TO: CITY COUNCIL
FROM: James Vega, City Manager
DATE REPORT PREPARED: July 18, 2019
MEETING DATE: July 22, 2019
SUBJECT: Resolution Endorsing Declaration of a Climate Emergency

Recommendation

Adopt a resolution endorsing the declaration of a climate emergency and direct staff to take steps to join with local, regional and broader efforts to reduce environmental impacts.

Discussion

Ojai has long been known as a community with strong respect for the environment. The Ojai City Council has taken many actions to support local, regional and broader clean energy, green and environmental efforts. In just the past two years, the Council voted to make Ojai a Nuclear-free zone, adopted new residential solar access guidelines, joined the Clean Power Alliance and became the first city in Ventura County to become a Certified AGZA Green Zone.

More broadly, Mayor Johnston has represented the City’s environmental concerns via the coalition of Climate Mayors. This organization of hundreds of mayors across the country has petitioned the federal government to adhere to energy consumption standards to ensure reaching a goal of zero emissions.

These are just a few examples of the City’s efforts to reduce its carbon footprint and affect policy change for climate protection.

Recently, several residents have addressed the Council, encouraging it to adopt a resolution declaring a climate emergency. This request is part of a trend among environmental groups nationwide and abroad, encouraging advocates to seek environmental policy changes in their own communities. It further encourages local cities and agencies to work together to affect regional and then national environmental policy change to transition as many countries as possible to a zero-emission, minimal-environmental-impact society.
The request for specifically declaring a climate emergency stems from environmental groups’ concern regarding whether the speed and amount of action taken by countries at the national level will be adequate to meet the goals of the 2016 Paris Agreement on climate change. In April of 2016, world leaders from 175 countries signed the agreement, which would keep global climate warming well below two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. The Paris Agreement further states that its signatories will pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

The position of advocates who seek local climate emergency declarations is that doing so supports national efforts to reach the Paris Agreement’s goals and that where national governments may be slow to act, change can still be made at the local and regional level.

Staff has included a draft resolution declaring a climate emergency as Attachment A. Should Council approve the resolution, such action would be consistent with its previous actions in support of climate protection.

**Fiscal Impact**

Staff report preparation costs are included in the 2019/20 budget. Future resource allocation will likely be a consideration as Council considers how to address commitments stemming from the resolution.

Prepared by:
James Vega, City Manager

Submitted by:
James Vega, City Manager

Attachment:
A – Draft Resolution Declaring a Climate Emergency.
WHEREAS, human activities have warned the Earth enough to end the 12,000-year period of climate stability that allowed agriculture and human civilization to develop; and

WHEREAS, the world came together in December 2015 to address the end of this period of climate stability due to global warming, agreeing to keep warming to “well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels” and to “pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius; and

WHEREAS, in 2017 the global surface temperature was over 1 degree Celsius warmer than the pre-industrial base period; and

WHEREAS, global warming has already set in motion catastrophic changes to the Earth system, including accelerating ice mass loss from the Greenland and West Antarctic Ice Sheets and the thawing of the borders of the vast Arctic permafrost, which holds twice as much stored carbon as the entire atmosphere; and

WHEREAS, according to the latest climate projects, humanity is on track to warm the Earth a sustained average of 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels as soon as 2026, and

WHEREAS, the Greenland Ice Sheet, which is likely to completely collapse at 1.6 degrees Celsius warming, which NASA scientists have concluded would lead to 23 feet of sea-level rise, billions of climate refugees, and a “global-scale catastrophe”; and

WHEREAS, it is estimated that sustained 1.5 degrees Celsius warming could cause a long-term, “continuous thaw” of the Arctic permafrost, which could turn the tundra from carbon sink into source in the 2020s; and

WHEREAS, such tipping points must be avoided at all costs, as they will have positive feedback effects on the climate system, causing further and increasingly uncontrollable global warming; and

WHEREAS, failure to uphold the Paris goal of keeping warming “well below 2 degrees Celsius would lead to the disappearance of island nations and “certain death” for Africa, Chief Negotiator for the G77 Lumumba Stanislaus Di-Aping warned in 2009; and

WHEREAS, it is estimated that humanity currently uses the equivalent of about 1.6 earths per year in resource consumption and waste disposal, a figure that is headed towards 3 earths per year in 2030; and
WHEREAS, the global economy's overshoot of ecological limits and, increasingly, climate change are driving a global fresh water scarcity crisis and the sixth mass extinction of species, which could devastate much of life on Earth for the next 10 million years; and

WHEREAS, climate-fueled droughts, famines, and diseases have already killed millions of people in the Global South and displaced millions more; and

WHEREAS, indigenous and low-income communities and communities of color in the United States and abroad have suffered the gravest consequences of the extractive economy since its inception; and

WHEREAS, the death and destruction already wrought by global warming of 1 degree Celsius demonstrate that the earth is already too hot for safety and justice; and

WHEREAS, the December 2017 Thomas Fire resulted in what was at the time the largest wildfire in recorded California history, displacing many people; and

WHEREAS we cannot wait for more devastating heatwaves, fires, floods, droughts, rising sea levels, and public health and humanitarian crises that threaten local residents, ecologies, businesses, and the broader Southern California population to begin the necessary emergency response; and

WHEREAS, the City Council of Ojai have committed to adopt, honor, and uphold the Paris agreement; and

WHEREAS, the City of Ojai and residents of the Ojai Valley have the insight, drive, capacity and capital to take a moral stand and do all we can to restore a safe climate within our own boundaries and on behalf of our planetary community; and

WHEREAS, the City of Ojai can model leadership by both converting to an ecologically, socially and economically restorative economy, and by catalyzing a unified regional climate emergency mobilization effort this year.

NOW BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, by the Ojai City Council that the City of Ojai declares that we face an existential Climate Emergency that threatens our city, region, state, nation, civilization, humanity and the natural world.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the City of Ojai commits to help educate our residents about the climate emergency to protect our residents as well as all the people and species of the world.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the City of Ojai underscores the need for full community participation and support, and recognizes that the residents of Ojai and community organizations will be integral to this effort.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the City of Ojai commits to keeping the consideration of disadvantaged communities central to all climate emergency actions and to inviting and encouraging such communities to actively participate in order to advocate directly for their needs.
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the City of Ojai seeks to partner with local and regional agencies to participate in a regional emergency effort and to intensify support of a comprehensive just transition to restore a safe climate.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the City of Ojai calls on the State of California to initiate a just statewide emergency mobilization effort to reverse global warming, which, with appropriate financial and regulatory assistance from Federal authorities, ends statewide greenhouse gas emissions as quickly as possible and immediately initiates an effort to safely draw down carbon from the atmosphere.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the City of Ojai calls on the United States of America to initiate a just national emergency mobilization effort to reverse global warming, which ends national greenhouse gas emissions as quickly as possible and immediately initiates an effort to safely draw down carbon from the atmosphere.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the City of Ojai calls on all governments and peoples worldwide to initiate a just global emergency mobilization effort to reverse global warming, which ends global greenhouse gas emissions as quickly as possible and immediately initiates an effort to safely draw down carbon from the atmosphere.

PASSED, APPROVED and ADOPTED this 22nd day of July, 2019 by the following vote:

AYES:
NOES:
ABSENT:
ABSTAIN:

CITY OF OJAI, CALIFORNIA

John F. Johnston, Mayor

Date signed

ATTEST:

Gail Davis, Deputy City Clerk

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

Matthew Summers, City Attorney
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