

City of Takoma Park Youth Council

Statement in Support of the City's Climate Emergency Response – February 26, 2020

We are lucky to live in a city whose residents are committed to making the world a better place. Takoma Park cares about the environment. Many of us have meaningfully changed our lifestyles to live more sustainably. But when the City Council first introduced the Climate Change Emergency Response plan, we saw a different side of Takoma. We saw people doubting our ability to make a difference, and, despite the incredible work that so many Takoma residents have done, we saw people resisting even the possibility that they would be inconvenienced in the interest of lower emissions.

On behalf of the Takoma Park Youth City Council, we ask that both the City Council and those in attendance consider our perspective. Climate change is a crisis and an emergency. The City has recognized that fact, and it is a fact that I doubt many here would dispute. Our generation will inevitably face a world that is meaningfully different than the one we live in today-- one that is less hospitable for human life. In this context, the objections that we hear against strong action to reduce emissions ring hollow.

One of the most common of those objections is that Takoma can't have enough of an impact, and therefore trying isn't worth it. This is the exact same kind of thinking that created the climate crisis in the first place and allowed it to continue unchecked for so long. It's called the tragedy of the commons: people, cities, corporations, believe that what they're doing individually won't make a big difference. The problem is that everyone adopts that same mindset, and before you know it, global temperatures are rising at unprecedented rates. The only way to change it is for someone to step up, and hope that more people follow. Cities are doing exactly that around the country. With this resolution, we would set ourselves on the path to joining them.

The revised resolution is in many ways better than the original. However, it lacks the specificity, and most importantly, the commitment to a timeline that will ensure this plan is actually borne out. We advise the City Council to add the timeline originally created by the sustainability manager to its equivalent areas in the revised resolution. This would ensure that future councils are forced to consider the policies we've identified as the most feasible and effective in a timely manner, and stick to a schedule that would ensure our goal of net zero by 2035.

With that addition, this resolution must be passed. Takoma Park must be a part of the solution to the global climate crisis, however small a part, and show cities around the state and country what it looks like to step up to this existential challenge. The young people of our city are counting on you.