

Columbia County Environmental Management Council Resolutions on Carbon Fee and Dividend, a Policy to Address Climate Change

Whereas the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, in its recent comprehensive review of climate science, concludes that a failure to act rapidly to cap the increase in global average temperatures to 1.5° C. will dramatically increase the risk of catastrophic impacts from climate change by 2050;

Whereas the just released fourth National Climate Assessment also shows how global warming impacts will be multiplied by disruptions to energy, transportation and other infrastructure that cascade across economic sectors and how, in the worst case, impacts could total 10 percent of U.S. GDP by the end of the century;

Whereas the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation has reported evidence of numerous local impacts from climate disruption including: higher average temperatures and worsening heat waves, more severe storms, changing precipitation patterns that bring about more inland flooding as well as more periods of drought, higher sea levels that intensify coastal flooding along the Hudson River, and damaging impacts to public health from heat waves, worsening air quality, more allergens and more insect-borne illnesses such as Lyme Disease;

Whereas the results of a changing climate have also had adverse effects on the economic health of local farms and businesses, caused more flooding and weather-related damage to our roads and bridges, and put additional stress on municipal budgets;

Whereas scientific consensus indicates that warming temperatures and climate disruption can be mitigated by replacing fossil-fuel based energy with currently available clean-energy technologies that increase efficiency and make use of non-polluting renewable power sources such as solar, wind and hydroelectric;

Whereas economists across the political spectrum, including recent Nobel Laureate William Nordhaus, support a policy that puts a price on greenhouse-gas emissions to reflect the true cost to society of fossil-fuel use;

Whereas pursuant to article 47 of the State of New York's Environmental Conservation Law, it is the responsibility of this council to advise on all matters affecting the preservation of the natural resources of the county;

Whereas multiple economic analyses have shown that a predictably rising carbon fee or tax would result in an effective, market-driven shift of our energy system without requiring the elaborate government regulations that often trigger legal challenges and partisan political conflict;

Whereas the analyses show that the rising price signal would also stimulate innovations in clean energy technologies that would drive economic and job growth while mitigating the risks of climate change;

Whereas some analyses have additionally shown that a policy called Carbon Fee and Dividend, which returns the revenues from emissions fees in equal shares as dividends to American households, would

help offset the impact of higher energy prices -- especially for those in lower to middle income brackets – and even act as an economic stimulus for local communities;

Therefore, be it resolved that this Council supports Carbon Fee and Dividend as an environmentally effective and economically responsible way to combat climate change;

Be it further resolved that this Council recommends that the individual municipalities in Columbia County as well as the County Board of Supervisors consider passing similar resolutions to inform our elected officials at the federal level of local support for this policy.

Adopted unanimously on November 26, 2018