acutely from climate disruption and environmental hazards, including air, water, and land pollution; and

WHEREAS Middletown has been designated an “environmental justice community” by the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, indicating that a critical number of its residents experience systemic racial, social, and economic injustices and disproportionate exposure to the effects of climate change and environmental degradation; and

WHEREAS it is vital that the City of Middletown rise to the challenge of the greatest crisis in history by joining local and global efforts to transition to a socially-just economy not based on fossil fuels,

NOW BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the Common Council of the City of Middletown declares a climate emergency that threatens the existence of our civilization and the natural world; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this resolution provides the foundation upon which the City of Middletown shall develop future priorities, legislation, policies, plans, budgets, and actions; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Middletown Common Council will work with the Mayor to establish an emergency mobilization effort that, with ongoing City funding and appropriate financial and regulatory assistance from state and federal authorities, will aim to end City-generated greenhouse gas emissions by or before December 31, 2030, and to adopt techniques to safely reduce emitted carbon; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Common Council urges the Mayor to direct all City department heads, committees, and commissions to establish plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by both the City and the wider community, placing the highest priority on providing the benefits of a clean-energy economy to all community members on an equitable basis; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City of Middletown recognizes environmental injustice as a racial justice issue which the City commits to address and understands that an equitable transition to a fossil-fuel-free economy requires full community participation; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City of Middletown will advocate for coordinated climate action at the regional, state, and federal levels to restore a safe and sustainable climate for all living beings on earth.

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