

Planning, Development, and Environmental Quality Committee
Special Meeting Minutes – Approved 12-21-16
Tuesday, December 6, 2016 4:45 PM
Legislature Chambers

Attendance

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Martha Robertson	Chair	Present	
Dooley Kiefer	Vice Chair	Present	
Michael Sigler	Member	Late	4:50 PM
David McKenna	Member	Present	
James Dennis	Member	Present	
Carol Chock	Member	Present	
Anna Kelles	Member	Present	
Joe Mareane	County Administrator	Present	
Ed Marx	Planning Commissioner	Present	
Michelle Pottorff	Chief Deputy Clerk, Legislature Office	Present	
Marcia Lynch	Public Info. Officer, County Administration	Present	

Guests: Miranda Phillips, Nancy Jacobson, Citizens' Climate Lobby

Call to Order

Ms. Robertson, Chair, called the meeting to order at 4:47 p.m.

Public Comment

There were no comments by the public.

Resolutions

Resolution No. - Urging United States Congress to Pass Carbon Fee and Dividend Legislation (ID #6705)

It was MOVED by Mr. Dennis, seconded by Ms. Kiefer to revisit Resolution No. 237-2016 that was recommended by the Committee at its last meeting.

Mr. Sigler arrived at this time.

It was MOVED by Ms. Kelles, seconded by Ms. Chock to insert the following WHEREAS to the recommended resolution:

"WHEREAS, such a tax/fee would be phased in, providing time for individuals and businesses to adjust while also providing certainty regarding a decrease in greenhouse gas emissions. For example, the tax/fee could start at \$15 per ton of carbon equivalent and increase by \$10 per ton each year until carbon emissions are reduced to 90% below 1990 levels. The revenue from the tax/fee would be kept in a separate trust fund and could be rebated to all US households on a per capita basis. Such a policy should protect lower and middle-income households since the money from the tax is likely to allow most American households to benefit financially, break even, or have only minimal increased costs; the policy would also create jobs, as a rebate from the tax puts money back into local economies. Such equal

monthly rebates can help ensure that families and individuals can afford the energy they need during transition to a greenhouse gas-free economy and as households spend the rebates this will stimulate the economy now therefore be it" and to delete the word "tax" in three places.

Following concern being expressed that the language duplicates other language contained in the original resolution, Ms. Kelles withdrew her amendment.

Based on a suggestion by Mr. Marx, it was **MOVED** by Ms. Kelles, seconded by Ms. Chock to insert the following **WHEREAS** to the recommended resolution:

"**WHEREAS**, such a tax/fee would be phased in, providing time for individuals and businesses to adjust while also providing certainty regarding a decrease in greenhouse gas emissions. For example, the tax/fee could start as \$15 per ton of carbon equivalent and increase by \$10 per ton each year until carbon emissions are reduced to 90% below 1990 levels. The revenue from the tax/fee would be kept in a separate trust fund and could be rebated to all US households on a per capita basis, now therefore be it" and to delete the word "tax" in three places.

A vote on the amendment resulted as follows: Ayes - 5, Noes - 2 (Kiefer and Sigler). **MOTION CARRIED.**

It was **MOVED** by Ms. Chock to remove in number 4 the words "eliminating the need for government subsidies that attempt to forecast alternative energy winners and losers". **MOTION FAILED DUE TO LACK OF A SECOND.**

A vote on the resolution as amended resulted as follows: Ayes - 0, Noes - 7. **MOTION FAILED.**

It was **MOVED** by Ms. Chock, seconded by Ms. Kiefer, to remove in number 4 the words "eliminating the need for government subsidies that attempt to forecast alternative energy winners and losers". A voice vote on the amendment resulted as follows: Ayes - 2 (Chock and Kiefer); Noes - 5. **MOTION FAILED.**

It was **MOVED** by Ms. Kelles, seconded by Mr. Dennis, to again approve the resolution as recommended previously by Committee with the friendly amendment included and the addition of a second friendly amendment as follows: **RESOLVED**, That copies of the resolution be sent to the County's federal representatives, the President-Elect, and Vice President-Elect. A voice vote resulted as follows: Ayes - 6, Noes - 1 (Kiefer). **MOTION CARRIED.**

RESULT:	RECOMMENDED [6 TO 1]
MOVER:	James Dennis, Member
SECONDER:	Anna Kelles, Member
AYES:	Robertson, Sigler, McKenna, Dennis, Chock, Kelles
NAYS:	Kiefer

WHEREAS, climate scientists worldwide are in near-unanimous agreement that the planet Earth is warming rapidly and to a degree that is perilous to human civilization, to numerous species, and to the global ecosystem, and

WHEREAS, human activity is a significant contributor to global warming, especially through the

accelerating combustion of fossil fuels that create carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases as a byproduct, and

WHEREAS, the Tompkins County Legislature has a record of acknowledging the reality of climate change as well as the County's responsibility to reduce its contribution to the causes of global warming, as evidenced by the Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan, Tompkins County Energy Roadmap, Tompkins County Energy Strategy, and numerous greenhouse gas emissions inventories and climate action plans, and

WHEREAS, a prompt and major shift away from fossil fuels is a necessary cornerstone to any meaningful response to climate change, and

WHEREAS, a steadily increasing fee on fossil fuels at the point of their entry into the economy would be straightforward and make effective use of free-market mechanisms to promote the transition to greater energy conservation and renewable sources of energy, and

WHEREAS, this revenue-neutral carbon fee and dividend is an effective method to reduce carbon emissions for the following reasons:

- 1) The fee would motivate everyone to conserve and adopt renewable energy without the need for extensive governmental regulatory controls or infrastructure, encouraging consumers and the market to replace consumption of carbon-based energy with innovative, sustainable energy sources, whether by being more efficient or choosing other, less carbon intensive energy sources;
- 2) The fee would employ a market approach to encourage innovative processes, not only in energy production, but also in every field in which energy is consumed, e.g. electric cars, mass transportation, architectural planning and construction, water heating, lighting, and air conditioning in residential and commercial buildings;
- 3) Levying the fee at the point of production would be more efficient, less expensive and provide more accurate signals than would doing so at the point of consumption;
- 4) The fee would incentivize the development and use of alternative energies and attendant technologies, eliminating the need for government subsidies that attempt to forecast alternative energy winners and losers;
- 5) Because the fee is levied on the same basis on all businesses, it is fairer to every business and easier to administer than alternatives, such as a cap and trade system;
- 6) A border adjustment would assess a fee on goods traded with countries without a comparable carbon price, thereby maintaining the competitiveness of US businesses and discouraging relocation to such countries, and

WHEREAS, such a policy would protect lower and middle-income households, as the dividend would allow more than 70% of American households to benefit financially, break even, or have only minimal increased costs (<0.2% income) from this policy; the policy would also create jobs, as the dividend puts money back into local economies, and

WHEREAS, further delay in responding to this crisis increases the risk of catastrophic climate change, imminently threatens low-lying coastal areas and land and sea species, threatens water supplies, increases the frequency of severe weather events, increases the cost of undertaking adequate responses, and increases risks to the global economy, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, on recommendation of the Planning, Development and Environmental Quality

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Planning, Development, and Environmental Quality Committee
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Committee, That the Tompkins County Legislature endorses a carbon fee and dividend and urges our representatives in the United States Congress to enact it into law,

RESOLVED, further, That copies of the resolution be sent to President Barack Obama, President-Elect Donald Trump, Vice-President-Elect Michael Pence, Governor Andrew Cuomo, Representative Tom Reed, and Senators Kirsten Gillibrand and Charles Schumer, New York State Senators James Seward, Thomas O'Mara, and Michael Nozzolio, and New York State Assemblywoman Barbara Lifton.

SEQR ACTION: Not an action subject to SEQR

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Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 5:22 p.m.