

Tell the Fort Collins City Council that now is the time to take meaningful action on climate change!

Location:

City Council Chambers
300 Laporte Avenue
Fort Collins

Date:

Tuesday, May 20th, 2008

Time:

6:30 p.m. The new greenhouse gas goals resolution is the first and only discussion item after approval of the consent calendar.

Requested Action:

Please come to the city council meeting at 6:30 p.m. We will have buttons for people to wear to show their support for taking action on climate change now. If you wish to speak in support of retaining the city's existing greenhouse gas emissions reduction goal, please sign in at the back of the room. You will have up to five minutes to voice your concerns. See "**background**" and "**talking points**" below for details.

Background

In 1999, the Fort Collins City Council adopted a "Local Action Plan to Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions." This plan set a goal of reducing citywide greenhouse gas emissions 30% below predicted worst-case 2010 levels.

By 2006, it became clear that the city would miss its 2010 emissions goal. The Fort Collins Sustainability Group, a citizens' organization, initiated a resolution to get the city back on track, which council approved in early 2007. As a result of this resolution, a "Climate Task Force" composed of citizens and city staff was formed to identify additional measures that could be taken to meet our 2010 goal.

The Climate Task Force presented its package of recommendations to City Council last February (for details, visit <http://fcgov.com/climateprotection/ctf.php>). A great deal of confusion and misinformation ensued concerning both the 2010 goal and the costs of meeting it. The Fort Collins Coloradoan suggested that the goal was unrealistic and the costs unaffordable. Neither of those suggestions are accurate.

The goal of 2,466,000 tons of carbon dioxide is only 3.3% lower than the city's greenhouse gas emissions in 2005. The costs of implementing the entire package would come primarily from the Utilities Department budget, and be spread out over a period of seven years. It would result in significant long term cost savings for utility customers. Nevertheless, City Council reacted by directing the Climate Task Force to focus on distant goals rather than the action package to meet our existing commitments.

A few weeks later, the Climate Task Force recommended that the city adopt the same long term goals as those contained in the State of Colorado's "Climate Action Plan." Those goals are to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 20% in 2020 and by 80% in 2050 compared to 2005 levels. However, the task force also reiterated strong support for their original charge: a package of actions designed to meet our modest 2010 climate goals.

On May 20th, the Fort Collins City Council will consider a resolution to adopt the 2020 and 2050 goals recommended by the Climate Task Force. However, the resolution makes no commitment to meet our existing 2010 goal. It merely states that milestones shall be established and suggests that the 2010 goal shall be met sometime between now and 2020.

Talking Points

- Adopting this new goals resolution in its current form would be something like playing a game of Three Card Monte with the people of Fort Collins. The city would in effect be telling citizens, “Forget about the existing 2010 goal; we promise to meet new goals 12 and 42 years from now.” Given the original climate program’s failure to meet relatively modest future goals, such an attempt to delay any real accountability is unacceptable. We should not take a 10-year program and give it a possible 10 - 11 more years to meet its goal.
- The Fort Collins Sustainability Group supports the new long-term goals, but strongly recommends that our 2010 goal be met no later than 2012. This would put the city on a straight line path towards the 2020 goal, and would require the city to act soon on the measures developed by the Climate Task Force.
- The intent of the resolution council passed establishing the Climate Task Force was a) for the Climate Task Force to develop steps the city could take to meet the 2010 goal and b) to recommend a future direction for the city to take on climate protection after 2010. The intention was not for the future direction to replace the 2010 goal. The Climate Task Force also supports attaining the 2010 goal by 2012, by a vote taken on 5/13/08.
- There are hundreds of local climate action plans and every one of them shares a greenhouse gas reduction goal by a set date. The end date drives these programs.
- Our 2010 program never had a 30% reduction commitment compared to actual emissions. Using 2005 as our base year, the commitment is only a 3.3% reduction.
- What confidence can we have about meeting 20-80% reductions if we can’t even commit to a 3.3% reduction over seven years, i.e. from 2005 to 2012?
- Using only an end date far in the future is similar to not grading a student until he or she is out of school. Without grades there is no chance of failure, but also a poor chance of accomplishing anything meaningful.
- Though the Fort Collins Sustainability Group hopes for a unanimous vote in favor of reaching the short term goal by 2012, the planet will not care if we get a unanimous vote on a short term goal tonight. Only achievements in reducing greenhouse gas emissions matter.
- Long term goals and milestones alone will not allow climate action to compete well in our budget process. There will always be other immediate measures competing for funding in this time of shortfalls. It will be easy to delay funding for measures right up until the due date. We can always kid ourselves that we will make up for it in the future.

- The time for accountability is now. We've already waited 9 years since 1999. Moving the goalposts just when we are nearing the end of the performance period is not a fair game.
- The long term 2020 and 2050 goals are fine, but they do not represent any commitment on our part. They are commitments we are making for our children and grandchildren. By 2020, children now in grade school will have finished college. The generation that needs to commit now is ours.
- Our efforts here and now will be remembered long after issues such as the city logo, newspaper kiosks, and holiday lighting colors are forgotten.