

WEST HARTFORD CLIMATE EMERGENCY RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, “Continued emission of greenhouse gases will cause further warming and long-lasting changes in all components of the climate system, increasing the likelihood of severe, pervasive, and irreversible impacts on people and ecosystems”¹; and

WHEREAS, world leaders from 197 countries including the United States, recognize the threat of climate change and the urgent need to combat it by adopting the Paris Agreement²; and

WHEREAS, the nations of the world currently have the economic and technical resources to avert this crisis³; and

WHEREAS, implementing climate mitigation strategies now will be less costly upfront, rather than trying to reverse climate damages in the future⁴; and

WHEREAS, both the Paris Agreement and the IPCC special reports identify limiting warming to 1.5°C this century as a key target to maintain a safe climate for all life on earth⁵; and

WHEREAS, limiting warming to 1.5°C this century will require a transformation of every sector of the global economy over the coming decades⁶; and

WHEREAS, a carbon price offers the most cost-effective policy to reduce carbon emissions at the scale and speed necessary to put the U.S. on a 1.5°C-compliant trajectory⁷; and

WHEREAS, marginalized populations in Connecticut and worldwide, including people of color, immigrants, Indigenous communities, low-income individuals, people with disabilities, outdoor laborers, and the unhoused are already disproportionately affected by climate change, and will continue to bear an excess burden as temperatures increase, and disasters worsen; and⁸

¹ the United Nations’ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the world’s most respected organization for study of research on climate change, stated in its [2014 Fifth Assessment Report](#)

² The United Nations website, [The Paris Agreement page](#)

³ Nicholas Stern from the London School of Economics, Chief Economist at the World Bank: [The Economics of Climate Change](#)

⁴ The Natural Resources Defense Council Report: [The Cost of Climate Change](#)

⁵ The United Nations website, [The Paris Agreement page](#); IPCC special report, 2021

⁶ IPCC special report, 2014 fifth assessment report (see footnote 1)

⁷ [Economists’ Statement on Carbon Dividends](#)

⁸ The United Nations [Report: Inequalities exacerbate climate impacts on poor](#)

WHEREAS, rising levels of carbon in the atmosphere will increase the frequency and intensity of heat waves, droughts, floods (by a factor of 5 to 10), and storms (comparable to those of Superstorm Sandy every 5 to 10 years), as well as sea-level rise and the spread of novel diseases⁹; and

WHEREAS, Connecticut is a coastal state with significant land, property, and commerce at risk from accelerating sea level rise, which will cause irreversible destruction to the state, impacting all connecting communities, the wider region, and economic interests state wide; and

WHEREAS, the Town of West Hartford is experiencing the effects of climate change, such as heatwaves, droughts, storms, and flooding, including an unprecedented “200-year” storm on August 21, 2021, which released 5 inches of rain in 3 hours and caused significant flooding; and

WHEREAS, the natural areas in and around West Hartford that we all enjoy like Spice Bush Swamp, the West Hartford Reservoir, Trout Brook, and our wonderful parks, risk decreased biodiversity, increased spread of invasive species and pestilence, temporary closings due to storm damage and flooding, and reduced usability due to heat.

NOW BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, the Town of West Hartford joins Hartford, New Haven, New Britain, Bridgeport, Middletown, Bloomfield, Stamford, Mansfield, and the 22 towns and cities of the Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments in declaring an on-going climate emergency that threatens the existence of our civilization and the natural world, and urges for the state of Connecticut to declare a Climate Emergency requiring immediate action; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Town of West Hartford will henceforth evaluate every town policy/action through the lens of environmental impact and consider any unintended consequences, striving to make each action as sustainable as possible; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Town of West Hartford rises to the challenge of creating upward political pressure by calling for state, federal, and global efforts to limit global average temperatures to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Town of West Hartford supports the development of national carbon pricing legislation, such as carbon fee and dividend; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Town of West Hartford will form a Climate Change Commission, or a similar body, either by adding a new commission or repurposing an existing commission; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the aforementioned West Hartford Climate Change Commission shall have student representation with voting privileges from Hall and Conard High School, as

⁹ [Yale Climate Change and Health in Connecticut 2020 Report](#), [Governor’s Council on Climate Change](#), and NASA’s [Effects of Changing the Carbon Cycle](#)

younger citizens will be disproportionately impacted by the consequences of a changing climate;
and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Climate Change Commission will work to persuade other Connecticut towns and cities to pass Climate Emergency Resolutions and to influence state legislators and the governor to pass substantive climate legislation; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Climate Change Commission will set goals, research and propose alternative policies, and catalyze action to reduce West Hartford's carbon footprint which in turn will support the commission's goal of advancing a model for other towns to follow;
and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Climate Change Commission, town staff, and other key stakeholders, will perform a greenhouse gas inventory and create a climate action plan for the Town of West Hartford to achieve net-zero emissions in waste, energy, transportation, and the built-environment by 2050. Both the inventory and plan shall be completed by December 2023.