By Supervisors Nicholson, Ortiz-Velez, Sumner, File No. 21-389

Clancy, Shea, and Wasserman

**A RESOLUTION**

committing Milwaukee County to becoming carbon neutral by 2050 and requesting the Director of Sustainability, Department of Administrative Services, develop and administer a strategic plan to achieve carbon neutrality in Milwaukee County facilities and operations by 2050

WHEREAS, carbon neutrality is the process of balancing carbon emissions with carbon removal or elimination until the net effect is zero; and

WHEREAS, carbon emissions are a result of extraction, refinery, transportation, and burning of fossil fuels, like coal, natural gas, and oil; and

WHEREAS, normally, trees absorb carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, but the increased creation of carbon dioxide and destruction of forests for agriculture, new developments, and collection of lumber prevents this natural process from occurring and, as a result, excess carbon emissions absorb radiation and prevent heat from escaping the atmosphere, causing disrupted weather patterns, global warming, and climate change; and

WHEREAS, reduction, elimination, or offsetting of carbon emissions is critical to preventing the continued effects of climate change on the planet; and

WHEREAS, the Global Carbon Project outlines the process to become carbon neutral as:

1. Calculating carbon emissions and other greenhouse gas from activities
2. Reducing emissions wherever possible
3. Balancing the remainder by purchasing offsets

; and

WHEREAS, reducing emissions includes limiting energy usage and emissions from transportation, buildings, and equipment, using electrical energy or low carbon energy sources, employing wind, nuclear, hydro, solar and geothermal power; and

WHEREAS, offsetting emissions includes buying and planting trees, investing in carbon offset projects in underserved communities, or purchasing carbon offsets or carbon credits; and

WHEREAS, in the absence of broad federal climate policies, state and local governments are leading the way in planning for carbon neutrality; and

WHEREAS, eight states, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico have 100 percent clean energy goals, with more states considering similar plans, and it is estimated that renewable energy sources will generate nearly a third of the country’s electricity by 2050 based on these state commitments alone; and

WHEREAS, Milwaukee County adopted File No. 17-506, committing to the principles and goals of the Paris Agreement for climate change awareness, which the United States provided notice of withdrawal in 2019 but later rejoined in February 2021, and requesting that the Department of Parks, Recreation, and Culture (DPRC) develop a plan for a comprehensive recycling system throughout all parks for approval by the County Board; and

WHEREAS, created through File No. 19-582, Milwaukee County has examined its progress towards eliminating carbon emissions through the Milwaukee City-County Joint Taskforce on Climate and Economic Equity (the “taskforce”); and

WHEREAS, the taskforce met to discuss and provide recommendations as to how Milwaukee can achieve net greenhouse gas emissions reductions by 45 percent of 2010 levels by 2030, achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 or sooner, and how to mitigate racial and income inequality through “green” jobs; and

WHEREAS, related to becoming carbon neutral, some of the taskforce’s recommendations as found in File No. 20-496 included:

* Obtaining a community greenhouse gas inventory to measure progress
* Hiring a consultant or expanding sustainability staff to create a narrative form of the greenhouse gas inventory to present to the public and stakeholders
* Developing a Milwaukee Climate and Equity Action Plan for reducing emissions
* Working with other Milwaukee County municipalities and the State of Wisconsin to coordinate and implement mitigation efforts
* Assessing the short, medium and long-term funding needs to implement a Climate and Equity Action Plan
* Analyzing the expected financial savings that could be achieved through the adoption of a Climate and Equity Action Plan
* Aggregating economic data on the emerging green economy in Milwaukee
* Evaluating the potential of larger-scale structural interventions to leverage a climate transition to dramatically improve regional economic equity

; and

WHEREAS, the Milwaukee County Transit System is in the process of acquiring hybrid-electric buses and electric buses for its fleet, which provides an opportunity to greatly decrease the greenhouse gas emissions produced by public transit, and the 2021 Adopted Budget included a provision to study the transition of all County fleet vehicles to electric vehicles; and

WHEREAS, Milwaukee County adopted File No. 19-397 declaring racism a public health crisis and File No. 20-174 codifying the County’s commitment to becoming the healthiest county in Wisconsin through the elimination of racism; and

WHEREAS, in 2018, the United States Global Change Research Program, commissioned through the Global Change Research Act of 1990, released the “Fourth National Climate Assessment” evaluating the impacts, risks, and adaptions in the United States to climate change and found that climate change has a disproportionate effect on communities of color because of a propensity to live in urban areas that suffer from poor air and water quality, inability to quickly or totally recover from climate events, amongst other concerns; and

WHEREAS, improving the health of the environment is vital to improving human health in our goal to become the healthiest county in the state; and

WHEREAS, to make progress towards becoming carbon neutral, Milwaukee County will need to work with its 19 municipalities and the public to provide education on the importance of understanding and reducing greenhouse gas emissions; and

WHEREAS, it is imperative that all levels of government across the United States mobilize to avoid the worst effects of climate change; and

WHEREAS, Milwaukee County is committed to fulfilling the recommendations provided by the taskforce to reduce carbon emissions and become carbon neutral, as well as mitigating racial and climate inequity through “green” jobs; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED, that it is the policy of Milwaukee County to become carbon neutral by 2050; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors hereby requests the Director of Sustainability, Environmental Services Division, Department of Administrative Services, in conjunction with the Economic Development Division and any other relevant entities, develop and administer a strategic plan to achieve carbon neutrality in Milwaukee County facilities and operations by 2050; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors hereby requests that the Director of Sustainability provide a report on Milwaukee County’s current progress on reducing and eliminating its carbon emissions and a framework for developing and administering a strategic plan for becoming carbon neutral by 2050 no later than the September 2021 cycle; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the framework shall include estimates on the costs of developing and implementing the strategic plan, the major avenues for reducing carbon emissions, an approximate timeline for the development of a plan, the entities involved in the development of the plan, and any additional, relevant information.