

SETTING SHORT-TERM PRIORITIES AND ORGANIZING FOR EFFECTIVE ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

In January 2020, Council adopted [Resolution 2020-20](#), highlighting the threats climate change poses for regional ecosystems, city infrastructure and the well-being of White Rock's citizens and requesting the EAC to review of the City's climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies. Over the next two years the COVID19 crisis and demands of other priorities (including the related Tree Protection review exercise) precluded initiation of a comprehensive review, and only limited attention was dedicated to the challenge of climate change. Since more regular committee meetings resumed in March 2022, the pace of work has picked up a bit, with a focus on selected mitigation measures viewed as ripe for action.

All told, progress to date has included the following:

- a) In March 2021, Council referred an EAC-proposed update of the City's official GHG reduction targets to staff for a "possible timeline of when and how it can be done." ([Resolution 2021-169](#)). As such targets are a required element of the City's OCP, this update should be incorporated into the next review of that document.
- b) On 11 April 2022, Council endorsed an EAC recommendation that it should expeditiously approve publicly consulted Zoning Bylaw amendments concerning [Landscape Open Space](#) and [Electric Vehicle Parking](#). Staff is presumably preparing these amendments for Council approval at an early opportunity. ([Council Motion 2022-142](#))
- c) At the same time, Council directed that "the City move expeditiously to adopt the Energy Step Code in the zoning or building bylaw to align with the City of Surrey (align to step 3 level in the next year)." This too will require Staff preparation of appropriate documentation for Council adoption. ([Council Motion 2022-143](#))
- d) Finally, on 9 May 2022, Council endorsed an EAC recommendation that the City "phase out the City's use of equipment that use fossil fuels where there are effective non-fossil fueled alternatives pending a review of this by staff," as well as a recommendation that bylaws be adopted "to phase out single-use plastic items in the same, or a similar, way as is being done in other surrounding municipalities (such as the City of Surrey) pending review by staff." ([Minutes not yet issued.](#))

Despite the unavoidable disruptions and constraints of the past two years, the "climate emergency" recognized by Council in January 2020 has not abated. The latest science and policy pronouncements from all higher levels of government (*) have underscored the growing seriousness of the challenge. Recent extreme weather events have particularly demonstrated the urgent need for more effective preparedness and adaptation measures.

While time is running out for major initiatives in Council's current term, the EAC urges Council and Staff, working in their respective spheres, to commit to some near-term priorities and consider some organizational measures to strengthen their engagement on the climate change file. The Committee is convinced that sustained, proactive attention from City officials and elected representatives will be crucial to the effectiveness of White Rock's climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts going forward.

Notes:

[* Metro Vancouver's [Climate 2050 Strategic Framework](#) (July 2019) and [Climate 2050 Roadmaps and Discussion Papers](#) (2020-22); the province's [CleanBC Roadmap to 2030](#) (October 2021); Canada's [2030 Emissions Reduction Plan](#) (March 2022)]

Specifically, **the EAC recommends:**

1. That Council direct Staff to complete during Council's current term implementation of its directives on Bylaw and Policy amendments concerning Landscape Open Space and Electric Vehicle Parking (*Council Motion 2022-142*), the Energy Step Code (*Motion 2022-143*), Fossil Fuel Based Equipment and Single-Use Plastics (*May 9 Council minutes yet to be released*).
2. That Council direct staff to:
 - a) prepare, as a matter of priority, a Climate Vulnerabilities Report identifying current and prospective vulnerabilities, risks and potential costs of climate change to public health and safety, private and public property and infrastructure in White Rock; and
 - b) initiate work on a Climate Change Adaptation Strategy Report suggesting short- and medium-term priorities for action to address or adapt to the challenges identified in the Climate Vulnerabilities Report, including appropriate operational, infrastructural, policy or bylaw measures.
3. That Council direct Staff to give priority to identifying any governmental or extra-governmental programs or funds that might be accessed to help inform or support the pursuit of the above priorities as well as any other climate change-related measures.¹
4. That Council direct the CAO to establish appropriate organizational measures to facilitate completion of the above priorities and promote more systematic and sustained focus on the climate change priority in ongoing policy and operational processes.²
5. That Council directs Staff to keep Council regularly apprised of developments regarding the City's climate change challenges and responses and that a staff report on the City's climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts be presented at least annually to a regular meeting of Council.³

Notes:

1. Resolution 2020-20 called on Staff to keep Council apprised of external programs and resources available to support the City's climate change efforts. With both the provincial and federal governments having recently announced new mechanisms to support community climate action, this is a key time to canvas such facilities. (See especially [CleanBC Roadmap to 2030](#), [BC Local Government Climate Action Program](#), the [B.C. Community Climate Funding Guide](#), the [FCM Municipalities for Climate Innovation Program](#).)

2. Resolution 2020-20 also directed staff to mainstream climate change considerations into decision-making and operations across all departments. The inclusion of climate change impact assessments in all reports and recommendations to Council has been a useful step in that direction. Additional ways to reinforce the mainstreaming prerogative might include: designating a staff climate change policy coordinator; establishing an inter-departmental climate change policy committee or making climate change a regular/periodic agenda item for management meetings; including climate change management among the corporate goals on which basis CAO performance is assessed. Such steps need not entail additional costs, but considering the importance of this priority, the Committee urges that modest incremental resources be allocated to it.

3. Resolution 2020-20 also requested staff to keep Council regularly informed of challenges and progress in addressing climate change, including through briefings on the City's annual reports to the Province's Climate Action Revenue Incentive Program (CARIP). CARIP has now been replaced by the [BC Local Government Climate Action Program](#) requiring annual reports that might serve as a vehicle to help keep Council informed and active in driving the City's climate change efforts.