

FCSG Statement on Key CAP Initiatives for 2017

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The new Fort Collins City Council will hold a retreat on May 12th and 13th to discuss its priorities for the coming year. The Fort Collins Sustainability Group (FCSG) encourages councilmembers to give significant consideration to the Climate Action Plan (CAP) during its retreat. The Fort Collins CAP is arguably the most forward-thinking policy ever adopted by City Council. The CAP will save Fort Collins residents billions of dollars by mid-century by dramatically lowering what we spend on fossil fuels, will improve our health by cleaning up our air, and will provide an example to other communities of how to preserve a livable climate for ourselves and future generations.

Over the last two years, progress toward the 2020 CAP goal – a 20% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions compared to 2005 levels – has been encouraging. In 2015, emissions were down 9% compared to 2005, and in 2016, that figure increased to 12%. However, significant work remains to be done if we are to achieve a 20% reduction in the period 2017 - 2020.

The FCSG recommends that Council focus on the following CAP initiatives over the coming year:

1. Renewable energy for municipal operations. Last year, city staff proposed a budget offer that would have dedicated City funds to purchasing renewable energy from the Platte River Power Authority (PRPA) to meet the electricity needs of all City departments. However, this budget offer would not have resulted in any net reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, since it would have simply re-allocated renewable energy produced by the PRPA's wind turbines and solar arrays from residential and commercial use to municipal use. This flaw in the original budget offer – which was not funded - could be addressed by procuring renewable energy for municipal operations from new sources. The FCSG believes that this could be done at competitive rates through a power purchase agreement (PPA) with a private entity. We suggest that the City consider entering into a PPA in 2017 or 2018 for municipal operations – especially if doing so would result in lower and/or more stable electricity prices than are currently available based on fossil fuel-fired generation. The price tag of the original budget offer was approximately \$1 Million per year; we believe that under a PPA that price tag would approach zero. According to the City's figures, this initiative would reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 20,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide per year – a 1% reduction from the 2005 baseline.
2. Community organic waste composting. Composting yard and food waste generated by Fort Collins businesses and residences offers the potential for significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions that will be critical to achieving the 2020 CAP goal. Staff is scheduled to present a range of composting options to council during the work session on May 23rd. While the FCSG supports composting organic material, we remain opposed to mixing the resulting biosolids with the general solid waste stream resulting from sewage treatment. We urge council to direct staff to pursue composting options that do NOT result in such mixing, and to prepare an offer for the 2019-2020 biennial budget based on that approach.

3. Trip reduction and transportation efficiency. Last year, city staff proposed a budget offer for a study intended to result in incentive programs to reduce motor vehicle use and thereby reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the transit sector. This offer was not funded. While the FCSG supported this offer last year, we now believe that it would be best to wait for the results of the transportation master planning update – which is currently underway - before considering any additional funding for a transportation efficiency study. The transportation master planning update should be available later this year. The results of that update should inform the development of transportation-related offers for the 2019-2020 biennial budget.

Finally, we strongly recommend that Council direct staff to develop additional CAP initiatives for Council's consideration if it appears that success in achieving the 2020 CAP goal is dependent on implementing any ONE new measure. It is critical that Council be able to choose between different paths for reaching the 2020 goal, rather than be forced to adopt every proposal set forth by staff in order to do so.

Meeting the 2020 CAP goal will not be easy, but it must be done if the City is to move forward credibly toward achieving its still more ambitious goals for 2030 and 2050: 80% greenhouse gas emissions reductions compared to 2005 levels and net zero emissions, respectively. The stakes are too high for us to fail to meet any of our CAP goals.