

Introduced: Mayor Byrd  
1<sup>st</sup> Reading: June 7, 2021  
Passed: June 14, 2021  
Posted: June 15, 2021  
Effective: June 14, 2021

RESOLUTION NUMBER 2091-2

A RESOLUTION DECLARING A CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND CALLING FOR AN IMMEDIATE EMERGENCY MOBILIZATION TO RESTORE A SAFE CLIMATE

**WHEREAS**, On April 22, 2016, world leaders from 174 countries and the European Union recognized the threat of climate change and the urgent need to combat it by signing the Paris Agreement, agreeing to keep warming well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C; and

**WHEREAS**, On October 8, 2018, the United Nations International Panel on Climate Change (“IPCC”) released a special report, which projected that limiting warming to the 1.5°C target this century will require an unprecedented transformation of every sector of the global economy over the next 12 years; and

**WHEREAS**, On November 23, 2018, the United States Fourth National Climate Assessment (“NCA4”) was released and details the massive threat that climate change poses to the American economy, our environment and climate stability, and underscores the need for immediate climate emergency action at all levels of government; and

**WHEREAS**, According to the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)’s Goddard Institute for Space Studies (GISS), global temperatures in 2018 were .83°C (1.5°F) warmer than the 1951 to 1980 mean, and the past five years are collectively the warmest in modern history; and

The death and destruction already wrought by climate change demonstrates that the Earth is already too hot for safety, as attested by increased and intensifying wildfires, floods, rising seas, diseases, droughts and extreme weather; and

**WHEREAS**, World Wildlife Fund’s 2018 Living Planet report finds that there has been 60% decline in global wildlife populations between 1970 and 2014, with causes including overfishing, pollution and climate change; and

**WHEREAS**, the planet has suffered from habitat loss and deforestation; and

**WHEREAS**, According to the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, human activity has already severely altered 40% of the marine environment, 50% of inland waterways, and 75% of the planet’s land, and it is projected that half-to-one million species are threatened with extinction, many within the next few decades; and

**WHEREAS**, The United States of America has disproportionately contributed to the climate and extinction emergencies and has repeatedly obstructed global efforts to transition toward a green economy, and thus bears an extraordinary responsibility to rapidly address these existential threats; and

**WHEREAS**, Restoring a safe and stable climate requires transformative societal and economic change on a scale not seen since World War II to reach net zero greenhouse gas emissions across all sectors, to rapidly and safely drawdown or remove all the excess carbon from the atmosphere, to end the 6th mass extinction of species, and to implement measures to protect all people and species from the increasingly severe consequences of climate change; and

**WHEREAS**, A sweeping overhaul of the economy that centers on equity and justice in its solutions is vital to our future and must include the following goals: dramatically expand

existing renewable power sources and deploy new production capacity with the goal of meeting 100% of national power demand through renewable sources; build a national, energy-efficient, “smart” grid; upgrade every residential, industrial, commercial, and public sector or governmental building for state-of-the-art energy performance, comfort and safety; eliminate greenhouse gas emissions from manufacturing, agricultural and other industries, including by investing in local-scale agriculture in communities across the country; repair and improve transportation and other infrastructure, and upgrade water infrastructure to ensure universal access to clean water; fund massive investment in the drawdown of greenhouse gases; make “green” technology, industry, expertise, products and services a major export of the United States, with the aim of becoming the international leader in helping other countries become greenhouse gas neutral economies and bringing about a global transition; and

**WHEREAS**, Marginalized populations in Greenbelt and worldwide, including people of color, immigrants, indigenous communities, low-income individuals, people with disabilities, and the unhoused are already disproportionately affected by climate change, and will continue to bear an excess burden as temperatures increase, oceans rise, and disasters worsen; and

**WHEREAS**, Addressing climate change fairly requires a “Just Transition” from fossil fuels to clean, renewable energy that is ecologically sustainable and equitable for all people, especially those most impacted by climate change already and those who will be most impacted in the future; and

**WHEREAS**, Core to a Just Transition is equity, self-determination, culture, tradition, deep democracy, and the belief that people around the world have a fundamental human right to clean, healthy and adequate air, water, land, food, education, healthcare, and shelter; and

**WHEREAS**, Just Transition strategies were first forged by a “blue-green” alliance of labor unions and environmental justice groups who saw the need to phase out the industries that were harming workers, community health, and the planet, while also providing just pathways for workers into new livelihoods; and

**WHEREAS**, Just Transition initiatives shift the economy from dirty energy that benefits fossil fuel companies to energy democracy that benefits our people, environment and a clean, renewable energy economy, from funding new highways to expanding public transit, from incinerators and landfills to zero waste products, from industrial food systems to food sovereignty, from car-dependent sprawl and destructive unbridled growth to smart urban development without displacement, and from destructive over-development to habitat and ecosystem restoration; and

**WHEREAS**, Building a society that is resilient to the current, expected, and potential effects of climate change will protect health, lives, ecosystems, and economies, and such resilience efforts will have the greatest positive impact if the most dramatic potential consequences of climate change are taken into account; and

**WHEREAS**, Climate justice calls for climate resilience planning that addresses the specific experiences, vulnerabilities, and needs of marginalized communities within our jurisdiction, who must be included and supported in actively engaging in climate resilience planning, policy, and actions; and

**WHEREAS**, Actions to eliminate greenhouse gas emissions and/or drawdown greenhouse gases may be taken in ways that also improve resilience to the effects of climate change, and vice versa; and

**WHEREAS**, Climate justice requires that frontline communities, which have historically borne the brunt of the extractive fossil-fuel economy, participate actively in the planning and implementation of this mobilization effort at all levels of government and that they benefit first from the transition to a renewable energy economy; and

**WHEREAS**, Fairness demands the protection and expansion of workers' right to organize as well as a guarantee of high-paying, high-quality jobs with comprehensive benefits for all as the mobilization to restore a safe climate is launched; and

**WHEREAS**, Common sense demands that this unprecedented mobilization effort address the full suite of existential ecological threats facing humanity in a comprehensive, integrated and timely fashion; and

**WHEREAS**, Nearly hundreds of cities, districts and counties across the world representing over millions of people collectively have recently declared or officially acknowledged the existence of a global climate emergency, including Hoboken, Berkeley, Los Angeles, Montgomery County, Oakland, Richmond, and Santa Cruz in the United States, Bristol and London in the United Kingdom and many cities in Australia, Canada, and Switzerland; and

**WHEREAS**, the City of Greenbelt, as a green town founded by the New Deal, can act as a global leader through continuing to build upon its renowned work related to environmentalism and sustainability; now, therefore, be it

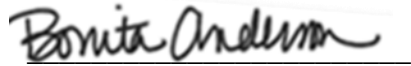
**BE Resolved**, The City Council declares a climate emergency and calls for an immediate emergency mobilization of local, state, and national governments to restore a safe climate.

Note: nothing in this resolution shall be construed as granting the city manager additional unilateral powers.

PASSED by the Council of the City of Greenbelt, Maryland, at its regular meeting of  
June 14, 2021.

  
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Colin A. Byrd, Mayor

ATTEST:

  
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Bonita Anderson, City Clerk