



## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** February 15, 2008

**TO:** Linda DeMichiel, Committee Chair  
Environmental Committee Members  
James Walgren, Assistant City Manager

**FROM:** Rebecca Zito, Staff Liaison

**SUBJECT: FORMATION OF CLIMATE PROTECTION TASKFORCE**

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

Accept as information staff's research on forming a Climate Protection Taskforce within Los Altos and approaches initiated by other communities.

### **BACKGROUND**

In November 2007, the Environmental Committee was approached by members of Cool Los Altos, a community group focusing on climate protection and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions throughout Los Altos. Representatives provided an overview of the group's mission and ways in which they would like the City to address environmental issues.

At the January meeting of the Environmental Committee, the committee drafted a recommendation (Attachment 1) in response to Council's request to endorse and sign the U.S. Mayor's Climate Protection Agreement or to not support the Agreement. Additionally, Council requested that the committee provide direction pertaining to the oversight of environmental initiatives for Los Altos. Specifically whether the Environmental Committee should be the responsible body or if a new citizen's taskforce should be formed.

The Committee's recommendation was presented at the January 22<sup>nd</sup> Council meeting. Council authorized the Mayor to sign the U.S. Mayor's Climate Protection Agreement and agreed to initiate a baseline study of greenhouse gases emitted through City operations. The possibility of forming a community taskforce was also discussed. Staff and the Environmental Committee were directed by Council to research the process other communities have used to develop climate protection plans.

To date staff has met with representatives from the City of Menlo Park and members of the Palo Alto Green Ribbon Taskforce. This report outlines the findings and suggests strategies for moving forward. The information presented is for informational purposes and additional research should be completed before a recommendation is made on how best to proceed.

### **DISCUSSION**

In recent months, information has been presented to the Environmental Committee regarding other cities efforts to address climate protection and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The information has primarily been presented by representatives of Cool Los Altos, and the Committee has had limited time to conduct its own independent research on this items.

### **Menlo Park**

Cool Los Altos has primarily referred to the approach initiated by Menlo Park. In 2007 then Mayor Kelly Ferguson initiated the Green Ribbon Taskforce. Mayor Ferguson discussed the initiative with Council and encouraged community members to become involved. The taskforce's role was to develop recommendations for addressing environmental issues throughout the Menlo Park community and present the findings at a later City Council meeting. Staff recently met with the Public Works Director and Environmental Programs Coordinator of Menlo Park to gather more information about the taskforce and findings in the report.

Menlo Park representatives explained that although the taskforce was initiated by the Mayor and supported by Council, the taskforce itself was not appointed by the City Council. Since the committee was not appointed by Council, the taskforce was not required to follow the Brown Act. This provided the taskforce with more flexibility and ease in communication. Additionally, the Environmental Programs Coordinator served as the staff liaison to the taskforce. Staff's role was to provide information about city programs and offer direction on what may or may not be supported by the city in terms of implementation and funding.

According to Menlo Park staff, this worked well for both the community and staff members. They found that not having to comply with the Brown Act allowed the taskforce more flexibility to freely communicate with one another and enabled them to make decisions more easily and at a faster pace. It was also beneficial to staff as there was no need to spend time preparing agendas or meeting minutes. This allowed staff to freely participate without having to take on an administrative function.

The taskforce met on a bi-weekly basis between March and November 2007. The taskforce's climate action report and recommendations were presented at the November 14<sup>th</sup> 2007 Council meeting. The report outlines the committee's approach, core values and areas of focus. Each focus area provides a series of recommendations and a prioritized list of approximately 32 recommendations was presented. The executive summary is attached and provides an overview of the taskforce's recommendations. Please see Attachment 2.

After the report was presented to Council, staff became more involved. A baseline inventory of community emissions was conducted by ICLEI and Menlo Park is currently contracting with an outside consultant to develop a climate protection action plan that will be adopted by City Council at a later date. The recommendations from the community taskforce will be incorporated into the plan.

### **Palo Alto**

Palo Alto is taking a three-tiered approach to develop a community wide climate protection plan. The first effort occurred in 2006. Mayor Judy Kleinberg encouraged the Palo Alto community to become involved and develop recommendations to address greenhouse gas emissions. A group of

citizens met at the encouragement of Mayor Kleinberg, the committee developed recommendations as well as an overall mission for addressing this issue. The taskforce met throughout the year and in December the initial plan was presented to Council.

Once the Committee finalized the mission statement they began considering program areas to study. The committee broke into five sub-committees focusing on establishing the baseline inventory, energy, transportation, the built environment as well as education and motivation. Each sub-committee developed a report with a series of recommendations. The executive summary, which provides an overview of the recommendations, is attached. Please see Attachment 3.

The report was presented to City Council in December 2006. Staff was directed to review the report and develop a more specific climate action plan. Staff's plan focuses on the five sub-committee areas and analyzes the committee's recommendations in greater detail. Staff developed an initial cost/benefit analysis of the recommendations established by the Green Ribbon Taskforce. Additionally, benchmark reduction goals were established as well as a target schedule for implementing short-term, medium-term and long-term goals. Palo Alto's climate protection plan was adopted by City Council this past November.

The third step in developing the Climate Action Plan is an effort to merge the community's recommendations with the plan developed by staff. The City of Palo Alto and community groups have created the Community Environmental Action Partnership (CEAP), which formed in accordance with the recommendations made by the Green Ribbon Taskforce and Climate Protection Plan.

The partnership will bring various segments of the community together to share knowledge, build mutual understanding, leverage resources and create and implement innovative environmental solutions. The overall goal and vision of the CEAP is to empower the community and encourage them to become more environmentally aware and responsibly incorporate climate protection measures into their daily life. Palo Alto's vision is for the community to be an active part of the solution and work with the City to adopt environmental programs.

### **Los Altos**

The desire to study and address climate protection and greenhouse gas reductions in Los Altos has primarily been driven by the community group Cool Los Altos. The group formed this past October and began attending meetings of the Environmental Committee. In December representatives of the group met with City staff including the City Manager, Assistant City Manager, and staff liaison to the Environmental Committee and also began discussing the initiative with individual Council members. Cool Los Altos effectively gained the support of community members and encouraged the City to proactively address global warming.

At the January 22<sup>nd</sup> Council meeting, Cool Los Altos presented information to Council about climate protection programs initiated in other communities, and the Environmental Committee provided a recommendation in support of the request to sign the U.S. Mayor's Climate Protection Agreement, initiate a baseline inventory of greenhouse gas emissions and begin the process of forming a community taskforce to develop a climate protection plan. The Committee was asked to provide additional information about a citizens' taskforce.

### **Formation of Citizen Taskforce**

After researching the process incorporated by Palo Alto and Menlo Park, staff finds that it is appropriate for Cool Los Altos to continue meeting through the end of the calendar year to develop an initial list of recommendations that will help the City determine how best to address global warming. Cool Los Altos would not be a Council appointed taskforce and therefore would not have to follow the requirements of the Brown Act. At the end of 2008, Cool Los Altos can present their report to City Council. Council can then discuss next steps and direct further action. Additionally, Council can direct the City Manager to allocate staff time to the committee.

Cool Los Altos is currently invested in this project and they should have an opportunity to recommend environmental protection measures. Once the recommendations are presented to Council, a detailed study can be conducted to evaluate the recommendations, establish specific goals and targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and conduct a detailed cost/benefit analysis of the program.

It's important that the community have an opportunity to develop the initial recommendations of a climate protection plan. Ultimately, many of the environmental protection measures will have to be implemented by the community. The success of the plan is dependent upon the community's ability to support and implement the recommendations.

### **Baseline Inventory**

Cool Los Altos would also work with City staff to complete the baseline inventory of greenhouse gas emissions. Palo Alto and Menlo Park conducted the inventory after the citizen's committee developed an initial report. The committee's recommendations, as well as the inventory were then used to develop a more detailed climate protection plan.

### **Next Steps**

The Environmental committee should:

1. Consider and discuss the information presented in the report, take public comment and if necessary conduct individual research before making a final recommendation.
2. Continue discussion at March meeting, report any additional findings and develop a recommendation for Council.
3. Recommend to Council in April that Cool Los Altos should be recognized as the community group to address the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and recommend local climate protection initiatives.

### **ALTERNATIVES**

The Environmental Committee can recommend to Council establishing a formal City Taskforce.

Rebecca Zito  
Staff Liaison, Environmental Committee

Attachments:

Formation of Climate Protection Taskforce

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1. Environmental Committee recommendation to City Council
2. Menlo Park: Executive Summary Green Ribbon Taskforce
3. Palo Alto: Executive Summary Green Ribbon Taskforce