

For Immediate Release

News from Grand Rapids Climate Resolution Coalition

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*****Press Release*****

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Residents Ask Commissioners to Align with Climate Science for Resolution

Carbon neutrality by 2030 to protect human lives and create a better future

The Grand Rapids Climate Resolution Coalition (GRCRC) spoke at last night's City Commissioners meeting asking the Commissioners to heed the warnings climate scientists have been sounding the alarm for decades and protect human lives. Coalition representatives asked the Commissioners to commit to Grand Rapids being carbon neutral by 2030.

Coalition member representatives addressed their concerns to the City Commission in response to the City Commission passing a "Resolution Declaring a Climate Change Crisis" earlier in the day. Coalition members acknowledged the City's passed resolution as a step in the right direction but inadequate to the severity of the challenge and insufficiently responsive to community input.

Danny Caracheo Teniente, 22, representing Michigan United, a Coalition member, stated to the Commission: "It will be our working-class communities hit the hardest, especially our immigrant communities" and noted heat waves, the polar vortex, and the fallout from flooding in Detroit from recent years as examples of extreme weather events that climate change intensifies and which disproportionately impacts vulnerable communities.

He stated earlier that: "It is the responsibility of the City Commission to improve the lives of residents across the City. This includes acknowledging the Climate Emergency and addressing the needs of the communities that will be hit hardest by the climate emergency.

Families such as those living on Burton Street, Franklin Street, Grandville Ave, and many more. These are the communities that will suffer the most from more intense and frequent polar vortexes, heatwaves, floods, as well as the financial and healthcare hardships that these events will cause.

Grand Rapids has the capacity and responsibility to address these issues. I believe it can be done, I believe this city can accomplish this. One step the City can take is achieving carbon neutrality for the whole community by 2030."

Terra Workman, 15, representing the Sunrise Movement GR, a coalition member, also addressed the City Commission at last night's meeting: "You are some of the last people who

will have the power and the ability to make these changes that we need” she told the Commissioners, and “and if that statement is scary for you, good, it should be, because it’s terrifying to me too.”

Workman urged the Commission to “take the action that actually confronts the crisis at the scale it demands” and “listen to the demands of my generation and of the community as a whole”

“If this resolution turns out to be a jumping-off point for greater action, an actual community-wide plan, and greater mobilization that centers frontline communities, then great,” she said.

“Declaring climate change a crisis can be a good first step. But this in itself is not enough. And I hope you don’t think that passing this resolution is going to placate us.”

All Coalition member representatives who spoke at the Commission meeting recognized the Commission’s step of declaring climate change a crisis but advocated for a stronger goal of community-wide carbon neutrality by 2030.

Janet Zahn, a co-chair of the Grand Rapids Climate Resolution Coalition said, “We are grateful for the City’s leadership in establishing municipal goals for carbon reduction and the ways in which the Office of Sustainability has launched the Community Collaborative on Climate Change to help build towards environmental justice. Their resolution is in the right direction, but does not genuinely reflect the nature of the urgency we face. Our community cannot afford to delay. We will continue to advocate for equity-based solutions which put frontline communities first, and a community-wide goal of carbon neutrality by 2030”.

The Grand Rapids Climate Resolution Coalition is a grassroots group with 57 member groups including nonprofits, neighborhood groups, faith groups, educational groups, businesses and individuals. It was formed in early 2021 to address the impacts of climate change in our community, particularly on frontline communities – communities where the impacts of climate change are experienced first and worst due to systemic injustices. The Coalition includes member organizations representing frontline communities, including NAACP, LINC UP, the Latino Community Coalition and P.R.O.A.C.T.IV.E.

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