




City and Borough of Sitka

PROVIDING FOR TODAY...PREPARING FOR TOMORROW

Coast Guard City, USA

MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor Eisenbeisz and Assembly Members

Thru: John Leach, Municipal Administrator 

From: Assembly Members Mosher and Nelson

Date: November 3, 2020

Subject: Climate Action Task Force

Background:

In early 2020, the Assembly voted down a resolution for the creation of a Climate Action Task Force on several grounds, mainly on the basis of concerns for the staff time, cost of ideas that could have been brought forth, and the possible eventual tax burdens on Sitkans. Assembly members Nelson & Mosher promised to rework this Resolution to one that we can support, and to bring it back to the Assembly at a later date. We were prepared to do so. However, it was around this time that COVID-19 and other issues became the main focus of city business for some time.

The Assembly recently received an email from a citizen group focused on climate change asking for a commission to be established. This brought back our attention to this matter, and since Sitka has put protocols and systems in place to deal with COVID-19, we feel that now is an appropriate time to bring this Resolution for the creation of a Climate Action Task Force forward.

Analysis:

Rather than establishing a commission, we believe a special committee established under Sitka General Code 2.04.040A and 2.04.150C to be more appropriate. This task force will be responsible for studying and making recommendations to the Assembly on ways to mitigate the impacts of climate change on the City & Borough of Sitka's economy, infrastructure, and to find ways to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases. In having this task force make recommendations to the Assembly, rather than directly to staff, this will ensure an open and public process, and still accomplish the stated goals.

Fiscal Note:

New technology is being discovered every day that gives hope to the possibility of having a world with sustainable energy that provides for its people without damaging the earth's ecosystem. We firmly believe we should be encouraging our congressional delegation to make available to Sitka funds to support our aging hydropower infrastructure, as well as other sources of power, even possibly supporting electric vehicles, etc. Only by continually striving for this, will we be able to live in a world that continues to be livable in the future for us, our children, our grandchildren...and so on.

At the same time, we need to be mindful of any costs that the residents of Sitka may need to bare that are not fully supported by the state or federal government. The people of Sitka are currently under a heavy financial burden due to a variety of reasons, two of which are the debt on the Blue Lake expansion, as well as the negative financial aspects that COVID-19 has had on our economy. **During this time, we need to be especially careful not to commit ourselves to major financial and policy changes, and if we are, the process needs to be fully open and public.** We need to come to an agreement as a community as to what changes and financial burdens we are willing to accept.

Recommendation:

We recommend passing this Resolution to create a Climate Change Action Task Force. This will allow a wide spectrum of people to be involved with this process, including those from youth, science, business, construction, tribal government, energy, environmental, fishing, tourism, and economic development sectors of the community to be involved. Together we should be able to come up with environmentally and financially sustainable solutions to climate change.