



Agenda Report

MEETING DATE: Tuesday, April 13, 2021

TO: City Council

FROM: PUBLIC WORKS & UTILITIES DIRECTOR PALMISANO
Alex Yasbeck, Senior Engineer

SUBJECT: UPDATE REPORT ON 2030 CLIMATE ACTION ADAPTATION PLAN

STATEMENT OF ISSUES:

The City of Watsonville is nearing completion of the 2030 Climate Action and Adaptation Plan (CAAP), which lays out a critical effort for climate action, adaptation, and restoration over the next decade. This report is an update on the progress.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

This is an update item only and no Council action is requested.

DISCUSSION:

The City of Watsonville is nearing completion of the 2030 Climate Action and Adaptation Plan (CAAP) which lays out a critical effort for climate action, adaptation, and restoration over the next decade. The CAAP will chart a clear path for the City, including residents and businesses, to reduce its greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, combat the impacts of climate change, and explore options for restoring and repairing its natural environment.

Background. The State of California supports local action on climate change by providing guidance for local jurisdictions to develop climate action plans or plans to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions for projects. The State also requires climate change adaptation strategies to protect communities and critical infrastructure from climate impacts. The State has set ambitious statewide GHG reduction goals and the expectation is that each jurisdiction will set reduction targets that represent a fair share of reductions that are achievable for the jurisdiction. To comply with existing legislation, the CAAP will have three focus areas: Climate Mitigation, Climate Adaptation, and Repair and Restoration. The web page for the CAAP is: cityofwatsonville.org/CAAP

Climate Mitigation. This component is based on the City's 2017 GHG inventory compiled by the Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG). Staff has worked across City

departments to identify a broad array of mitigation strategies with clear performance metrics. Mitigation actions are characterized by their potential to reduce GHG emissions, implementation timeframe, cost, community support, and ability to provide additional community benefits.

The City is currently working with the project consultant to determine a GHG reduction target that can be realistically achieved. The target will likely be close to the State reduction target of a 40% reduction in GHG emissions by 2030. This target uses 1990 as the baseline year - specifically reducing the community wide emissions to 40% of what they were in 1990. The long term goal will likely be carbon neutrality by 2045 or 2050.

By adopting a target that is consistent with the State target the City will align with other cities throughout the State and will remain competitive when applying for climate related grants and funding avenues. In addition, this target streamlines the GHG analysis process for all projects in the City when demonstrating California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) compliance.

In order to meet this commitment the City will need to reduce GHG emissions from all sectors but with a strong focus on reducing emissions from transportation (through the creation of local employment opportunities, the adoption of electric vehicles, and the continued expansion of active transportation and public transportation); emissions from new and existing buildings (by transitioning from natural gas use to clean electricity); and improvements to the management of the waste streams generated by the City (solid waste and wastewater).

Climate Adaptation. This component is based on the City's recent 2020 Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP). It considers additional risks, including agricultural impacts, grid reliability, and changes in the City population. Staff will categorize potential adaptation strategies by their risk-reduction potential (effectiveness), implementation timeframe, cost, community support, and ability to provide additional community benefits. Some example adaptation strategies include installing emergency generators, designating community cooling centers, developing distributed energy systems, continuing to support affordable housing development, and increasing tree canopy and green infrastructure.

Repair and Restoration. The final component includes an evaluation of potential regional actions such as: regenerative agriculture, large scale tree planting, and wetland restoration. Due to the proposed regional scale of the implementation measures in this section, staff is proposing a collaborative approach with implementation measures that are scaled at the Pájaro River watershed or Santa Cruz County level. Recognizing the limited reach of City projects, the plan will lay out strategies for the City to play a role in a larger context through Statewide and Regional policy advocacy.

Outreach and Community Engagement. Effective stakeholder and community engagement is an essential part of the Watsonville 2030 CAAP process. To shape the kind of Watsonville we want to build in the future, it is critical to hear from our community. By better understanding how people in the community are being affected by climate change we can better plan and prepare to address these issues. Our hope is to develop climate solutions that address environmental justice and inequalities, to do so we want to involve those who are most impacted by pollution and climate-change related issues.

Community Surveys. City staff developed two bilingual community surveys to inform our community about the CAAP and solicit their input on climate action and adaptation strategies. Participants learned about the CAAP purpose, goals and process, as well as the various climate initiatives. Through these surveys the community was also able to vote on options, and contribute comments/feedback through the chat-boxes. Outreach efforts to disseminate the surveys were done via social media, the Register Pajaronian, website, and in-person following social distancing guidelines at various locations.

The first climate survey was open from July 16 to August 25th, 2020 and informed Watsonville residents about the importance and benefits of the CAAP and solicited their input on climate change concerns. There were a total of 273 responses in both Spanish and English.

The second survey launched from November 5th to December 24th, 2020 and focused on residents preferences and acceptance of specific climate related strategies and initiatives. Participation was higher than the first survey with 1,099 responses in both Spanish and English.

In summary the results of the surveys showed:

- 60% of respondents are "very concerned" about the environment while an additional 25% are "concerned"
- 60% of respondents said it is "very important" that we reduce emissions to zero before 2045
- 51% of respondents said it is "very important" to invest in electric grid improvements to prevent power shut-off
- Respondents would like to see the City improve sustainable building practices, invest in water conservation, and increase food systems security and storage
- The creation of urban forests and green spaces was the initiative that most respondents chose as the program the City should consider to help reduce carbon emissions
- Community workshops and opportunities to advocate for change at State and Federal level were the top two informational resources respondents would like the City to provide.

- 66% of respondents said they support closing certain streets to allow outdoor activities
- 83% of respondents support and would make use of a repair center and a tool library
- The most selected answer for why people don't ride a bicycle for transportation was because they don't feel safe

For the complete survey results report, please visit:

<https://www.cityofwatsonville.org/1764/Learn-About-Climate-Action-Plan>

Stakeholders & Community Advisory Committee. In August 2020 a Community Advisory Committee was formed with members of the community who do not traditionally participate in local decision-making processes and are most impacted by climate change. Members of this committee include a mix of residents and representatives from a number of local organizations including Pájaro Valley Prevention and Student Assistance (PVPSA) and Community Action Board of Santa Cruz County (CAB).

Two CAAP Community Advisory Committee meetings have been held virtually. During the first meeting held in September, members of this committee reviewed the results of the first Watsonville's climate survey and advised City staff on ways to get more community members to vote on which specific environmental actions and strategies Watsonville should take for the next 10 years. During the second meeting in February 2021, the committee learned about the proposed CAAP strategies and provided feedback on best ways to present this information in a more accessible way to our community.

A stakeholder group meeting was held on September 25th. The City included both internal stakeholders (City department directors and staff) and external stakeholders (other local government agencies and organizations). The stakeholder group has been asked to review relevant draft materials and provide input in the strategy development phase. The stakeholder group includes representatives from the following groups (and others not listed):

- Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments (AMBAG)
- Central Coast Community Energy (3CE)
- Pájaro Valley Water Management Agency (PVWMA)
- Central Coast Climate Collaborative
- Watsonville Wetlands Watch
- Regeneración
- Community Bridges
- The Amah Mutsun Tribal Band
- Monterey Bay Economic Partnership
- Pájaro Valley Unified School District (PVUSD)
- Ecology Action

- Cabrillo College
- Land Trust of Santa Cruz County
- Salud Para La Gente
- Santa Cruz Regional Transportation Commission
- County of Santa Cruz
- City of Santa Cruz
- County of Monterey
- City Departments, including Airport, Parks, Community Development, PW/Engineering

By including such a diverse group of community members, it is hoped that the strategies presented to the community are realistic, creative, consistent with regional efforts, and have the backing of agencies that have a role in implementing the strategies successfully.

In order to achieve the ambitious goals for the CAAP the City is co-implementing climate strategies with our Stakeholders. For example, the City is:

- Coordinating with Ecology Action on promoting affordable options for purchasing electric vehicles,
- Doing restoration work with the Amah Mutsun Land Trust and Watsonville Wetlands Watch,
- In discussions with Regeneracion on partnering on implementing a neighborhood pod program (community empowerment), and
- Exploring natural gas transition strategies with 3CE and neighboring jurisdictions.

Once the CAAP draft has been completed, a public meeting will be scheduled to review and discuss the draft plan.

Climate Strategies: Moving from Planning to Implementation. A strategy matrix was developed based on the GHG inventory, discussions with the Community Advisory Committee, and input from the consultant and community. The matrix was distributed to staff for feedback and input. Staff was also asked to rank strategies and provide estimates of impact and cost to implement. The results of this work is a summary list (attached below). The strategies have been divided into 10 sectors which cover the various actions the City can take to address climate change.

New GIS Website Tool. The development of a web application is underway. The purpose of the application is to communicate climate risks and opportunities in a way that activates community engagement and action. The development of the web application will support the selection, monitoring, and implementation of local mitigation and adaptation strategies by providing transparent data and interactive maps that identify priority areas. A draft version of the application can be found at:

<https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/7da73008cb314cd08949e2b6fe0eef95>

Next Steps. Over the next six months the necessary steps will be undertaken to ensure that the plan is qualified under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) process ensuring that the final plan brought to Council for approval is defensible. Once adopted by Council the plan will be brought to the planning commission so that it can be integrated into the general plan through an amendment. As part of the CEQA process the plan will be publicly posted for comment. Staff also plans to have a public meeting to present the draft plan and receive input and feedback.

Staff will also continue to meet with stakeholder and community groups to begin implementing various actions and strategies in the draft plan during this time.

The final outcome of the development of the CAAP is a robust implementation plan that summarizes key findings, lists potential mitigation and adaptation strategies, and establishes a plan for implementing and monitoring progress moving forward. Importantly, the Plan will include financial options for selected high priority emission reduction and adaptation measures.

STRATEGIC PLAN:

03-Infrastructure & Environment

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

None

ALTERNATIVE ACTION:

None

ATTACHMENTS AND/OR REFERENCES (If any):

- 1) Draft Climate Strategies Summary List