

RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF ALEXANDRIA TO DECLARE A CLIMATE EMERGENCY

WHEREAS global warming over the past century of approximately 1°C has triggered devastating changes to the earth, such as accelerating the collapse of the West Antarctic Ice Sheet, the thawing of the Arctic permafrost, an increase in droughts, heatwaves, forest fires, super storms, flash flooding, the migration of insect-borne diseases, the melting of glaciers, coral bleaching, the mass extinction of species, ocean oxygen loss, and sea level rise; and also is contributing to human migration; and

WHEREAS global warming is caused by our emissions of carbon dioxide, methane, and other greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, primarily from burning fossil fuels; and

WHEREAS carbon dioxide concentrations in the atmosphere reached 415 ppm on March 13th of this year, a level last reached roughly 3 million years ago, when global average temperatures and sea levels were significantly higher; today's carbon emissions rates are likely unprecedented over the last 50 million years; and any amount of carbon over 350 ppm causes the earth's temperature to rise; and

WHEREAS the acceleration of carbon into the atmosphere has increased at a faster rate in the last 100 years than prior centuries; and

WHEREAS 18 of the 19 warmest years on record for the planet have occurred since 2000, with extreme highs occurring around the world, including temperatures in the arctic ocean reaching 84°F; and

WHEREAS there is a consensus among scientists, as described in the recent United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report, that we must reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 45% from 2010 levels by no later than 2030—in just eleven years—and reach net zero around 2050, in order to stabilize a 1.5° C (2.4° F) temperature increase to have a chance at avoiding profound and disastrous impacts on global climate, ecosystems, and human societies; and

WHEREAS meeting these goals will require annual emissions reductions of roughly 4-5% each year and Alexandria's greenhouse gas emissions declined by 1.4% between 2012 and 2015; and

WHEREAS the Environmental Action Plan 2040 passed by Council in July 2019 commits us to cut in half all city-wide emissions by 2030, with reductions of 80-100 percent by 2050; and

WHEREAS the city government's emissions account for 4 percent of our community's emissions and residents and businesses account for 96 percent and thus community education and engagement is critical; and

WHEREAS the costs of addressing this climate emergency are far less than the costs of not addressing the climate crisis; and solving the crisis will take significant public investment, education, commitment and resolve; and

WHEREAS the recent Global Climate Strike, led by Swedish activist Greta Thunberg and other youth, may be the largest mass protest for action on global warming in history with an estimated four million participants in 2,500 events across 163 countries on all seven continents demanding climate action and climate justice for all; and

WHEREAS marginalized populations in Alexandria and worldwide, including people of color, immigrants, indigenous communities, low-income individuals, and people with disabilities, and the unhoused are already disproportionately affected by the effects of climate change, and will continue to bear an excess burden as temperatures increase, oceans rise, and disasters worsen; and

WHEREAS justice calls for climate resilience that addresses the specific experiences, vulnerabilities, and needs of marginalized communities within Alexandria, who must be included and supported in actively engaging in climate resilience planning, policy, and actions; and

WHEREAS Alexandria's location along the Potomac River makes it particularly susceptible to rising sea levels and the Northern Virginia Regional Commission estimates that between \$100 million to \$250 million of Alexandria property will be affected by a 1-5% rise in sea levels, respectively, with many residents displaced; and

WHEREAS each of us has a moral duty to safeguard the planet for future generations and we need to take strong and unprecedented action to lead and enable community-wide greenhouse gas emissions reductions and prepare Alexandria for the effects of climate change;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE CITY COUNCIL OF ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA

declares that a climate emergency threatens our city, region, Commonwealth, nation, civilization, humanity and the natural world; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED the City of Alexandria reaffirm our commitment to the goals, targets, and actions set forth in the City's Environmental Action Plan 2040.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the City Council commits to a citywide just transition and climate emergency mobilization effort to reverse global warming, which, with appropriate financial and regulatory assistance from the Commonwealth of Virginia and Federal authorities, ends citywide greenhouse gas emissions as quickly as possible and no later than 2050, immediately initiates an effort to safely draw down carbon from the atmosphere, and accelerates adaptation and resilience strategies in preparation for intensifying climate impacts; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the City of Alexandria commits to educating our residents about the climate emergency and underscores the need for full community participation, inclusion, and support, and recognizes that the residents of Alexandria, along with community organizations dedicated to faith, youth, labor, business, academic institutions, civic participation, and the rights of marginalized populations, along with other such allies will be integral to and in the leadership of the mobilization effort; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the City of Alexandria calls on the Federal Government, Congress, the Commonwealth of Virginia, and other local governments to declare a Climate Emergency; and to initiate a just transition and climate emergency mobilization effort to restore a safe climate and build a sustainable economy; and to convey the urgency to citizens.

Adopted:

JUSTIN M. WILSON, MAYOR

ATTEST:

Gloria A. Sitton, CMC City Clerk