

Town of Blowing Rock

Request for Council Action

FROM: Manager Ed Evans
SUBJECT: Resolution for Clean Energy and Green Jobs
TO: Mayor and Council
DATE: March 13, 2018
REQUESTED BY: Sue Sweeting

Public Hearing Yes No Not required NA
Properly Advertised Yes No Not required NA

BACKGROUND:

The Resolution calls for the State of North Carolina and the United States to establish a transition from a fossil fuel-based economy to a 100% clean renewable energy for all energy sectors-based economy, by January 1, 2050 or sooner to avoid climate catastrophe, to promote job creation and economic growth, and to protect the Earth for current and future generations from climate catastrophe. Achieving this goal would result in the total phase out of fossil fuels by 2050 for energy use.

Numerous scientists, policymakers, business and faith leaders, environmentalists and others have stated that we are in a “climate emergency.” The use of fossil fuels by society is the primary cause of climate change according to leading scientific, academic and governmental organizations, including the National Academy of Sciences, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Department of Defense, United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and numerous other authorities.

Climate change leads to rising sea levels through the melting of the glaciers and an increase in the severity and frequency of flooding, wildfires, droughts, heatwaves, infectious diseases among other disastrous impacts that can lead to death and dire economic impacts if not stopped. Human-induced climate change can only be stopped by phasing out fossil fuels, which cause greenhouse gas emissions such as carbon dioxide and methane. These emissions trap heat in the Earth’s atmosphere and oceans according to an overwhelming scientific consensus.

Seventeen of the eighteen hottest years on record since 1850 have occurred in the twenty-first century and 2017 was the hottest year on record if the El Nino boost is not included.

In December 2015, nearly 200 nations, including the United States, signed a climate agreement in Paris, France to phase out all fossil fuels and to keep the global temperature increase since the 19th Century to well below 2 degrees Celsius and to pursue efforts to keep it below 1.5 degrees Celsius.

North Carolina is second in the nation in solar capacity behind California and also has the biggest potential for offshore wind energy on the Eastern Seaboard.

This resolution has been endorsed by the North Carolina Climate Solutions Coalition (NCCSC), a group dedicated to fight climate change and support clean energy, which consists of the following organizations: Climate Voices US, Justice Action Mobilization Network, Hip Hop Caucus, The Climate Times, Sustainable Sandhills, The Canary Coalition, Beyond Extreme Energy, Divestment Student Network, Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League (BREDL), NC Power Forward, Temple Emanuel Environmental Movement, Appalachian Voices, and the Long Branch Environmental Education Center. The Coalition is led by Co-Executive Directors Dr. Harvard Ayers, Professor Emeritus of Anthropology at Appalachian State University and Joel Segal.

The Advisory Committee for the North Carolina Climate Solutions Coalition includes internationally recognized scientists and author/activist: Dr. Michael Mann, Distinguished Professor of Atmospheric Science, Penn State University; Dr. Robert Howarth, David R. Atkinson Professor of Ecology and Environmental Biology, Cornell University; Dr. George Woodwell, Founder and Director Emeritus of the Woods Hole Research Center; Dr. Mark Z. Jacobson, Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering, Director of the Atmosphere/Energy Program, Stanford University; Bill McKibben, author, climate activist, Schumann Distinguished Scholar at Middlebury College, Founder of 350.org; and Dr. Richard Gray, Professor of Physics, Appalachian State University.

On December 15, 2016, the Boone Town Council adopted by a vote of 5-0 a resolution calling for a goal of 100% clean energy and green jobs for all energy sectors for the State of North Carolina and the United States by the year 2050. The vote was historic because the Town of Boone became the first municipality in the United States officially calling for a 100% clean energy for all energy sectors goal for their state and the United States., Fifteen municipalities in North Carolina have passed a 100% renewable energy resolution.

A joint Stanford University and University of California-Berkeley study concludes the United States and the world energy supply could be based entirely on renewable energy by the year 2050 using current technologies and 80% renewable energy by 2030 while creating numerous green jobs.

The U.S. Conference of Mayors passed a resolution in 2017 calling for 100% renewable energy by 2035.

At least 40 U.S. cities have already committed to 100% clean energy.

In 2016, 48 countries of the Climate Vulnerable Forum agreed while attending the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Marrakech, Morocco (COP22) to make

their energy production 100% renewable "as rapidly as possible" and by between 2030 and 2050 at the latest.

On March 16, 2017, an almost identical legislation (House Resolution 401), called the "100% Clean Energy and Green Jobs Resolution," was introduced in the North Carolina House of Representatives by State Representatives Pricey Harrison, John Autry, Jean Farmer-Butterfield, and Susan Fisher and currently has a total of 16 sponsors.

ATTACHMENTS: 2018-05 Resolution for Clean Energy

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Gauge your personal support for this initiative, weight the merits of the Resolution and express your support or non-support for the Resolution by voting to endorse it, or not.



Resolution #2018-05

RESOLUTION BY THE BLOWING ROCK TOWN COUNCIL SUPPORTING A STATE AND NATIONAL GOAL OF 100% CLEAN ENERGY BY 2050 AND THE CREATION OF GREEN JOBS

WHEREAS, by the end of 2015, the Earth's average surface temperature has increased by about 1.0 degree Celsius (1.8 degrees Fahrenheit) since the late-19th century according to NASA;

WHEREAS, climate change is expected to increasingly impact North Carolina's temperatures, precipitation and sea level with harmful consequences in coming years;

WHEREAS, climate change and global average temperature increases are primarily due to human-caused fossil fuels emissions, including coal, oil and natural gas, according to the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, National Academy of Sciences, American Meteorological Society, United States Environmental Protection Agency, United States Department of Defense, and numerous other leading scientific, academic and governmental authorities both in the United States and internationally;

WHEREAS, a final agreement of the United Nations Conference of Parties (COP21), which included the United States and a total of 195 nations, was reached in Paris, France on December 12, 2015, that states the aim is to "holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels" and entered into force on November 4, 2016;

WHEREAS, scientists have concluded the concentration of carbon dioxide, the leading greenhouse gas, in the Earth's atmosphere is currently and consistently over 400 parts per million (ppm) and will likely stay above this level for the indefinite future for the first time in millions of years;

WHEREAS, seventeen of the eighteen hottest years on record since 1850 have occurred in the twenty-first century and 2017 was the hottest year on record if the El Nino boost is not included;

WHEREAS, an increase in the global average temperature is having and will continue to increasingly have major adverse impacts, if not stopped by eliminating the use of fossil fuels, on both the natural and human-made environments due to longer, more intense heat waves, prolonged droughts, spread of infectious diseases, rising sea

levels, ocean acidification, wildfires, and more intense and frequent extreme weather events;

WHEREAS, these physical effects are expected to lead to water scarcity, food insecurity, increasing numbers of refugees, increased poverty, and the mass extinction of species;

WHEREAS, studies completed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Risky Business Project, Duke University, and others point to the severe economic costs of climate change and continuing use of fossil fuel, estimating billions of dollars a year in costs nationally and trillions globally;

WHEREAS, leading economists, policy experts, and business leaders conclude that transitioning to a clean energy economy available for all would create millions of green jobs nationally, improve health and living standards, and boost economic growth in coming years;

WHEREAS, a study cited two of the twenty dirtiest coal plants in the country in North Carolina, the Belews Creek plant and the Roxboro Steam plant;

WHEREAS, low-income communities and communities of color in North Carolina and the United States are inordinately exposed to pollution, that causes serious health problems such as cancer and asthma, from fossil fuels, including the dirtiest coal-fired power plants which produce coal ash, and need to be empowered and have access to educational tools and an awareness of climate issues;

WHEREAS, a Stanford University and University of California-Berkeley study concludes the United States energy supply could be based entirely on renewable energy by the year 2050 using current technologies and 80% renewable energy by 2030 while creating numerous green jobs;

WHEREAS, municipalities, organizations, businesses, and academic institutions throughout the world have set a goal to achieve carbon or climate neutrality by 2050 or earlier;

WHEREAS, the U.S. Conference of Mayors passed a resolution in 2017 calling for 100% renewable energy by 2035;

WHEREAS, over 600 American colleges and universities have made a commitment to reduce greenhouse gases, including Appalachian State University, Blue Ridge Community College, Carteret Community College, Catawba College, Central Carolina Community College, Davidson College, Duke University, Elizabeth City State University, Fayetteville State University, Guilford College, North Carolina Central University, Queens University of Charlotte, Southeastern Community College, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina at Charlotte, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, University of North Carolina at Pembroke, Wake Technical Community College, and Warren Wilson College;

WHEREAS, North Carolina installed 1,140 MW of solar electric capacity in 2015, ranking it second nationally; nearly \$1.7 billion was invested on solar installations in North Carolina, a 159% increase over the previous year; there are currently more than 200 solar companies at work throughout the value chain in North Carolina, the state companies employing some 6,000 people; North Carolina ranks third in the nation in installed solar capacity, enough to power 260,000 homes; and solar photovoltaic system prices in the U.S. have dropped by 66% since 2010; Whereas, North Carolina has more offshore wind energy potential than any other Atlantic state;

WHEREAS, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Fifth Assessment Report recommended a global goal of achieving near zero greenhouse gas emissions or below, which is necessary to stabilize the global average temperature to avoid climate catastrophe;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Blowing Rock Town Council that it endorses the following:

SECTION 1. The State of North Carolina and the United States shall establish a transition from a fossil fuel-based economy to a 100% clean renewable energy for all energy sectors-based economy, by January 1, 2050 or sooner to avoid climate catastrophe, to promote job creation and economic growth, and to protect the Earth for current and future generations from climate catastrophe.

SECTION 2. This resolution is effective upon adoption March 13, 2018.

Charlie Sellers, Mayor

Hilari Hubner, Town Clerk