



Monterey County Planning Commission

Board of Supervisors
Chambers
168 W. Alisal St., 1st Floor
Salinas, CA 93901

Agenda Item No. 4

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GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT - POLICY OS-10.11 (GREENHOUSE GAS REDUCTIONS)

- a. Consider an early assessment of a proposed County-initiated amendment to the 2010 General Plan regarding Greenhouse Gas Reductions (Policy OS-10.11) consistent with state law and guidance.
- b. Provide direction to staff relative to the suitability of the proposed General Plan Amendment in consideration of the context of all other amendments comprehensively and cumulatively.

Location: County-wide

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Planning Commission:

- a. Consider an early assessment of a proposed County-initiated amendment to the 2010 General Plan regarding Greenhouse Gas Reductions (Policy OS-10.11) consistent with state law and guidance.
- b. Provide direction to staff relative to the suitability of the proposed General Plan Amendment in consideration of the context of all other amendments comprehensively and cumulatively.

SUMMARY:

Chapter 21.91 of the Monterey County Code (implementing General Plan Policies LU-9.6 and LU-9.7) sets forth a process and criteria to amend the General Plan, which entails bringing requests to the Planning Commission for an early assessment. Staff has identified the need to update policy OS-10.11 of the 2010 General Plan. At the time of adoption of the General Plan, and consistent with Assembly Bill 32 (the Global Warming Solutions Act), Policy OS-10.11 requires adoption of a Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Reduction Plan with a target to reduce emissions by 15 percent from 2005 levels by 2020. Current state guidance (Senate Bill 32) sets the relevant target as reduction of emissions to 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2030.

To align timelines and targets provided in Policy OS-10.11 with current guidance from the State, staff recommends that the Planning Commission initiate revisions to the Policy that remove the specific target years. Proposed revisions generally keep the GHG reduction goal that was the reason for the Policy, while providing flexibility in future target years and reduction [in emission?] quantities to avoid the need for future amendments to the Policy and allow staff to align planning with state law and guidance.

The County's Sustainability Program Manager and RMA's long-range planning team intend to move GHG reduction planning efforts forward. The first step to do so is an early assessment of the proposed General Plan amendment. The Planning Commission is asked to review the proposal and provide feedback to staff as to whether the amendment should be pursued, and if so, any thoughts for the contents of said amendment. If the Commission supports proceeding, staff will return to the Planning Commission at a future noticed hearing for formal consideration of a recommendation to the Board on amendment language. As such, early assessment is not an approval or guarantee of an ultimate outcome; and therefore, this action is not a project subject to CEQA.

DISCUSSION:

In 2006, California passed landmark climate action legislation, AB 32, the Global Warming solutions act, which set the goal to return greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by 2020 and cited local governments as key collaborators in reaching the target through Climate action planning. Climate Action Plans lay out strategies that local governments can implement to achieve greenhouse gas emissions reductions. They are created through collaborative process with external stakeholders and the local community. Strategies are typically analyzed for cost-benefit, feasibility, and greenhouse gas reduction prior to being selected for implementation. Since 2006, climate action planning has evolved substantially, with options to include adaptation and CEQA certification to the overall plan.

In the 2010 General Plan, the County included the following language regarding Climate Action Plans designed to mirror language accepted by the State Attorney General in litigation against San Bernardino County:

“Within 24 months of the adoption of the General Plan, Monterey County shall develop and adopt a Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Reduction Plan with a target to reduce emissions by 2020 to a level that is 15% less than 2005 emission levels. At a minimum, the Plan shall:

- a. Establish an inventory of 2005 GHG emissions in the County of Monterey including but not limited to residential, commercial, industrial, and agricultural emissions; and*
- b. Forecast GHG emissions for 2020 for County operations;*
- c. Forecast GHG emissions for areas within the jurisdictional control of the County for “business as usual” conditions;*
- d. Identify methods to reduce GHG emissions;*
- e. Quantify the reductions in GHG emissions from the identified methods;*
- f. Establish requirements for monitoring and reporting of GHG emissions;*
- g. Establish a schedule of actions for implementation;*
- h. Identify funding sources for implementation; and*
- i. Identify a reduction goal for the 2030 Planning Horizon.*
- j. Quantify carbon sequestration in agricultural soils and crops.*

During preparation of the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Plan, the County shall also evaluate potential options for changes in County policies regarding land use and circulation, as necessary, to further achieve the 2020 and 2030 reduction goals and measures to promote urban forestry and public awareness concerning climate change.”

With a new Sustainability Program Manager hired, efforts are being reinitiated to complete a Community Climate Action Plan. However, for that Plan to be consistent with state law, General Plan language needs to be updated to reflect the latest state goals, set out in SB32, which seek to reduce emissions by 40% from 1990 levels by 2030. Staff has drafted the following language to reflect what we would envision with this amendment:

~~Within 24 months of the adoption of the General Plan, The County of Monterey County shall develop and adopt a Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Reduction Plan Climate Action Plan with a target to reduce emissions by 2020 to a level that is 15% less than 2005 emission level with a target that is consistent with state-wide targets and science-based targets. The Community Climate Action Plan shall be a fully enforceable document that establishes emissions reductions targets and identifies and quantifies strategies and measures the County will undertake to reach its targets. At a minimum, the Plan shall:~~

- a. Conduct ~~a~~ current inventory of 2005 GHG emissions in the County of Monterey including but not limited to residential, commercial, industrial, and agricultural emissions; and*
- b. Forecast GHG emissions for the target year for County operations;*
- c. Forecast GHG emissions for areas within the jurisdictional control of the County for “business as usual” conditions;*
- d. Identify methods to reduce and sequester GHG emissions;*
- e. Quantify the reductions in GHG emissions from the identified methods;*
- f. Establish requirements for monitoring and reporting of GHG emissions;*
- g. Establish a schedule of actions for implementation;*
- h. Identify funding sources for implementation; and*
- i. ~~Identify a reduction goal for the 2030 Planning Horizon.~~*
- j. Quantify carbon sequestration in agricultural soils and crops.*

During preparation of the Community Climate Action Plan ~~Greenhouse Gas Reduction Plan~~, the County shall also evaluate potential options for changes in County policies regarding land use and circulation, as necessary, to further achieve future ~~the 2020 and 2030~~ reduction goals and measures to promote carbon sequestration ~~urban forestry~~ and public awareness concerning climate change.”

Following the process contained in Chapter 21.91 of the Monterey County Code (General Plan Amendments), staff is bringing this item to the Planning Commission for an early assessment. The early assessment process provides for Planning Commission review of the suitability of General Plan amendments and a consideration of the context of all other amendments comprehensively and cumulatively. This is the only General Plan amendment currently being considered, and this amendment would better carry out the overall goals and objectives of the General Plan. Staff believes that significant progress toward meeting the 2020 reduction targets was achieved through a combination of green building incentives and requirements, and the formation of Monterey Bay Community Power.

Section 21.91.050 lays out evaluation criteria for General Plan amendments that “must at a minimum” be satisfied “in addition to any other relevant considerations”:

1. The amendment is not in conflict with the goals, objectives, and policies of the general plan that are not proposed for amendment; and
2. The applicant demonstrates, based on substantial evidence, one or more of the following:
 - a. There is a demonstrable error or oversight in the adopted general plan; or
 - b. There is a clear change of facts or circumstances; or
 - c. The amendment better carries out the overall goals and policies of the general plan.

Staff believes that this amendment is consistent with the above stated goals as there has been a clear change of circumstances with respect to state climate change target laws and that the intention of the Policy was to maintain consistency with state laws and targets for greenhouse gas reductions. Further, the amendment is not in conflict with the goals, objectives, and policies of the General Plan since this update will not change the intent or mission of the current Policy other conform that Policy with current state law.

CEQA:

This early assessment is not a project as defined in the California Environmental Quality Act. Early assessment is not a commitment to the general plan amendment and does not excuse preparation of environmental review as appropriate under CEQA in the future. This approach is recognized in Section 21.91.030.F of the Monterey County Code.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

This report has been prepared by the County Administrative Offices (Sustainability Program) with assistance from the RMA.

FINANCING:

No financing is being requested at this time. Staff time for processing the General Plan amendment is included in the adopted budget for the Departments involved. Staff may seek grant funding and other funding opportunities in connection with preparation of a Community Climate Action Plan in the future.

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS STRATEGIC INITIATIVES:

Climate action planning is essential to the health and safety of the future of the County of Monterey and setting strategies for meeting 2030 climate targets will help the County to mitigate risk in an economically and socially just manner.

Mark a check to the related Board of Supervisors Strategic Initiatives

- ☒ Economic Development
- ☒ Administration
- ☒ Health & Human Services
- ☒ Infrastructure
- ☒ Public Safety

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Reviewed by: Craig Spencer, RMA Planning Services Manager

Approved by: Carl Holm, AICP, RMA Director and
Nick Chiulos, Assistant County Administrative Officer

The following attachments are on file with the RMA:

Attachment A - Current 2010 General Plan Policy OS-10.11

Attachment B - Draft Policy revisions