



Legislation Text

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RESOLUTION OF THE NEW HAVEN BOARD OF ALDERS COMMITTING THE CITY OF NEW HAVEN TO A LEADERSHIP ROLE IN ELECTRIFYING ITS BUILDINGS AND VEHICLE FLEET.

Whereas, in 2019 New Haven declared that we face an existential climate emergency that threatens our city, region, state, nation, human civilization, and the natural world; and

Whereas, the New Haven Board of Alders officially committed to leading an emergency mobilization effort that would work to end community-wide greenhouse gas emissions by or before December 31, 2030, and immediately initiate an effort to safely draw down carbon from the atmosphere; and

Whereas, New Haven must take additional measures to decarbonize, transitioning from fossil fuel-powered buildings and transportation vehicles to electric-powered ones; and

Whereas, the COVID 19 crisis has highlighted the vulnerability of front-line communities to social, political, and environmental systems that harm respiratory health; and

Whereas, New Haven is ranked 11th of 100 US metropolitan cities that are most challenging to live with asthma by Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America in large part because of the burning of fossil fuels; and

Whereas, electrification will improve air quality as all-electric buildings will improve indoor air quality and overall health, by eliminating natural gas combustion inside homes that produces harmful indoor air pollution; and

Whereas, all-electric transportation vehicles improve outdoor air quality, particularly for residents in urban neighborhoods and for those living near major roads; and

Whereas, life expectancy in New Haven is lower than surrounding towns, due in part to poor air quality, which causes respiratory diseases, heart disease and cancer; and

Whereas, electrification is widely recognized as a powerful strategy to both combat climate change and address poor air quality in the front-line communities most harmed by climate change; and

Whereas, as a coastal city, New Haven is particularly vulnerable to the devastating consequences of climate change, including more intense storms, flooding and sea-level rise; and

Whereas, electrification will reduce noise pollution as electric vehicles produce far less noise than gas-powered vehicles, and noise pollution has been shown to have detrimental effects on human health; and

Whereas, Avangrid is a global provider of electricity with a stated goal of achieving carbon neutrality by 2035; and

Whereas, its subsidiary United Illuminating is the largest personal property taxpayer in the City and increasing electrification will lead to grid improvements that will increase the grand list; and

Whereas, every new building relying on fossil fuel for its heating and cooling will have a negative impact on the climate for decades to come and require additional investments to be retrofitted to electric systems as the climate emergency worsens; and

Whereas, 50% of electricity in Connecticut comes from nuclear power and other clean sources and the State has committed to 100% clean electric grid by 2040, electrification will increasingly reduce the carbon footprint of the City of New Haven; and

Whereas, electrified buildings provide safer living conditions in that it leads to lower risk of building fires or carbon monoxide leaks; and

Whereas, electrification will potentially reduce construction and maintenance costs as all-electric new buildings do not require the installation of gas infrastructure, saves space within buildings, and reduces upkeep costs; and

Whereas, electrification will increase social equity as all-electric new construction can reduce housing costs as disadvantaged populations spend a disproportionate amount of their income on energy and are more likely to suffer from asthma due to poor air quality; and

Whereas, unlike fossil fuel whose price is highly connected to uncontrollable natural resources and political issues, electricity has a variety of production which guarantees its steady price; and

Whereas, an electric future means New Haven and Connecticut can move towards building a local clean energy industry that will supply all our energy needs, redirecting the \$5 billion Connecticut spends on fossil fuels each year into to local businesses; and

Whereas, we learned from the lesson of COVID-19 that we should prepare ourselves from potential crises and risks before damage has already begun; and

Whereas, more and more cities have started their implementation of new policies and ordinances for cleaner cities, New Haven, as a city with history of making great innovative policies, should take actions as well; and

Whereas, it is clear that the energy system of the future is 100% electric and that the vast transition to electric systems will greatly increase energy efficiency, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve public health and increase the quality of life throughout the city; and

Whereas, the City of New Haven recognizes the broad benefits of accelerating the transition to electric buildings and transportation throughout the City.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City and Board of Alders commit to working with the State of Connecticut and relevant agencies to encourage a sustainable electric generation portfolio; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City of New Haven commits to electrifying its own building and transportation systems by December 31, 2030; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Chief Administrative Officer reports back to the Board of Alders in six months with an analysis of how many City vehicles can be feasibly replaced with electric vehicles over the next two capital planning cycles, including an estimate of the lifetime savings from electrifying light duty and refuse vehicles; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Engineer shall develop a schedule for the replacement of all existing heating systems, shall evaluate fully electrifying all new construction and all existing heating systems, and shall report the results of these evaluations back annually to Board of Alders; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City in consultation with the Board of Education shall work to develop plans to electrify school transportation and school facilities as soon as practically possible; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Plan Department will work to update policy, including zoning, to incentivize new construction to shift all-electric construction to the greatest degree possible and will require developers to calculate carbon emissions during the plan review process; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Livable City Initiative and the Building Department will work with United Illuminating, the Green Bank and other partners to educate building owners of various building electrification incentives and resources; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board of Alders encourages the City's state delegation to prioritize passing policies that require and incentivize electrification statewide; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Economic Development Department report back to the Board of Alders in six months with a plan for how to use the coming electrification, energy efficiency and clean energy transition to create local jobs and grow locally owned businesses, giving special priority to historically marginalized communities.