

Dear Councilmembers:

I am writing to comment on the 2021 budget process on behalf of People for Climate Action - Seattle. PCA's mission is to help Seattle and King County develop and implement comprehensive climate action plans to reach the greenhouse gas reduction targets set by the King County-Cities Climate Collaboration as well as Seattle's Green New Deal target of zero emissions by 2030.

Thank you for the work you do governing in these very difficult times and for your ongoing support of the Green New Deal, including adoption of the JumpStart business tax intended to simultaneously address the city's shortage of affordable housing, the climate crisis, and other urgent needs.

We are concerned that the Mayor's proposed budget would continue to delay implementation of key initiatives in the Office of Sustainability and Environment and would suspend other existing programs. Although there were understandable reasons for the Mayor to delay two key hires and to temporarily reassign some OSE positions to COVID relief, it is critical that these cutbacks not be made permanent.

To date the City has not convened the Green New Deal Oversight Board or interdepartmental team mandated by Council Bill 119604, has not hired the budgeted Oversight Board position, and has not implemented the Electrification Strategy or emissions indicator dashboard directed by the Mayor's Executive Order 2020-01.

We are in a climate emergency, and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warned in 2018 that global greenhouse gas emissions must be roughly cut in half by 2030 in order to avoid the most catastrophic effects of climate disruption. These next 10 years may be the most critical in human history, and Seattle must step up to fulfill its climate commitments.

Here are the changes that must be made to the Mayor's proposed budget:

Add \$150,000, as proposed by Council President Gonzalez and Councilmember Strauss, to continue the successful Energy Benchmarking and Building Tune-Up programs. The Mayor's proposed budget cut is particularly baffling given that suspended enforcement of the law would reduce City revenue by \$140,000. These programs have reduced carbon emissions and will continue to do so if maintained.

Add \$132,000, as proposed by Councilmember Sawant, to hire the Green New Deal adviser, convene the GND Oversight Board, and pay financial hardship stipends for Board members. We fully expect the Council to implement its intent that 9 percent of JumpStart revenues be devoted to Green New Deal initiatives starting in 2022.

Add \$140,000, as proposed by Councilmember Strauss, to hire a climate policy adviser with responsibility for developing a Climate Impact Assessment Toolkit, creating green-jobs policies, evaluating racial equity in decarbonization, and establishing building performance standards. All those functions are important, especially the toolkit that would provide more meaningful analyses of climate impacts under Council Resolution 31933.

We also support Councilmember Lewis's proposed statement of legislative intent to develop legislation for a carbon excise tax on commercial buildings, with proceeds to be used to decrease greenhouse gas emissions. If properly designed, this kind of legislation could be an effective tool toward eliminating carbon pollution.

Beyond this budget cycle, we urge the Council to undertake a comprehensive assessment of OSE's priorities and work program. The work program should be in alignment with achieving the emissions reductions called for in the Green New Deal. The Council may urge a reprioritization of funding and staff in order to achieve the most important functions of OSE.

This is not the time to pull back from the steps necessary to defend against climate chaos. We urge the Council to adopt these common-sense and relatively inexpensive measures that would demonstrate that Seattle is not backing away from its commitment to achieve zero carbon emissions by 2030.

Sincerely,

Keith Ervin

Robin Briggs

on behalf of the steering committee of People for Climate Action - Seattle