

RESOLUTION DECLARING A CLIMATE EMERGENCY – Version 5/24/22

WHEREAS, in the past decade the Town of Greenwich has experienced extreme weather, including severe storms, drought, and intense heat, which has resulted in increased risks to public health and safety due to an urban heat island effect, loss of power and basic utilities, high riverine floodwaters, inland and coastal flooding, and reduced urban tree canopy; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Greenwich is a coastal community and is vulnerable to damage by rising sea levels; and

WHEREAS, the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), is a well-regarded international organization established under the United Nations for the interchange of ideas on climate change and to provide governments at all levels with the scientific information they need to develop policies to address climate change; and

WHEREAS, the IPCC 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"¹; and

WHEREAS, atmospheric carbon dioxide concentrations have increased from approximately 280 parts per million (ppm) in the 18th century² to 414 ppm in 2020, and human activities currently release over 30 billion tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere every year²; and

WHEREAS, the IPCC concludes with high confidence that at warming levels beyond 2°C by 2100, risks of extirpation, extinction and ecosystem collapse escalate rapidly, and climate impacts on ocean and coastal ecosystems will be exacerbated by increases in intensity, reoccurrence and duration of marine heatwaves³; and

WHEREAS, there is a direct, linear relationship between the total amount of CO₂ released by human activity and the level of warming at the Earth's surface and the US is responsible for the largest share of historical emissions with some 20% of the global total;⁴ 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

¹ https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/05/SYR_AR5_FINAL_full_wcover.pdf pg 8

² <https://www.epa.gov/climatechange-science/causes-climate-change>

³ https://report.ipcc.ch/ar6wg2/pdf/IPCC_AR6_WGII_FactSheet_Biodiversity.pdf pg 2

⁴ <https://www.carbonbrief.org/analysis-which-countries-are-historically-responsible-for-climate-change/>

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 2022, IPCC climate scientists said, “the scientific evidence is unequivocal: climate change is a threat to human wellbeing and the health of the planet. Any further delay in concerted global action will miss a brief and rapidly closing window to secure a livable future”;⁵ and

WHEREAS, restoring a safe climate urgently requires a comprehensive mobilization to reduce greenhouse gas emissions across all sectors, to implement mitigation strategies to remove greenhouse gasses [CO₂, methane & Nitrous Oxide] from the atmosphere, and to adopt measures to protect all species from the most severe consequences of climate change;

WHEREAS, black, Indigenous, and other communities of color, as well as low-income communities, minority communities in particular, 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, higher levels of global warming lead to greater constraints on societies and climate change increases the threat of poverty and food insecurity.

https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_WGII_FinalDraft_Chapter08.pdf pg3

WHEREAS, it is vital that the Town of Greenwich recognizes and starts to address the challenges presented by the climate crisis.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE GREENWICH BOARD OF SELECTMEN declares:

1. the existence of a climate emergency, which threatens the natural world upon which our community, region and country rely; and;

⁵ <https://www.ipcc.ch/2022/02/28/pr-wgii-ar6/> intro

2. this declaration of a climate emergency provides the foundation upon which the Town of Greenwich shall develop future priorities, policies, plans, budgets, and actions; and
3. that it shall be the policy of the Town of Greenwich that all Town department heads, committees, and commissions shall establish plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by both the Town 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
4. that the Greenwich Board of Selectmen agrees to work with the Board of Estimate and Taxation and the Representative Town Meeting to establish an emergency mobilization effort that, with ongoing Town funding and appropriate financial and regulatory assistance from state and federal authorities, will aim to end Town-generated greenhouse gas emissions by or before December 31, 2030 in compliance with State law adopted in 2022⁶, and to adopt techniques to safely reduce Townwide carbon emissions; and
5. that the Board of Selectmen understands that an equitable transition to a fossil-fuel-free economy requires full community participation and that it will work with community leaders to ensure that all Greenwich residents are represented in the process; and
6. that the Town of Greenwich will advocate for coordinated climate action at the municipal, regional, state, and federal levels to restore a safe and sustainable climate for all living beings on Earth.

Adopted this __ day of _____, 2022

⁶<https://ctmirror.org/2022/04/26/senate-passes-and-sends-to-house-a-ct-clean-air-act>