

**A RESOLUTION PRIORITIZING VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES IN FUTURE CLIMATE
MITIGATION AND ADAPTATION PROJECTS**

2020-12-138

WHEREAS, the Linn County Board of Supervisors on December 4, 2019 passed and approved Resolution 2019-12-160, A RESOLUTION DECLARING A CLIMATE CRISIS AND COMMITTING TO ACCELERATED EFFORTS TO LIMIT THE GLOBAL AVERAGE TEMPERATURE INCREASE, committing the County to accelerated climate mitigation and adaptation targets; and,

WHEREAS, the United States' *Fourth National Climate Assessment* states older adults, low-income communities, communities of color, people who are disabled, people with poor health status, and Indigenous people are "often disproportionately affected by, and less resilient to, the health impacts of climate change;" and

WHEREAS, a 2018 study sponsored by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) finds that particulate matter disproportionately burdens those in poverty and people of color, particularly Black Americans, due to "disparate air pollution exposures" resulting from racial segregation.

WHEREAS, the EPA links exposure to particulate matter to lung and heart diseases; and

WHEREAS, the World Bank's 2017 *Unbreakable: Building Resilience of the Poor in the Face of Natural Disasters* report states "poor people suffer disproportionately from natural hazards," due to overexposure, higher vulnerability, less ability to cope and recover, permanent impacts on education and health, and the effects of risk on saving and investment behavior; and

WHEREAS, the 2020 derecho storm disproportionately impacted low-income and immigrant and refugee communities as evidenced by the high demand for food bank and pantry services, shelters, supplemental programs for public transit, essential items, and translators; and

WHEREAS, the 2020 derecho storm disproportionately impacted residents with unique medical needs, as evidenced by the high demand for generators in homes where medical needs rely on electricity; and

WHEREAS, American Community Survey 2018 5-year estimates show Black residents disproportionately make up Linn County's population under the poverty level, as Black residents make up 6.1% of the County's population, but 16.5% of the County's population below the poverty level; and

WHEREAS, the World Bank's 2017 *Unbreakable: Building Resilience of the Poor in the Face of Natural Disasters* report also states disasters "make it harder for people to escape

poverty;" in part because households in the lowest income quintile are spending 36% of their income on food (USDA, *Economic Research Service*) and

WHEREAS, the United States' *Fourth National Climate Assessment* also states "disruptions to the transportation network during extreme weather events can disproportionately affect low-income people, older adults, people with limited English proficiency, and other vulnerable urban populations;" and

WHEREAS, rural communities are "dependent upon natural resources for their livelihood and social structure" and are vulnerable to climate impacts due to "limited economic diversity" and aging communities with a reduced ability to react to climate disasters.

WHEREAS, the United States Department of Agriculture *Food Access Research Atlas* illustrates there are two areas in Linn County characterized by low-income census tracts where a significant share of residents is more than 1 mile (urban) or 10 miles (rural) from the nearest supermarket; and

WHEREAS, the EPA defines environmental justice as the "fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulation, and policies;" and

WHEREAS, the EPA defines meaningful involvement as a process in which "community concerns will be considered in the decision making process," and "decision makers will seek out and facilitate the involvement of those potentially affected."

NOW, BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that the Linn County Board of Supervisors will pass and approve climate mitigation and adaptation plans, projects, and policies that prioritize the participation and protection of vulnerable communities, defined in this resolution as residents of color; low-income, disabled, and elderly residents; rural residents, and immigrant and refugee residents.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Board of Supervisors commits to the following hazard mitigation targets:

- (a) Identify disproportionate impacts of environmental hazards on vulnerable communities in Linn County by reviewing locations of environmental hazards and demographic data.
- (b) Mitigate impacts of existing environmental hazards where residents are exposed.
- (c) Prioritize the protection of residents when considering the approval of projects that result in environmental hazards.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Board of Supervisors commits to the following adaptation targets:

- (a) Identify barriers vulnerable communities face to coping and recovering from disasters, including transportation, food, housing, language, medical, and other barriers.

- (b) Develop solutions to minimize barriers vulnerable communities face to coping and recovering from disasters.
- (c) Support the development of flood protection, stormwater management systems, and green infrastructure for vulnerable communities within 100 and 500-year floodplains.
- (d) Prioritize projects and programs that enhance the resiliency of vulnerable communities by completing and making public an "equity strength assessment" for proposed projects and programs within Linn County related to climate-adaptation and mitigation. Equity assessment should be reviewed alongside other project assessments when making key decisions relevant to project/program.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Board of Supervisors commits to developing a community-wide climate action and adaptation plan with the following climate justice targets:

- (a) Develop an inclusive outreach and participation process by enabling vulnerable communities to determine the climate mitigation, adaptation, and justice challenges and solutions in their neighborhoods.
- (b) Coordinate with the County's Food Systems Council and Food Environment Alliance to end food deserts by 2040 to ensure access to fresh, nutritious, and culturally relevant foods to vulnerable communities.
- (c) Support rural and urban farming practices that utilize regenerative carbon capture practices and prioritize local food production to ensure a fresh food supply during and future climate disasters.
- (d) Encourage economically sustainable agricultural operations for vulnerable communities by reviewing and assessing local ordinances to support value-added agricultural practices.
- (e) Guarantee access to nature or green space to all vulnerable communities by supporting the preservation or development of green or natural amenities in their neighborhoods.
- (f) Guarantee a direct line of communication between vulnerable communities and the County in order for vulnerable communities to provide feedback on environmental injustices and barriers to resilience in their neighborhoods.
- (g) End housing insecurity in Linn County by working with other governments and organizations to offer safe, affordable housing to vulnerable communities in order to protect against environmental hazards and improve resiliency in the face of future natural disasters.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Board of Supervisors commits to developing a community-wide climate action and adaptation plan with the following job, worker, and employer guarantees:

- (a) Create green jobs, where green jobs are those that further the climate mitigation, adaptation, and justice goals of the County and offer a living wage.
- (b) Ensure a just transition for workers whose jobs depend on the fossil fuel industry by investing in job training programs and opportunities that provide workers with the skills required by a green economy.
- (c) Work with business and industry stakeholders to develop green job opportunities and support small businesses in transitioning to more sustainable operations.

- (d) Encourage improvements in green jobs, energy efficiency, and waste reduction by supporting the development of county-wide sustainability metrics for businesses and industries.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Board of Supervisors appoints a steering committee with the purpose of developing a framework for the development of a community-wide climate action and adaptation plan, with members representing the following communities:

- (a) Vulnerable communities
- (b) Farmers
- (c) Rural communities
- (d) Energy industry workers/leaders
- (e) Food-insecure residents
- (f) Public transit riders
- (g) Sustainable business/industry leaders
- (h) Sustainability-focused nonprofits
- (i) Conservation organizations
- (j) Small businesses
- (k) Municipal Government

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, all County departments dealing in issues of the environment, public health, climate action, planning and development, transportation, conservation, and emergency response will collaborate with the Sustainability Manager to find ways to address the targets of this resolution in upcoming plans and projects by creating goals with measurable outcomes.

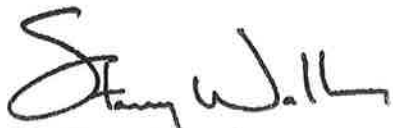
PASSED AND APPROVED this 16 day of December 2020.

LINN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Ben Rogers
Chair



Brent Oleson
Vice Chair



Stacey Walker
Supervisor

ATTEST:



Joel Miller
Linn County Auditor