



Allegheny County Council

County of Allegheny
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Legislation Text

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Motion of the Council of Allegheny County establishing a desired timeline for the creation of an Allegheny County Sustainability Commission and the development of an Allegheny County Climate Action Plan.

Whereas, Allegheny County established a sustainability program in 2009, which is tasked with improving the County's overall sustainability; and

Whereas, since the establishment of the sustainability program, the County has reduced its reliance on fossil fuels by purchasing energy from renewable sources, reduced its carbon footprint, and taken additional steps to safeguard the environment, most recently by establishing a clean construction program specifically designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions related to County construction projects in June of 2020; and

Whereas, in addition to the sustainability office, the County also has a long term sustainability plan in place, which is designed to improve the fashion in which County-owned facilities and County-provided services operate in an environmentally responsible fashion; and

Whereas, as noted by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), the impact of climate change is becoming significant: “[s]cientists have high confidence that global temperatures will continue to rise for decades to come, largely due to greenhouse gases produced by human activities. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which includes more than 1,300 scientists from the United States and other countries, forecasts a temperature rise of 2.5 to 10 degrees Fahrenheit over the next century.”; and

Whereas, also according to NASA and IPCC, while the impacts of this climate change will vary from region to region within the United States, common themes across the nation will involve strained infrastructure and human health hazards stemming from rising sea levels, changes in the availability of potable drinking water, extreme heat waves, increases in the strength and number of hurricanes and other damaging weather events, and instability in agricultural systems; and

Whereas, according to data compiled by the Energy Information Administration in 2005, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania by itself was the world's 22nd largest emitter of carbon dioxide, the most prevalent of the GHGs; and

Whereas, as noted by the Union of Concerned Scientists, carefully structured Climate Action Plans can, *inter alia*, serve to mitigate the costs of climate change, create jobs, improve public health, provide benefits to farmers and others employed within the agricultural sector, reduce energy costs (which would be particularly beneficial to lower income households), help preserve important ecosystems and species, and aid in safeguarding potable water supplies; and

Whereas, it is the judgment of Council that, while the County's existing sustainability plan has value, the County is positioned to be even more proactive in mitigating its impact upon climate change through the

formulation of a more detailed, comprehensive climate action plan, similar to that established by the City of Pittsburgh; and

Whereas, it is further the judgment of Council that the County's existing sustainability program should be expanded to a formalized Sustainability Commission with representation from both the County government and the private sector in order to provide evaluation and guidance relating to the environmental consequences of proposed County actions, as well as to recommend future initiatives designed to promote the long term goals of the sustainability plan, and structured similarly to the Sustainability Commission established by Delaware County in February of 2020 through the enactment of Resolution 2020-4 (attached);

The Council of the County of Allegheny therefore hereby moves as follows:

That Allegheny County Council, in cooperation with the Chief Executive and County Manager, should:

1. No later than May 1, 2021, formulate and introduce an ordinance to establish an Allegheny County Sustainability Commission, incorporating representation from both the County government and the private sector and empowered to provide evaluation and guidance relating to the environmental consequences of proposed County actions, as well as to recommend future initiatives designed to promote the long term goals of the sustainability plan; and
2. No later than September 1, 2021 and with the assistance of the Allegheny County Sustainability Commission, begin crafting an Allegheny County Climate Action Plan to assess potential deleterious environmental impacts and formulate strategies for mitigating those impacts within Allegheny County in contexts including, but not limited to: energy generation and distribution, building and end use efficiency, transportation and land use, waste and resource recovery, food and agriculture, and local ecosystems.