

SUBSTITUTE MOTION BY SUPERVISORS SHEILA KUEHL
AND HOLLY J. MITCHELL

March 1, 2022

Addressing the Need to Create Climate Resilient Communities

The Board of Supervisors has taken a number of strong actions designed to meet its commitment to the Paris Climate Accord and to the climate goals of the OurCounty Sustainability Plan. In the last year alone, the Board has directed the Department of Regional Planning (DRP) to phase out oil drilling in the unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County, adopted 100% renewable energy as the default energy product for our residents and for the over 100,000 businesses served by the Clean Power Alliance in unincorporated County areas, and adopted a fleet policy requirement that all vehicles purchased by the County be zero emission whenever an appropriate model is available that meets operational needs. Later this year, DRP will present an updated Climate Action Plan for the County that sets out a pathway for meeting Paris Climate Accord targets.

However, despite these bold actions to reduce climate impacts and air pollution in our communities, we understand that climate change is a global threat and that we are already experiencing its effects here in Los Angeles. The Chief Sustainability Office recently released a Climate Vulnerability Assessment containing a year-long technical

MOTION

SOLIS	_____
KUEHL	_____
HAHN	_____
BARGER	_____
MITCHELL	_____

analysis supported by the Department of Public Health (DPH), DRP, the Department of Public Works (DPW), and other departments, that comprehensively assessed, on a Countywide basis, the expected impacts of climate change on each of our census tracts. We know our communities will experience increasingly frequent, long-lasting, and severe heat storms, wildfires, and droughts; that these droughts will be punctuated by periods of intense rain that lead to inland flooding; and that areas along the coast are at risk of flooding due to a rise in sea levels.

The Climate Vulnerability Assessment used census data to identify populations within each census tract who were most susceptible to these climate changes. It is not surprising that low-income communities and communities of color will be disproportionately impacted. For example, while the County population is about half Hispanic/Latinx, this population makes up two-thirds of the residents in the census tracts most vulnerable to extreme heat. This disparity is exacerbated by a lack of investment in urban trees, parks, and other open space as well as a preponderance of heat trapping surfaces like asphalt roadways and parking lots.

So, while the County has been bold in taking action to reduce climate impacts and air pollution emissions, this report points out the severity of impacts to human health and to our communities, necessitating equally aggressive action to prepare our communities and systems to be more resilient to the changes we know are coming and to reduce disparities in climate vulnerability. To be most effective, this action should coordinate and build upon the work already being done across County departments.

DPW has taken the initiative, through the creation of Infrastructure LA, to advance the development of sustainable, resilient, equitable infrastructure for the region. Infrastructure LA is a regional collaborative forum for strategic, multi-sector collaboration among the region's infrastructure leaders to support the development of

strategies to advance new initiatives and remove barriers to infrastructure delivery. Infrastructure LA's recent efforts have been focused on legislative advocacy for the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, coordinating with other infrastructure agencies to identify potential regional projects for Federal funding and assessing the current process of infrastructure development within DPW through an equity and climate lens.

Another major facet of climate vulnerability is the need to address the health impacts of heat-related incidents. Heat accounts for more deaths than any other weather-related phenomena and creates a host of other issues including impacts on mental health and decreases in cognition. As the impacts of climate change worsen, the County will experience more frequent and longer heat storms and drought events. It is well-established that such impacts are more severe in low-income communities and especially communities of color. The Office of Emergency Management (OEM) and DPH work to protect our communities from the impacts of extreme heat, ensuring that impacted communities receive the care, resources, services and support they need, such as providing information on how to stay safe and find cooling centers during extreme heat events. However, much more needs to be done to proactively plan for and mitigate the impacts of heat-related events.

A great many cities and counties in the U.S. and across the world have met this challenge by creating Chief Resilience Officers and/or Chief Heat Officers to dedicate staff and resources to comprehensively address community and infrastructure preparedness for, and recovery from, systemic stressors and shocks, specifically as they relate to climate change and other environmental hazards.

Key strategies for addressing social/community resilience include creating Community Resilience Hubs, developing hazard warning systems to alert the public to potential dangers (such as severe heat storms), implementing zoning and building

codes and regulations to reduce climate impacts, adopting policies to protect workers and others from the dangers of climate hazards such as heat exposure, and creating financing mechanisms to manage County response costs. Improving our physical infrastructure is also critical as schools, hospitals, energy and water systems, transportation, and telecommunications facilities are all critical to managing the impact of climate hazards on our communities. An example of this type of work is the implementation of the Safe Clean Water Program that relies on nature-based solutions to capture stormwater, thereby providing green infrastructure and reducing our reliance on imported water.

Last year, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) ranked Los Angeles County as the riskiest county in the nation. Given the existing and future hazards that our residents and businesses face, it is appropriate and necessary that we quickly operationalize a Climate Resilience Initiative within the Chief Executive Office that can coordinate and lead the County's efforts to ensure the public health and wellbeing of our communities in the face of a changing climate.

An important component to developing community resilience is building equitable and climate resilient infrastructure for our energy, water, transportation, public health, education, and telecommunications sectors - infrastructure that can withstand climate hazards and is also designed to mitigate the impacts of these hazards to communities. This means infrastructure built to cool and green, protect public health, conserve water and energy while strengthening delivery systems, reduce disparities in climate vulnerability, and promote social connection. As unprecedented amounts of funding become available at the state and federal level, part of the Climate Resilience Initiative's mission would be to work closely with DPW and other infrastructure providers to develop a coordinated and focused effort to access these funds to create equitable and

resilient infrastructure that does not lead to new sources of greenhouse gas emissions in coordination with the *Addressing Infrastructure Inequity* program initiated by Board motion (Mitchell-Hahn) on August 10, 2021 that DPW is already leading.

As such, the Climate Resilience Initiative should work collaboratively with the Chief Sustainability Office and all key County departments, including but not limited to DPW, DRP, DPH, OEM, Internal Services Department, Fire, Parks and Recreation, and Beaches and Harbors. Recognizing that the State has begun to allocate significant financial resources to this issue with over \$1 billion in the Governor's proposed budget dedicated to drought resilience, heat response, clean energy resilience, and the development of regional Climate and Health Resilience Plans, that the federal government is also dedicating resources, and that philanthropy has expressed a keen interest in creating more resilient communities, there will be opportunities to supplement any County funding with outside resources to further enhance the work of the Climate Resilience Initiative and of critical County departments such as DPW, DPH, and others.

With the increasing focus on building regional and community-scale climate resilience, and the financial resources now being dedicated to these issues, it is imperative that the County act quickly to create this initiative, establish a coordinated government climate resilience vision and strategy, and begin accessing these resources for the benefit of our communities.

WE, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors:

1. Direct the County's Chief Executive Officer, in consultation with the Chief Sustainability Office, Department of Public Works, Department of Public Health, and other key departments, to report to the Board within 45 days on the steps necessary to incubate, for up to 15 months, a Climate Resilience

Initiative within the Chief Executive Office to implement a whole of government approach to addressing climate resilience, including hiring a consultant with expertise in this arena and identifying staffing support and resources as necessary.

S:SF: AddressingtheNeedtoCreateClimateResilientCommunities