

CITY OF WORCESTER

RESOLUTION ENDORSING THE DECLARATION OF A CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND REQUESTING REGIONAL COLLABORATION ON AN IMMEDIATE JUST TRANSITION AND EMERGENCY MOBILIZATION EFFORT TO RESTORE A SAFE CLIMATE

PREAMBLE: Worcester, the Heart of the Commonwealth, is a city of beautiful diversity, with community members coming from many parts of the world and representing many different backgrounds. We are also a Gateway City, faced with complex social and economic challenges and deep inequities experienced across race and class. We are committed to approaching our future development with a lens of equity and justice. This is because we want all residents to thrive and we understand that our well-being is interconnected. As part of this, we must take immediate action to mitigate climate change and prepare our infrastructure, and we must do so thinking first and foremost of our residents who are likely to be disproportionately impacted. We recognize that climate change will impact Worcester in ways including but not limited to our local food system, landscape, and air and water quality. Thus, climate change connects all spheres of social and economic activity to universal concerns for the health of our communities and the planet. We recognize that residents already experiencing poverty, a lack of food and housing, and poor health are likely to feel these effects most strongly. We commit to doing everything in our power to keep *all* our residents safe and to safeguard the future of this city for our children.

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

WHEREAS, the death and destruction already brought by a global warming of approximately 1°C, increased and intensifying wildfires, floods, rising seas, droughts, and extreme weather highlights how the Earth is already too hot for safety and justice;

WHEREAS, climate change accelerates the destruction of developing and small island countries as well as coastal communities and exacerbates conflict worldwide, which will lead to an increase in climate refugees;

WHEREAS, climate change and the global economy’s neglect of ecological limits are driving the sixth mass extinction of species, which could devastate much of life on Earth for the next 10 million years;

WHEREAS, the United States of America has disproportionately contributed to the climate and ecological crises and has repeatedly obstructed global efforts to transition toward a sustainable economy, and thus bears an extraordinary responsibility to rapidly solve these crises;

WHEREAS, restoring a safe and stable climate requires an emergency mobilization effort on a scale not seen since World War II to reach zero greenhouse gas emissions across all sectors at wartime speed in order to rapidly and safely decrease or remove all the excess carbon from the atmosphere, and to implement measures to protect all people and species from the consequences of abrupt climate change;

WHEREAS, the term “just transition” is a framework for a fair shift to an economy that is ecologically sustainable, equitable and just for all its members;

WHEREAS, just transition strategies were first forged by a 'blue-green' alliance of labor unions and environmental justice groups who saw the need to phase out the industries that were harming workers, community health and the planet, while also providing just pathways for workers into new livelihoods;

WHEREAS, just transition initiatives shift the economy from dirty energy to energy democracy, from funding highways to expanding public transit, from incinerators and landfills to zero waste, from industrial food systems to food sovereignty, from car-dependent sprawl and unbridled growth to smart urban development without displacement, and from rampant, destructive over-development to habitat and ecosystem restoration;

WHEREAS, justice requires that frontline communities – which have historically borne the brunt of the extractive fossil-fuel economy – participate actively in the planning and implementation of this mobilization effort at all levels of government and that they are the first to benefit from the just transition to a renewable energy economy;

WHEREAS, fairness demands a guarantee of high-paying, good-quality jobs with comprehensive benefits for all and many other tenets of a Green New Deal effort as the mobilization to restore a safe climate is launched;

WHEREAS, the City of Worcester has demonstrated a commitment to making Worcester the greenest city in America by:

- * (1993) becoming the largest city in the US to establish curbside recycling and a pay-as-you-throw trash collection system.
- * (2003) adopting a resolution to join the Cities for Climate Protection Campaign;
- * (2005; 2009) signing the U.S. Conference of Mayors Climate Protection agreement;
- * (2010) becoming one of the first cities in Massachusetts to be designated a Green Community;
- * building the largest municipal solar farm in New England;
- * (2019) launching a plan of action to mitigate the effects of climate change;
- * (2019) launching a Green Worcester Strategic Plan to integrate sustainability and resilience practices, to include quality of life and natural systems;

WHEREAS, the City of Worcester is currently undertaking ambitious redevelopment projects that include significant investment in infrastructure and is in negotiations with the Worcester Community Labor Coalition over assurances that public and private development projects bring a host of tangible benefits to the residents of Worcester, address environmental justice issues, and ensure diversity in hiring and local hire for resulting jobs;

WHEREAS, the City of Worcester acknowledges that residents of Worcester call for the revitalization of our public transportation by incentivizing the use of clean motor vehicles and making roads and infrastructure friendlier for clean transportation, including but not limited to buses, bicycles, and pedestrians;

WHEREAS, the City of Worcester acknowledges that residents of Worcester call for greening the city while eliminating single-use plastic products that increase GHG emissions while polluting air and water;

WHEREAS, the City of Worcester acknowledges that residents of Worcester call for the creation of a government office dedicated to sustainability efforts and climate mobilization;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the City of Worcester declares that a climate emergency threatens our city, region, state, nation, civilization, humanity and the natural world;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the City of Worcester commits to a citywide just transition and climate emergency mobilization effort to combat global warming, which, with appropriate financial and regulatory assistance from State and Federal authorities, ends citywide greenhouse gas emissions as quickly as possible and no later than 2030;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the City of Worcester commits to educating our residents about the climate emergency and working to catalyze a just transition and climate emergency mobilization effort at the local, state, and national levels to provide maximum protection for our residents as well as all the people and species of the world;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the City of Worcester underscores the need for full community participation, inclusion, and support, and recognizes that the residents of Worcester, community organizations, academic institutions, and faith, youth, labor, business and homeowners associations and groups, as well as groups focused on environmental, food, economic, racial, gender, family, disability, indigenous, and immigrant rights and justice will be integral to and in the leadership of the mobilization effort;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the City of Worcester commits to keeping the concerns of vulnerable communities central to all just transition and climate emergency mobilization effort planning processes and to inviting and encouraging such communities to actively participate in order to advocate directly for their needs;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the City of Worcester joins a nation-wide call for a regional just transition and climate emergency mobilization collaborative effort focused on transforming our region and rapidly catalyzing a mobilization at all levels of government to restore a safe climate; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the City of Worcester calls on the State of Massachusetts, the United States of America, and peoples worldwide to initiate a just transition and climate emergency mobilization effort to reverse global warming by restoring near pre-industrial global average temperatures and greenhouse gas concentrations, that immediately halts the development of all new fossil fuel infrastructure, rapidly phases out all fossil fuels and the technologies which rely upon them, ends greenhouse gas emissions as quickly as possible, initiates an effort to safely draw down carbon from the atmosphere, transitions to regenerative agriculture, ends the sixth mass extinction, and creates and guarantees high-quality, good-paying jobs with comprehensive benefits for those who will be impacted by this transition.

In City Council

September 17, 2019

Resolution adopted by a yea and nay vote of Eleven Yeas and No Nays

A Copy. Attest:


Susan M. Ledoux
City Clerk