



Allegheny County Council

County of Allegheny
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Legislation Text

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An Ordinance of the County of Allegheny, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, providing for the development of a climate action plan by the Allegheny County Department of Sustainability no later than July 1, 2024.

Whereas, both the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the City of Pittsburgh have created climate action plans (CAPs); and

Whereas, the City of Pittsburgh's CAP, now in its third version, was initially adopted in 2008, and was created specifically to serve as a guidance document for the City's efforts in reducing greenhouse gas emissions; and

Whereas, in 2012, the City adopted the second version of its CAP, which proposed new measures that could be taken by the City to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 20% lower than 2003 levels by 2023; and

Whereas, in 2017, the City adopted the third version of its CAP, which was designed to track progress from the first two plans, and which also proposed additional measures that could be taken to counteract continuing effects of climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions to 50% below 2003 levels by 2030; and

Whereas, the City's CAP 3.0 also established other goals to be met, including reduction of energy and water consumption by 50% by 2030, reducing on-road transportation by 50%, contributing zero waste to landfills by 2030, doubling carbon sequestration (essentially capturing carbon that would otherwise be emitted into the atmosphere by increasing green plant coverage and similar means) by 2030, and improving local food systems; and

Whereas, in working towards these goals, the City has increased the number of electric vehicles purchased for its fleet, convened an Electric Vehicles Task Force to provide recommendations for making electric vehicle charging and operation more easily accomplished in the City, and partnered with the American Cities Climate Challenge and Pittsburgh Parking Authority to develop an Electric Vehicle Charging Strategic Plan for Pittsburgh Public Facilities; and

Whereas, Pittsburgh is also one of only 25 cities chosen by the Bloomberg Philanthropies Climate Challenge to showcase the beneficial impacts that result from planned climate strategies geared towards reducing building energy use, increasing renewable energy, reducing vehicle travel, and electrifying vehicles; and

Whereas, pursuant to the Pennsylvania Climate Change Act of 2008, the Commonwealth must develop both a CAP and a Climate Impacts Assessment, and must update both the CAP and Impacts Assessment every three years; and

Whereas, the most recent incarnation of the Commonwealth's CAP is the Pennsylvania Climate Action Plan 2021 (PACAP21), which outlined strategies for reaching Pennsylvania's greenhouse gas reduction goals: 26 percent by 2025 and 80 percent by 2050 (both values are reductions from 2005 levels); and

Whereas, the Climate Change Act also established a Climate Change Advisory Committee to advise the DEP throughout the planning process, with members including representatives from science, business and

industry (including fracking and mining), transportation, environmental (including the Sierra Club), social, outdoor and sporting, labor and other interested communities; and

Whereas, PACAP21 describes the environmental, economic, and social benefits of each proposed strategy, together with the costs or savings from implementing it. Environmental benefits, and costs or savings, are stated as reductions in GHG emissions and changes in energy and fuel use. Economic effects are described in terms of changes in employment, disposable income, and the Commonwealth's economic output. Social benefits and costs are expressed as effects on air quality (changes in certain pollutants, such as nitrogen oxides) and associated public health and social values, such as equity and resilience; and

Whereas, PACAP21 emphasizes the importance of complimentary action by local governments; as noted by former Governor Wolf in his announcement of the Plan, "I urge leaders across government, business, agriculture, academia, and community organizations-and all Pennsylvanians-to join in making climate change a top priority. It is only with your commitment, collaboration, and action, large scale or small, that Pennsylvania will meet the climate imperative. Throughout history, Pennsylvania has led the nation in every era of energy innovation. We can and must lead now. Pennsylvania Climate Action Plan 2021 tells us how."; and

Whereas, to this end, the Commonwealth's Department of Environmental Protection has established the Local Climate Action Program, which is specifically designed to assist local governments with climate action planning. The program is run by the DEP Energy Programs Office and funded by the State Energy Program of the U.S. Department of Energy; and

Whereas, the DEP expressly indicates that "[h]aving state and local governments lead by example on climate action is a key component of mitigating climate change in Pennsylvania and one of the strategies recommended in the Pennsylvania Climate Action Plan."; and

Whereas, the DEP Local Climate Action Program provides free technical and personnel assistance to local governments that want to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and address climate change. In its first three years, LCAP has trained 53 cities, townships, boroughs, counties, and regional organizations, representing approximately 380 municipalities across the commonwealth; and

Whereas, in 2022, Allegheny County Council established a Department of Sustainability by enacting ordinance 25-22-OR; and

Whereas, this action was undertaken in accordance with the Home Rule Charter of Allegheny County, Article IV, §6, which provides that "County Council shall adopt by ordinance, and amend as needed, an Administrative Code that shall provide a complete plan of organization, departmental structure and operation for the County Government."; and

Whereas, as stated in the preamble to ordinance 25-22-OR, "County Council is of the considered opinion that the County's efforts to integrate and invest in environmentally sensitive and sustainable measures would be improved and strengthened by the creation of a separate department within the structure of County Government dedicated solely and exclusively to planning, promoting and implementing a County "Green Sustainability Plan" and more widespread sustainability practices with County Government."; and

Whereas, Allegheny County has not adopted a CAP, but it is the judgment of Council that formulation of a Climate Action Plan will inure to the benefit of the County's residents, while placing the County on par with both the City's and Commonwealth's plans, which have been in place for years; and

Whereas, it is further the judgment of Council that the existence of these and other CAPs throughout the Commonwealth will provide significant guidance in developing the County's CAP, that other existing resources (specifically the DEP's Local Climate Action Program) will provide low cost (yet invaluable)

assistance in developing the County's CAP, and that developing the County's CAP lies within the intended function of the Department of Sustainability; and

Whereas, to the extent that development of a County CAP may constitute an alteration in the function of the Department of Sustainability, that alteration is the intention of Council consistent with the Home Rule Charter of Allegheny County, Article IV, §2(m), which provides that Council has the power/duty to "[b]y ordinance or resolution, modify or eliminate any department, agency or function that no longer meets the needs of the County's taxpayers."

The Council of the County of Allegheny hereby enacts as follows:

SECTION 1. Incorporation of the Preamble.

The recitations contained within the Preamble to this Ordinance are hereby incorporated by reference herein.

SECTION 2. Climate Action Plan Development.

The Allegheny County Department of Sustainability shall formulate, develop, and present to Council and the Chief Executive a Climate Action Plan for Allegheny County no later than July 1, 2024. Such plan shall be consistent with the goals established by the City of Pittsburgh and Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Climate Action Plans to the extent practicable. Once presented to the Council and Chief Executive, the plan shall become effective via duly enacted ordinance of the County.

SECTION 3. - Effective Date.

The provisions of this Ordinance shall enter into effect immediately upon the date of final approval.

SECTION 4. - Severability.

If any provision of this Ordinance shall be determined to be unlawful, invalid, void or unenforceable, then that provision shall be considered severable from the remaining provisions of this Ordinance which shall be in full force and effect.

SECTION 5. - Repealer.

Any Resolution or Ordinance or part thereof conflicting with the provisions of this Ordinance is hereby repealed so far as the same affects this Ordinance.