

To: Board of Supervisors
From: Planning and Building Department
Agenda Section: Departmental

Vote Requirement: Majority

SUBJECT:

Direction on formation of a Board of Supervisors Ad Hoc for preparation of the Climate Action Plan and formation of a Climate Advisory Committee relative to the Preparation and Implementation of the Climate Action Plan.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Give Direction on formation of a Board Ad Hoc
2. Give Direction on formation of a Climate Advisory Committee

SOURCE OF FUNDING:

The salary funding for this work is included is in the General Fund contribution to the Long Range Planning unit, 1100-282.

DISCUSSION:

Before the Board are two decisions related to the Climate Action Plan, the formation of an Ad Hoc Committee and the formation of a Climate Advisory Committee.

Background:

In June 2019 the Board of Supervisors approved a Memorandum of Understanding with all the incorporated cities in the County to prepare a regional Climate Action Plan (CAP). At the same time the Board approved an agreement with the Redwood Coast Energy Authority (RCEA) for consulting work on the CAP and authorized the County to join the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) and appointed Mike Wilson as the Board representative to ICLEA. This formalized the relationship between the cities and county in preparing a regional CAP.

The regional collaboration includes senior staff from each of the participating agencies with the county taking the role of project manager. Each agency coordinates their own actions on CAP. To date this has included conducting public outreach and authorizing a draft to be used as the project description for preparation of the EIR. In response to this public engagement each agency has provided input on changes to the draft that reflect the concerns of the community.

On August 27, 2019, the Board directed staff to come back with recommendations for formation of a Climate Advisory Committee. A working group consisting of staff from the county, cities and RCEA have been working collaboratively on the CAP. In 2019 there was also discussion about putting together a regional coordinator for implementation of the CAP. The discussion of alternatives was delayed to provide time for discussions related to the potential for a regional coordinator. The County management of the Climate Action Plan was adversely affected by staffing changes as two senior staff retired, and the staff planner assigned to the CAP resigned. Work on the CAP was delayed and the discussions on a regional coordinator did not develop, and the recommendation was not brought back until this report.

The completion of the CAP has not proceeded as expected. On June 7, 2022, the Board approved the Draft CAP for use as the project description for preparation of the EIR. As part of the work to prepare the EIR, it was discovered that the draft CAP was highly aspirational and was unlikely to be implemented as written nor achieve the Greenhouse Gas reduction goals established by the state. On October 17, 2023, the Board of Supervisors approved modifying the draft Climate Action Plan to achieve a Qualified Climate Action Plan status and to allow the EIR funds to be used for revision to the CAP rather than preparation of an EIR. This modification is supported by each of the cities.

The primary objective is to complete the CAP as a qualified document in the most expedient manner possible. The County has engaged Rincon Associates to complete this work, which will include coordination with the cities and two public meetings prior to the hearing process. Rincon is clear on the objectives, concerns and limitations associated with Humboldt County.

Board of Supervisors Ad Hoc Formation

The Board asked staff if it would be helpful to have an Ad Hoc formed to facilitate completion of the CAP. Ad Hoc's are beneficial when participation by the Board of Supervisors is important for political reasons and when important decision making will be needed along the way of completing a project. In this case, the county and cities have been coordinating well and the objectives are very straight forward. The primary objectives are as follows:

1. Achieve a Qualified CAP
2. Complete it as quickly as possible.
3. Set the stage to achieve Carbon Neutrality in 2045.

To achieve this most effectively the primary task will be to be responsive to the consultant, providing them with information or direction as needed. The most critical county action item will be to keep the consultant moving forward. This is typically a staff responsibility.

Staff committed to providing regular updates to the Board of Supervisors. The contract has been signed, and a kickoff meeting has been held with Rincon. The completion date is June of 2024. As a separate item, staff is bringing forward reallocation of funds to complete the EIR for the CAP.

Formation of an Ad Hoc for the remaining tasks to be completed does not seem warranted unless the objectives change.

Formation of a Climate Advisory Committee

The desire to form a Climate Advisory Committee occurred early in the process. A properly formed Climate Advisory Committee would represent the diverse interests and backgrounds of Humboldt County. There have been many public meetings and stakeholder discussions associated with the CAP development. The concerns are understood after conducting many public meetings. There are also divergent viewpoints which have not moved toward the center to form a consensus but seem to have become more polarized. Putting representatives of these viewpoints onto an advisory committee at this point will not facilitate completion of the CAP because there is little opportunity for agreement. The additional funding needed to perform these discussion tasks that are unlikely to produce consensus can be more effectively utilized in producing a plan to achieve the intended objectives.

The staff from the County and cities have functioned as an advisory committee representing the concerns of the individual jurisdictions at critical decision points. This is a very strong and collaborative working group. Adding an advisory group in addition to the staff working group when the finish line and deadline is clear has potential to disrupt the relationship between the cities and county and result in process delays and increased cost.

It is not recommended that a Climate Advisory Committee be assembled for work on the CAP document.

A Climate Advisory Group may be helpful in implementing climate adaptation strategies by setting priorities and guiding adaptation of County operations and facilities. This may be dependent upon creating and effectively outlining the role of a Resiliency Officer. This work is currently being undertaken. The Resiliency Officer could leverage this group to develop priorities and implementation strategies. This would invite public collaboration and involvement in implementing climate adaptation.

Narrative Explanation of Financial Impact:

Neither the formation of an Ad Hoc nor formation of a Climate Advisory Committee have an impact on staffing but would likely add cost and impact the General Fund. This is work that will be done, with or without an Ad Hoc or Climate Advisory Committee. If either is formed, it will require dedication of staff time to meet with each separately. The amount of time cannot be determined at this time, but the additional time commitment and cost would likely not fit within existing budget allocations.

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK:

This action supports your Board's Strategic Framework priority of fostering transparent, accessible, welcoming and user friendly services.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

None

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Board of Supervisors has several options here. It is not recommended that an Ad Hoc or Climate Advisory Committee be formed for the completion of that CAP as that has a high potential to slow down the process. It should be a consideration as to how the CAP and county ambitions to respond to climate resiliency will be implemented and whether there is a place for either an Ad Hoc or a Climate Advisory Committee to facilitate that process.

PREVIOUS ACTION/REFERRAL:

Board Order No.:

Meeting of:

File No.: In addition to listing the file information here, utilize the “Related Files” function under the “Associations” tab when uploading into Legistar to link previous actions to this item.