



Legislation Text

File #: RES 19-1870, **Version:** 3

Committing to advocating for the renewable, equitable, and locally-produced energy commitments expressed in the Climate Action and Resilience Plan, and to opposing proposed new fossil fuel energy infrastructure. (Laid over from October 23 and November 6)

WHEREAS, the City of Saint Paul recognizes that the climate crisis caused by greenhouse gas emissions from burning fossil fuels and other sources, is increasingly exposing Saint Paul residents to flooding, poor air quality, extreme heat events, loss of tree cover, economic hardship, and psychological stresses; and

WHEREAS, Saint Paul City Council members unanimously passed a the iMatter “Climate Inheritance Resolution” in August of 2018 calling for “net zero greenhouse gas emissions from City buildings by 2030 and overall by 2050, 100% renewable electricity for the entire city by 2030, and 25% of electricity created within city limits” (RES 18-1361 version 1); and

WHEREAS, the City of Saint Paul is also responding to the existential threat of climate change in 2019 by developing a Climate Action and Resilience Plan that commits the city to carbon neutrality by 2050 and reducing emissions from all sectors 50% by 2030; and

WHEREAS, the Climate Action and Resilience Plan projects that we will fall short of these goals, reaching only 44% reduction in emissions by 2030 and 73% by 2050 from business as usual (pgs. 48, 63), and energy production is a significant factor in Saint Paul’s ability to meet these goals; and

~~WHEREAS, energy production and policies affect Saint Paul’s ability to meet the goals identified in the Climate Action and Resilience Plan, especially “improving equitable access to clean electricity” (pg. 48, 63); and~~

~~WHEREAS, a 2017 report commissioned by the McKnight Foundation and written by Gridlab at the University of Minnesota shows that Minnesota could retire the state’s coal plants, build no additional natural gas plants, and still meet energy demands reliably through clean, renewable energy sources while also reducing energy costs and tripling local clean energy jobs; and~~

WHEREAS, the City of Saint Paul has innovative examples of locally-produced energy, such as District Energy Saint St. Paul, North America’s largest cogeneration district heating and cooling system, fueled primarily by wood waste; Brookfield Renewable Power’s Twin Cities Hydroelectric Facility in Highland Park, which powered the Ford Plant and continues to produce enough energy to power 14,400 homes a year; and the potential for an estimated 800MW of rooftop solar within city limits (about 40% of the city’s total electricity consumption); and

WHEREAS, the City of Saint Paul has a franchise agreement with Xcel Energy ~~for~~ to deliver our electricity and gas, a corporation that leads the nation in carbon-free energy production among investor-owned utilities; and

WHEREAS, on July 1, 2019 Xcel Energy filed its 15-year Upper Midwest Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) with the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (PUC) proposing the closure of Xcel’s two remaining coal plants in Minnesota by 2030, adding 4000 MW of utility scale solar energy production, and substantial energy efficiency improvements, ~~but also proposing the construction and operation of a new gas power plant in 2026 (Sherco GG);~~ and

WHEREAS, natural gas power plants burn fossil fuels that include fracked gas which can pollute water sources and degrade air quality at the point of extraction, and leak potent greenhouse gases such as methane throughout the distribution infrastructure in addition to the carbon produced when it is burned to generate electricity; and

WHEREAS, natural gas power plants have a projected life of 20-30 years, but rapidly increasing feasibility and affordability of renewable energy plus storage may render them uneconomical within a few years; and

~~WHEREAS, this proposal will make Saint Paul dependent on energy from fossil fuels for 25% of our electricity through 2030 and beyond (IRP, pg. 8, Figure 1-3: "Preferred Plan Energy Mix through 2034"), unnecessarily putting Saint Paul communities and our climate at risk at a time when renewable energy plus storage technology is already proving to be reliable and as affordable on a levelized cost of energy basis to new gas-fired generation; and~~

WHEREAS, in addition to environmental ~~damage, burning harm, dependence of energy from~~ natural gas has serious economic risks for an estimated 42,124 households in Saint Paul experiencing an energy burden (the percent of income spent on energy costs) of 4% or above who are especially vulnerable to volatility in fossil fuel costs and risks associated with stranded assets when power plants are forced to be retired early due to economic and/or environmental concerns; and these same households are also the most vulnerable to risks associated with the pollution that causes climate change; now therefore be it

RESOLVED that the City of Saint Paul will submit official comment in the Public Utilities Commission review process of Xcel Energy's 2020-2034 Integrated Resource Plan expressing opposition to construction of ~~a new Sherco CC gas plant in 2026 (docket 19-368)~~ new fossil fuel infrastructure in this time of climate crisis; and now therefore be it further

RESOLVED that the City of Saint Paul will advocate for including more renewable, equitable, and locally produced energy plus storage in Xcel Energy's 2020-2034 Integrated Resource Plan so that our city can meet the bold commitments for reducing emissions and energy burdens as expressed in our Climate Inheritance Resolution and Climate Action and Resilience Plan ~~(draft 2)~~.