

# Fort Collins Chamber CEO Continues to Ignore Climate Crisis

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In his most recent guest commentary on renewable electricity, Fort Collins Area Chamber of Commerce President and CEO David May notes with evident pride that he has never written about the same topic three times in a row.

Alas, May's latest piece largely repeats the points made in his first two pieces. Still more lamentably, he has now failed to mention "climate change" in connection with renewable electricity in each of his three guest commentaries.

The need to address climate change by making deep greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reductions is urgent, and Fort Collins can and should be a leader in showing other communities the way forward. The future costs to society of not achieving those reductions dwarf the sunk costs associated with coal-fired power plants that so trouble May.

Think, for instance, of the costs associated with fighting and recovering from intensifying and more frequent wildfires, the costs associated with reduced agricultural production, the costs associated with the loss of our ski industry, and the myriad other costs associated with a significantly warmer and dryer climate here in Colorado.

For Fort Collins Partners for Clean Energy, or FCP4CE, the coalition that introduced the 100 percent renewable electricity resolution to City Council last spring, the problem of climate change is front and center.

We are fully supportive of the city's climate goal for 2030, which was adopted unanimously by City Council in 2015. That goal calls for Fort Collins to reduce its GHG emissions 80 percent compared to 2005 levels.

Reducing emissions 80 percent by 2030 is a very ambitious goal, but is in line with what's required worldwide to avoid the most dangerous consequences of climate change. The city's 2015 Climate Action Plan (CAP) Framework identifies a number of strategies to reduce our GHG emissions 73 percent by 2030, meaning there's still a 7 percent gap between the goal and the measures identified to meet that goal.

One of the strategies called out in the 2015 CAP Framework is to reduce GHG emissions from electricity supplied by our utility 80 percent by 2030. Given the steep drops in the cost of wind, solar, and storage technologies in recent years, FCP4CE believes that increasing that subsidiary goal to 100 percent renewable, zero emissions electricity would be a good way to close the gap noted above.

However, we acknowledge that achieving the last 5 to 10 percent of the 100 percent renewable electricity goal could prove costly.

That is why we recently proposed an addition to the original version of our resolution that would establish a mid-term review of that goal, perhaps in 2025. That review would allow City Council to modify the renewable electricity goal if more cost-effective strategies exist at that time to achieve the 2030 community-wide GHG emissions reduction goal and if council signals its intent to pursue implementation of those strategies.

Climate change is a problem that ultimately threatens to destroy the planetary ecosystems that have sustained human civilizations since the dawn of the Holocene Epoch. We can either recognize that fact and respond with the requisite urgency, or we can ignore that fact and watch worldwide tragedy unfold.

We encourage May and the Fort Collins Area Chamber of Commerce to change course and join us and the city of Fort Collins on the first of those two paths.

*Kevin Cross is the convener of the Fort Collins Sustainability Group (<http://fcsf.fccan.org>), which is a member of Fort Collins Partners for Clean Energy.*