

August 5, 2019

MEMORANDUM

To: Sustainability and Transportation Committee
From: Yolanda Ho, Council Central Staff
Subject: Green New Deal Oversight Board (CB 119604) and
Green New Deal for Seattle (RES 31895)

On Tuesday, August 6, 2019, the Sustainability and Transportation Committee will receive a briefing on CB 119604 establishing a Green New Deal Oversight Board (Board) that would support implementation of initiatives identified in the Green New Deal for Seattle ([RES 31895](#)).

In preparation for the discussion, this memorandum provides: (1) background on current City efforts to address climate change and the Green New Deal for Seattle; (2) context on the creation of the Board; and (3) potential impacts of CB 119604.

Background

In 1992, the City Council adopted [Resolution 28546](#) recognizing the crisis of global warming, and subsequently passed the following pieces of legislation related to climate change:

- [Ordinance 120121](#) (2000) created the Office of Sustainability and Environment (OSE) to develop strategies and coordinate City efforts to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.
- [Resolution 30309](#) (2001) endorsed OSE's work program, and directed OSE to conduct a baseline GHG inventory (updated regularly since the first report in 2005).
- [Resolution 30316](#) (2001) supported efforts to curb global warming, adopted GHG reduction goals for Seattle, and committed to ongoing efforts to achieve these goals.
- [Resolution 31312](#) (2011) set goals for Seattle to reach zero net GHG emissions by 2050 and to prepare for the likely impacts of climate change.
- [Resolution 31447](#) (2012) adopted the [2013 Seattle Climate Action Plan](#) recommending implementation of a variety of short- and long-term coordinated strategies to reduce GHG and foster climate resiliency, with strategies particularly focused on emission reduction related to transportation and buildings, which comprise the vast majority of Seattle's GHG emissions.
- [Resolution 31757](#) (2017) affirmed the City's commitment to meet or exceed goals established in the Paris Climate Agreement – the world's first comprehensive commitment – to limit global warming to no more than 1.5 degrees Celsius.

The City has also implemented a variety of policies to increase municipal building efficiency; encourage developers to construct more green buildings; and virtually eliminate all GHG emissions related to electricity generation.

In addition to these measures, the Council and Mayor recognized that certain communities have historically been excluded in environmental and climate change discussions. Additionally, these same communities have been disproportionately impacted by environmental hazards, such as those located in the vicinity of the Duwamish River Superfund site. To correct this, the City launched the [Equity and Environment Initiative](#) (2015) and adopted [Resolution 31681](#) (2016) to prioritize people of color, immigrants, refugees, people with low-incomes, youth, and limited-English speaking individuals in all of Seattle's environmental and sustainability work.

The [2016 Seattle Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory](#), released in February 2019, included findings that Seattle has reduced GHG emissions by five percent since the baseline year of 2008, even while experiencing population growth of 18 percent over this same time period. The report concluded, however, that the City would not achieve its climate goals at this current rate. To reach zero net GHG emissions by 2050, the pace of Seattle's emissions reductions will need to increase by sevenfold.

Green New Deal for Seattle (RES 31895)

In early 2019, the United State Congress considered a resolution calling for a Green New Deal, which proposed that the federal government establish policies and make major investments in programs to address climate change and economic inequality. The goal is to dramatically reduce GHG emissions, facilitate efforts to transition away from reliance on fossil fuels, provide job guarantees and living wages, and prioritize support for communities most affected by climate change, pollution, and other environmental impacts.

RES 31895 affirms the Council's support for the federal Green New Deal and establishes the following goals:

1. Make Seattle free of pollutants that cause shifts in climate patterns, such as carbon dioxide, black carbon, methane, nitrogen oxides, and fluorinated gases, by 2030;
2. Prioritize investment in communities most harmed by economic, racial, and environmental injustices;
3. Advance an equitable transition from an economy that is based on extraction and exploitation to one that is based on regeneration and cooperation;
4. Ensure those with the least amount of power and wealth are positioned to lead during this transition; and
5. Create stable, livable-wage jobs that prioritize local hires; and protect jobs covered by Project Labor Agreements and Labor Harmony Agreements.

Additionally, RES 31895 identifies specific initiatives necessary to achieve these goals in the general categories of:

- Building efficiency
- Transportation efficiency
- Housing affordability
- Renewable energy
- Climate preparedness
- Emergency management
- Job training

Green New Deal Oversight Board (CB 119604)

Under the direction of Councilmember O'Brien, legislation was drafted to create a Green New Deal Oversight Board that would advise and support City efforts to implement the Green New Deal for Seattle. Key aspects of the proposed Board include:

- Administrative support provided by OSE.
- 16 members comprised of:
 - Eight community representatives directly impacted by racial, economic, and environmental injustices (including one tribal member and two individuals between the ages of 16 and 25 at the time of their appointment);
 - Three representatives of environmental justice organizations;
 - Two representatives of labor unions; and
 - Three representatives with experience in greenhouse gas reduction and climate resiliency strategies relevant to cities (e.g., public health, infrastructure, sea-level rise, extreme weather events, etc.).
- Terms of three years, with a limit of two consecutive terms.
- Members for whom participating on the Board presents a financial hardship would be eligible for compensation at a rate of \$50 per hour.

The proposed legislation also requests that OSE form an interdepartmental team (IDT) to implement the Green New Deal for Seattle and to support development of individual climate plans for all City departments. The IDT would include representatives from the Department of Parks and Recreation, Seattle Department of Transportation, Office of Planning and Community Development, Office of Housing, Seattle Public Utilities, Seattle City Light, Office of Economic Development, Seattle Department of Human Resources, Office of Emergency Management, Department of Neighborhoods, the Mayor's Office, City Council, City Council Central Staff, and others as needed.

Each department's climate plan should include targets and metrics to monitor the City's effort to achieving decarbonization by 2030. OSE would report on these plans to Council by July 1, 2020, and provide progress reports annually beginning in 2021. The IDT is also expected to meet quarterly with the Board on the development of these plans as well as policies, programs, and projects related to the Green New Deal for Seattle.

Potential Impacts of CB 119604

Expertise

The City currently has more than 70 boards and commissions that serve the Council and the Mayor in an advisory capacity. These boards and commissions do not necessarily have the expertise in climate change to support the City's implementation of the Green New Deal for Seattle. Where additional expertise is needed, the Green New Deal Oversight Board may enlist the assistance of non-member experts or other boards/commissions, such as the Seattle Planning Commission.

Fiscal Impact

OSE has indicated that it has sufficient staffing to support the formation of this Board, but reserves the right to request additional staff to facilitate the development and implementation of individual City department climate plans. The financial hardship compensation for Board members is estimated to be \$34,000 annually, assuming all 16 members meet eligibility requirements.

City Staffing Impact

The proposed IDT would include representatives from numerous City departments. It is unknown at this time whether the impacted City department staff would have the necessary expertise and/or be able to absorb this additional work. Depending on the actions identified in individual City department climate plans, work may need to be reprioritized and/or additional resources will be needed.

Executive Commitment

Establishing and participating on the IDT and developing and implementing climate plans and other aspects of the Green New Deal for Seattle will require a shared commitment from the Executive for this effort to be successful.

Next Steps

If this proposal is adopted, the Council will need to appropriate resources to OSE during the 2020 budget deliberations for Board member compensation and possibly to support the work of the proposed IDT. As discussed, future staffing and fiscal resources may also be necessary in the out years.

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