



# Memorandum

**TO:** HONORABLE MAYOR  
AND CITY COUNCIL

**FROM:** Vice Mayor Chappie Jones  
Councilmember David Cohen  
Councilmember Pam Foley

**SUBJECT:** SEE BELOW

**DATE:** June 14, 2022

Approved

Date: 6/10/2022

**SUBJECT: CARBON NEUTRAL BY 2030**

## RECOMMENDATION

1. Direct staff to return to Council by February 2023 with recommendations on establishing a Climate Commission, so that it can be considered for funding as part of the FY23-24 budget process.
  - a. The commission's scope of responsibility should include, but not be limited to, the following:
    - i. Advising and making recommendations to staff on San José climate and environmental policy
    - ii. Providing feedback on staff recommendations to the Council and the Transportation and Environment Committee
    - iii. Identifying and vetting potential strategies for meeting San José's Climate Smart goals
    - iv. Monitoring best practices employed by other municipalities around the world
    - v. Serving as the community's voice in matters related to San José environmental and climate policy
  - b. The commission's composition should include, among others, the following:
    - i. Technical experts with experience in clean energy, power planning, transportation, planning and building, environmental law, and other relevant fields
    - ii. Climate scientists
    - iii. Climate and environmental advocacy organizations
    - iv. Community representatives
    - v. One seat should be reserved for a youth representative
2. Merge the Clean Energy Community Advisory Commission, with its role in providing advice on SJCE operations and clean energy production, with the Climate Commission.

- a. The current members of the CECAC will serve out the remainder of their CECAC terms on the Climate Commission.
3. Return to Council with information on staffing and funding needs for establishing a climate commission, and with recommendations on pathways to meeting those needs.
4. Direct the Environmental Services Department to continue evaluating the following and vet with stakeholders as needed, and return to the Transportation and Environment Committee with recommendations on both options by the end of the calendar year as part of the reach code evaluation timeline:
  - a. Updating the city's roof space design standards to minimize its carbon footprint and expand use of solar on rooftops
  - b. Mitigation of carbon emissions from building materials in the form of embodied carbon

## **BACKGROUND**

Climate change is the defining crisis of our time, and we stand today at a critical moment in that crisis. Generations to come will either reap the benefits of what we do in this moment, or they will endure the consequences of our inaction. The framework staff has brought forward today for achieving climate neutrality by 2030 recognizes the gravity of the emergency facing us, and we want to thank them for their recommendations, and for the years of diligent work they have put into the Climate Smart plan since it was first adopted by the Council in 2018.

Staff are assisted with many of our most pressing issues by the advice and input of commissions that comprise subject matter experts and community representatives. The lack of such a body providing feedback on our climate goals, policies, and strategies is an oversight that we should take the opportunity today to rectify. We have a foundation for this in the Clean Energy Community Advisory Commission, which serves as a forum for members of the public with expertise in clean energy and environmental advocacy to provide advice to the Council on SJCE operations. Clean energy is a crucial aspect of our climate response, and we benefit greatly from the CECAC's expert counsel on that subject, but the commission's focus on energy production excludes from its purview some of the largest sources of emissions— transportation, buildings, industrial activities, all of which account for over 75% of San José's carbon output. We are, in effect, neglecting to bring in vital expert and community feedback on the vast majority of our strategies to fight climate change.

Today's discussion is an opportunity to address that omission. To that end, we recommend that the Council approve the formation of a commission that would bring together the voices of technical experts, climate scientists, advocacy organizations, and community members to provide guidance and feedback on the city's Climate Smart plan. Such a board would be able to assist city staff in vetting and implementing key strategies for meeting our climate goals, bolster the community's voice in the process, and provide a conduit for expert input on San José's environmental policies. Its purpose is not to add another layer of bureaucracy but rather to alleviate staff's workload and expedite the formulation and implementation of effective policies, just as we have commissions and boards that offer input on the city's strategies for urgent issues

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like housing and homelessness. We are asking staff to return to Council with recommendations on whether a climate commission would be helpful in meeting our goals, and on what resources are needed from a staffing and funding perspective to make the commission effective.

Climate scientists around the world have presented us with a grim and virtually unanimous consensus: our window for preventing climate disaster is small and shrinking day by day. We must be creative, we must be bold, and we must recognize that there is no option more costly than inaction. By creating a means for technical experts in the community to bring their knowledge to our city's climate strategy— and by giving a voice to the communities most threatened by climate change— a climate commission will help us build a sustainable, safe, clean San José.

*The signers of this memorandum have not had, and will not have, any private conversation with any other member of the City Council, or that member's staff, concerning any action discussed in the memorandum, and that each signer's staff members have not had, and have been instructed not to have, any such conversation with any other member of the City Council or that member's staff.*