

A petition from the Orange-Chatham Group of the Sierra Club for a “Ready for 100 Resolution”

We are asking that the Town of Chapel pass a comprehensive resolution which commits our government to transition to 100% clean, renewable energy for all sectors by December 31, 2050 or sooner and 80% clean, renewable energy by 2030.

We are asking for the Town to do this as it begins work on the Climate Action Plan, which you have just put into the budget.

Unlike many other petitioners for resolutions, we aren’t supplying the “whereas” clauses, nor even the exact language for “be it resolved.” In April you received a petition with language essentially identical to what Orange County adopted in 2017, with many interesting “whereases” and very little to be “resolved.” That can certainly be a source for the first part of the Ready for 100 Resolution.

Our intention is to suggest some energy sectors with specific areas of action in them. You may not choose to have all these in the Ready for 100 Resolution we’re requesting, or many at all, or in as much detail, but we sincerely believe that some version of them should be in our Climate Action Plan. We are willing to further participate in composing the Resolution we’ve requested.

Structural issues:

You’ve taken the major first step of committing to do a Climate Action Plan.

You do need to designate funds and **staff** to carry it out, and by doing so you fulfill the resolution we’re asking you to adopt later.

We ask tonight for specific timelines in at least one energy sector, transportation. In other sectors, because none of us know what our State will ultimately let us do for climate action, we are less specific.

We strongly urge you to find a way to establish a source to fund necessary projects. Our Sierra Club members vocally supported Orange County’s action earlier this month for climate action funding. While the Town may not take identical action, there are pathways to find and follow.

Sector One: Transportation

We believe these need to be explicit components of our Climate Action Plan. Many say that transportation surpassed all other sectors in about 2017 in terms of impact on climate change.

(A) Transit and Fleet Vehicles

The national Sierra Club’s “wishlist” for this sector gives **advisory deadlines** for transitioning to “zero-emission vehicles” (ZEVs):

“2030 to 2040” for transit buses, and “2045” for local government fleet vehicles. We request that Transit and Public Works come up with a short-term timeline for making progress on both fronts. The grantseeking by Transit for electric buses is a joy to watch and to participate in, with Orange-Chatham submitting letters of support for each application. We’re also pleased at the grant application for solarizing the Transit bus parking area.

(B) New development that is focused on “infill, transit and pedestrian access” and related policies on issues of “equity and job access.” When it comes to judging whether specific applications sincerely achieve these goals, that is obviously your job.

(C) In “expanded access and increased safety” for bicyclists and walkers. With the use of the 2015 bond issue funds for projects which NCDOT won’t fund due to current legislation, our Town has stepped up in big way.

(D) Other concepts you could include: EV car-share programs aimed at lower-income residents; bike-share for “last-mile transit”(when we have regional high-capacity transit); no car/no driving zones.

Sector Two: Buildings and their surroundings – no timetable except 2050

Thanks to yourselves, your staff, and particularly our Environmental Stewardship Advisory Board, you're starting to make real progress here, much of it not on the ground yet.

In addition to potentially requiring solar collection facilities for new public and private buildings, some other actions are or may be within the Town's ability to do. There's obviously no clear funding source at this time for a number of these. We hope that someday the State allows "green building codes."

(A) Conventional energy retrofits – quick and cheap, that target individual building components.

(B) Deep energy retrofits – whole-building assessment and overhaul, that can reduce energy consumption by up to 50 percent. Best to hire an energy service company for the assessment, unless staffed up to do it by then.

(C) Integrate onsite renewables – something already in place at the Town Operations Center, with geothermal energy. We're not aware of current status, but we see it mentioned in the Framework document presented in April.

(D) Load shift to zero carbon availability – using energy storage systems, as they become more available and affordable.

(E) Appliance choices – setting guidelines for efficiency standards of those used in Town buildings or setting rules for use.

(F) Lighting – It looks to us like this is an area where the Town has been making progress for some years now, and about to take a big step in terms of swapping out streetlights. Let's set an example for our residents.

(G) No new buildings with gas source heating systems: Sierra Club and many other environmental groups oppose the methods for obtaining and transporting natural gas; seek renewable energy approaches for heating new Town buildings. Have a long term goal of replacing gas systems. We know that's not cheap.

ON A COMMUNITY LEVEL

We intend for all these components of a Climate Action Plan to be implemented in Town government itself. As you all know, if they match your view of our community's values, you will find a way to pay for them.

Under current realities, the Town faces external policy and technological limitations on its ability to increase renewable energy across all these sectors. Making the transition to 80% renewable energy by 2030 and 100% renewable by 2050 will depend on federal and state policy changes not fully within the Town's control.

We expect that as a Council you will commit to achieving equity, affordability, and access for all members of the community in the transition to carbon neutrality and renewable energy. And that you will commit to a transparent and inclusive process for planning and implementation.

We ask that, in addition to all you do in the Town's way of doing energy business, that you explicitly **commit** to a transition to carbon neutrality and 100% clean, renewable energy **community-wide** by 2050. That's a big ask, and a big leap, but we are very certain you need to make that **commitment** as you embark on a Climate Action Plan.

As we all know, there will be many more of us serving this Town, between now and 2050, for whom this is even more important than it is for us. As we enter Chapel Hill's third century, we can have confidence that this commitment will be kept.