

Mayor Wheeler and City Council Members,

Thank you for taking public testimony on the draft climate emergency declaration. I have reviewed it and have a few pieces of feedback to share:

(1) The City of Portland’s climate response would benefit from more input and accountability than exists today. As reviewer and recommending body for the Climate Action Plan, the Planning and Sustainability Commission theoretically offers this. But the PSC has not provided substantive accountability for the sustainability side of the city’s operations since the passage of the 2015 Climate Action Plan, and the climate crisis can’t wait.

The City should convene and empower a new Climate Commission to fill this role. This could be the ‘new governance structure’ referenced in the draft declaration – but it should have more authority and include a broader coalition of members. In addition to (and ideally overlapping with) members of frontline communities and youth leaders, the commission should include technical and policy experts familiar with climate science, energy policy, and levers of change. Frontline communities and youth members must be at the decision-making table to ensure the city adopts just climate policies. But they need not bear the full responsibility of climate leadership. This is a huge undertaking that demands as much leadership as we can muster – inclusive of but not limited to young people and frontline communities.

(2) The plan should be specific and action-oriented, with clear timelines. The current draft should be updated to include specific action items with deadlines. At minimum, it should direct all bureaus to report back within 90 days on opportunities for radical greenhouse gas and co-pollutant emissions reductions and greenhouse gas drawdown opportunities, including metrics that prioritize the decrease of fossil fuel use and climate-adaptive land use planning. This could happen in parallel with the creation of the aforementioned governance structure, which would help guide the translation of these ideas into concrete actions. Without such detail, the resolution runs the risk of being perceived as hand waving – at a time when concrete action is needed.

(3) Shorten the feedback loop by establishing interim targets. The earliest ‘target’ date reference in the draft resolution is 2030. This is way too far in the future to motivate the actions we need to be taking this year and next. We must establish hard annual targets so we know if we’re actually on track to meet the 2030 goals – or need to work harder – before it becomes too late to try and play catch up.

(4) Don’t start back at square one. Reading the draft action plan makes it seem like we’re starting from scratch on a process to infuse equity into our climate plan. But City and County leaders already have a history of partnering with frontline communities in this area. Over the course of 2 years, Portland, Multnomah County, and members of the Equity Working Group integrated equity into the 2015 Climate Action Plan, as outlined

in the “2016 Climate through Equity” report. We should build upon this important process, particularly the 9 equity considerations to guide decision-making described on p. 12 of the report (attached).

(5) The climate resolution could be half as long and twice as potent. Consider drawing from this excellent template: <https://www.theclimatemobilization.org/climate-emergency-resolution>. The following clauses, cherry-picked from it, could be used to shorten and focus the current draft:

“WHEREAS, justice requires that frontline and marginalized communities, which have historically borne the brunt of the extractive fossil-fuel economy, participate actively in the planning and implementation of this mobilization effort and that they benefit first from the transition to a climate-safe economy;

NOW BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, [CITY/COUNTY] declares that a climate and ecological emergency threatens our city, region, state, nation, civilization, humanity and the natural world;


BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the [CITY/COUNTY] Council directs all [CITY/COUNTY] Departments, proprietaries, and commissions to report back within 60 days of the date <of the all-staff meeting> referenced above on maximum emergency reductions in greenhouse gas emissions from their operations feasible by the end of 2030;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the [CITY/COUNTY] Council directs [RELEVANT DEPT/AGENCY] to report back within 90 days on the feasibility for the rapid phase out of fossil fuel production, power generation, and use within [city/county] limits, including immediate changes to building codes, local ordinances, and permitting processes to prevent the construction of new local fossil fuel infrastructure;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the [CITY/COUNTY] commits to keeping the concerns of frontline and marginalized central to all Climate Emergency Mobilization program planning processes and to inviting and encouraging such communities to actively participate in the development and implementation of this Climate Mobilization Action Plan and all climate mobilization efforts;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the [CITY/COUNTY] recognizes that the full participation, inclusion, support, and leadership of community organizations, faith communities, youth, labor organizations, academic institutions, indigenous groups, and racial, gender, family, immigrant and disability justice and organizations and other allies are integral to the climate emergency response and mobilization efforts;

Thank you for your consideration.



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Feedback was molded into 9 equity considerations

Staff summarized the feedback from these work sessions and finalized them after review by the Equity Working Group. (See Equity Considerations text box for more details).

Staff then used the Equity Considerations to conduct a basic equity assessment of every action proposed in the draft Climate Action Plan. Actions were revised based on that assessment and the updated actions were shared with the Equity Working Group to determine if their feedback had been adequately integrated.



“For the community-based grantees, we learned how to better navigate the government bureaucracy while developing our own internal leadership around the issues of climate change. This small investment in our organizations had great returns in terms of building new capacity within various groups that are often ignored in the civic process due to cultural or language barriers. Moving forward, this grant could be a great model for future meaningful community engagement in a policy making process.”

Duncan Hwang, Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO), Equity Working Group Member

EQUITY CONSIDERATIONS

1. Disproportionate impacts

Does the proposed action generate burdens (including costs), either directly or indirectly, to communities of color or low-income populations? If yes, are there opportunities to mitigate these impacts?

2. Shared benefits

Can the benefits of the proposed action be targeted in progressive ways to reduce historical or current disparities?

3. Accessibility

Are the benefits of the proposed action broadly accessible to households and businesses throughout the community — particularly communities of color, low-income populations, and minority, women and emerging small businesses?

4. Engagement

Does the proposed action engage and empower communities of color and low-income populations in a meaningful, authentic and culturally appropriate manner?

5. Capacity building

Does the proposed action help build community capacity through funding, an expanded knowledge base or other resources?

6. Alignment and partnership

Does the proposed action align with and support existing communities of color and low-income population priorities, creating an opportunity to leverage resources and build collaborative partnerships?

7. Relationship building

Does the proposed action help foster the building of effective, long-term relationships and trust between diverse communities and local government?

8. Economic opportunity and staff diversity

Does the proposed action support communities of color and low-income populations through workforce development, contracting opportunities or the increased diversity of city and county staff?

9. Accountability

Does the proposed action have appropriate accountability mechanisms to ensure that communities of color, low-income populations, or other vulnerable communities will equitably benefit and not be disproportionately harmed?