

DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF LANE COUNTY

Platform Committee

5/20/2021

RESOLUTION 2021.11

A resolution of the Democratic Party of Lane County

Regarding Support of a Eugene Green New Deal and Building Electrification

WHEREAS, our adopted platform indicates that we are committed to advocating “for aggressive actions to proactively address and expeditiously solve the Climate Crisis and protect our environment and our health;” and

WHEREAS, a Green New Deal supporting large scale investments in renewable energy and energy efficiency will create good union wage jobs and is necessary for a Just Transition that supports frontline communities and workers transitioning from the fossil fuel industry, and;

WHEREAS, a local Green New Deal could spur investments in bike and pedestrian infrastructure, electric vehicle charging stations, and electrifying buildings that would create thousands of union wage jobs; and

WHEREAS, the Green New Deal¹ calls for “upgrading all existing buildings in the United States and building new buildings to achieve maximum energy efficiency, water efficiency, safety, affordability, comfort, and durability, including through electrification”; and

WHEREAS, the Green New Deal calls for ensuring that the transition creates high-quality union jobs that pay prevailing wages, hires local workers, offers training and

¹ Green New Deal, <https://www.congress.gov/116/bills/hres109/BILLS-116hres109ih.pdf>

advancement opportunities, and guarantees wage and benefit parity for workers affected by the transition; and

WHEREAS, residential Natural Gas use has risen 22% in Eugene from 2010 to 2019 and is the fastest growing sector of Eugene’s emissions;² and

WHEREAS, without reducing fossil natural gas use the City of Eugene will not achieve the science based greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction targets adopted as part of its 2014 Climate Recovery Ordinance (CRO); and

WHEREAS, not only combustion of gas but leaking during fracking and transmission is also a significant source of greenhouse gases;³ and

WHEREAS, Renewable Gas from feedlots and landfills is unlikely to meet more than 5% of current demand and thermal gasification, if proved viable, up to 20% of current demand, future demand must be substantially reduced in order to meet a 100% Renewable Gas goal;⁴ and

WHEREAS, with the limited potential supply of renewable natural gas, it is better to reserve it for where it is most needed, such as in energy intensive industries or smoothing out electrical power production from more intermittent methods. To the extent possible, it is best to use natural gas for energy needs on the site where it is

² https://www.eugene-or.gov/DocumentCenter/View/59286/2019-Eugene-Community_GHG

³ <https://theconversation.com/the-us-natural-gas-industry-is-leaking-way-more-methane-than-previously-thought-heres-why-that-matters-98918>

⁴ 2018 Oregon Department of Energy (ODE) report to the legislature, <https://www.oregon.gov/energy/Data-and-Reports/Documents/2018-RNG-Inventory-Report.pdf>. The ODE report estimates up to 10 Bcf of natural gas could be supplied from anaerobic digestion technology and up to 40 Bcf by thermal gasification. From https://www.energy.gov/sites/prod/files/2016/09/f33/OR_Energy%20Sector%20Risk%20Profile.pdf, Oregon uses 211 Bcf annually, about a third of which is residential use. Even the most optimistic estimates of the potential of renewable natural gas with hydrogen mixed in to the maximum extent that current infrastructure can handle is insufficient to meet the current usage in just the non-residential sector.

produced, which saves the cost and potential leakage entailed when it is transferred to another site; and

WHEREAS, encouraging renewable gas from manure pools is likely to incentivize large scale feed lot operations;⁵ and

WHEREAS, Hydrogen can only be used up to 20% before steel pipes become brittle and these pipes would need to be replaced with pipes that include expensive alloys in order to allow levels higher than 20%; and

WHEREAS, electrification can meet the needs of residential use more cost effectively and with fewer GHG emissions than with natural gas usage;⁶ and

WHEREAS, historically, natural gas has been uselessly burned as a waste product in the extraction of oil, so its increased use as an energy source was welcome. Over the last ten to fifteen years, natural gas usage has increased as coal-usage has decreased.⁷ In the last two decades, a growing amount of natural gas has been produced by hydraulic fracturing (fracking), so that by 2015 two-thirds of it was from fracking.⁸ While natural gas has been a useful transitional energy source that is “greener” than what came before it, we need to be judicious in its use going forward; and

WHEREAS, young people and historically marginalized communities, who will be most impacted by climate change, are advocating for swift and immediate action; and

⁵ Sightline Article on Renewable Natural Gas, <https://www.sightline.org/2021/03/09/the-four-fatal-flaws-of-renewable-natural-gas/#:~:text=RNG%20has%20four%20fatal%20flaws,carbon%20intensity%2C%20and%20industry%20obfuscation>

⁶ Rocky Mountain Institute Study, <https://rmi.org/insight/the-economics-of-electrifying-buildings/>

⁷ <https://www.eia.gov/totalenergy/data/annual/>

⁸ <https://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.php?id=26112>.

WHEREAS, a broad coalition of organizations with representation from labor, environmental, racial justice, public health, tenants' rights, solar installers, firefighters, faith, and other groups are calling for actions to electrify buildings in Eugene;⁹ and

WHEREAS, Eugene City Council has boldly refused to agree to franchise terms with NW Natural that would have resulted in minimal GHG reductions, limited the Council's ability to achieve future reductions, and threatened the City's ability to regulate its right of way; and

WHEREAS, Eugene Councilors have called out NW Natural for using the Tobacco Industry playbook of lying and obfuscating to push its agenda to the detriment of Eugene residents;

THEREFORE, the Democratic Party of Lane County resolves:

SECTION 1: Thank the Eugene City Council for their decision not to sign a franchise agreement with NW Natural that would have made it impossible to reach the City's science-based GHG reduction targets and threatened the City's ability to regulate its right of way; and

SECTION 2: Encourage the Eugene City Council to continue to push for strong action on climate including, but not limited to:

- Mandating the transition of all utilities in the City to 100% renewable energy by 2030, or as soon as feasible; and
- Enacting a moratorium on the construction of new fossil fuel infrastructure until utilities laying the infrastructure are on a track to 100% renewable energy; and
- Creating a climate fund, as was recommended by the Eugene Sustainability Commission, through a fee on NW Natural and other large climate polluters, those that emit over 2,500 tons per year in CO₂ emissions, to transition low-income and historically marginalized communities from fracked gas to high-efficiency electric appliances when replacing old equipment, and to retrofit

⁹ Fossil Free Eugene Letter, <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1V1nxRUqzdUw6uf8j93ZkBKxMtVEjqXkNI44KppNWANE/edit>

these homes to increase efficiency through high paying union jobs.¹⁰

SECTION 3: Encourage the City of Eugene to sign a new franchise agreement with NW Natural only if the terms put the City on track to meet its GHG Reduction goals.

¹⁰ Eugene Climate Fund Recommendation, <https://www.registerguard.com/story/news/2021/03/03/eugene-sustainability-commission-recommends-new-fund-pay-citys-climate-action-plans/6801117002/>