

TO: MAYOR HOPEWELL, VICE MAYOR KNOTT AND KALAMAZOO CITY  
COMMISSIONERS  
FROM: ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS COMMITTEE  
DATE: SEPTEMBER 18, 2019  
RE: RESOLUTION TO DECLARE A CLIMATE EMERGENCY

WHEREAS, the consensus conclusion of scientific and policy assessments from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) calls for urgent and decisive actions by governments around the world to make "rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society" in order to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius to avoid the most disastrous impacts;<sup>1</sup>

WHEREAS, the U.S. Fourth National Climate Assessment detailed the massive threat that climate change poses to the American economy and underscored the need for emergency climate action at all levels of government;<sup>2</sup>

WHEREAS, the 2019 Assessment of the Impacts of Climate Change on the Great Lakes highlights the significant impacts in our unique backyard.<sup>3</sup> Here in Kalamazoo - and all over southwestern Michigan - we are increasingly experiencing the predicted impacts of climate change including flooding of streets and homes, power outages, and heat waves. Farmers cannot plant or delay planting due to flooded fields. Record low temperatures with snow and ice close schools and businesses. Moreover, these economic and environmental hardships disproportionately affect the most vulnerable citizens of Kalamazoo;

WHEREAS, over 1,000 local governments in 18 countries have already signed emergency declarations;<sup>4</sup>

WHEREAS, Mayor Hopewell attended the most recent meeting of the U.S Conference of Mayors where this organization representing more than 1,400 cities issued a resolution declaring a climate emergency.<sup>5</sup> This resolution calls for de-carbonization in time to keep the global rise in temperatures to a 1.5 degree Celsius level and emphasizes that such efforts must involve local governments and their jurisdictions;

WHEREAS, Mayor Hopewell is one of hundreds of American mayors who signed a pledge<sup>6</sup> to adopt and uphold the 2016 Paris climate agreement goals in an open letter from the Mayors National Climate Action Agenda. Goals of the pledge include: to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, increase investments in renewable energy and energy efficiency, create a clean energy economy, and build relationships to address climate change;

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ipcc.ch/2018/10/08/summary-for-policymakers-of-ipcc-special-report-on-global-warming-of-1-5c-approved-by-governments/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.globalchange.gov/nca4>

<sup>3</sup> <http://elpc.org/glclimatechange/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://climateemergencydeclaration.org/climate-emergency-declarations-cover-15-million-citizens/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.usmayors.org/the-conference/resolutions/?category=a0D4N00000FDCIGUAXa&meeting=87th%20Annual%20Meeting>

<sup>6</sup> <https://medium.com/@ClimateMayors/climate-mayors-commit-to-adopt-honor-and-uphold-paris-climate-agreement-goals-ba566e260097>

WHEREAS, the global, national, and local effects of climate change threaten all 10 of the City of Kalamazoo's goals for the future as laid out in the Strategic Vision of the Imagine Kalamazoo 2025 Master Plan;

WHEREAS, the City has moved forward with initiatives to ensure a sustainable future such as the Complete Streets policy and the Natural Features Protection ordinance, and Imagine Kalamazoo 2025 explicitly recognizes the serious threat of climate change by calling for the development of a City of Kalamazoo Climate Action Plan;

WHEREAS, upon request from the Director of the Department of Community Planning and Development, a Western Michigan University graduate seminar developed a draft Kalamazoo Climate Action Plan<sup>7</sup> and current efforts by City staff are underway to develop and integrate a Final Climate Action Plan into existing city goals and planning processes;

WHEREAS, leadership and recognition of the climate crisis from the City of Kalamazoo, as the most populous entity and urban core of the region, promotes both local solutions and regional cooperation;

WHEREAS, a formal Declaration of a Climate Emergency by the City of Kalamazoo is the critical and courageous first step in laying the foundation to address the climate crisis. A formal declaration will provide the catalyst to mobilize residents, businesses, institutions, faith and community organizations to work together to prioritize the immediate reduction of CO<sup>2</sup> emissions and support the City in current efforts to plan for community resilience and adaptation while keeping the concerns of vulnerable populations central to a just transition.

NOW BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, the City of Kalamazoo declares that a climate emergency threatens our citizens, city, region, state, and the natural world;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the intent of this declaration is to both affirm existing commitments and further support City staff in their current efforts to develop a climate action plan that recognizes the climate emergency and set aggressive measurable goals and effective implementation;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the City of Kalamazoo accepts a role of regional leadership, and as such will seek partnerships with other regional governments, businesses, community groups, educational and other anchor institutions to best utilize regional expertise and resources to meet shared goals;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the City of Kalamazoo will aggressively seek any available state, federal, and private funding for this effort and form alliances with other Michigan cities that have declared a climate emergency or have a written climate action plan to lobby for such funding;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the City of Kalamazoo underscores the need for full community participation, inclusion, and support for the climate mobilization effort;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the City of Kalamazoo commits to keeping the concerns of vulnerable communities central to a just transition and climate mobilization effort planning processes and to inviting and encouraging such communities to actively participate in order to advocate directly for their needs.

---

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.kalamazoocity.org/kcap/file>