

Dane Co. Exec. Parisi: Dane County holds inaugural council meeting to confront climate change

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Dane County Executive Joe Parisi announced the “Dane County Climate Change Council” is holding its inaugural meeting today at 2:00 p.m. in City-County Building, Room 354 to confront problems posed by climate change. The council is made up of local government officials, business leaders, representatives of the University of Wisconsin, local utilities, community groups, and environmental advocates. Together, the Climate Change Council members will work to develop a climate action plan that will provide the roadmap to drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions and better prepare the county for the effects of climate change.

“With our communities constantly getting bombarded with heavy rains and 100-year floods seeming to take place every year now, the Climate Change Council could not be more timely,” said County Executive Joe Parisi. “I am eager to have the council begin its work and see what further actions Dane County can take to combat climate change and its effects that negatively impact our residents on a more and more frequent basis.”

Parisi created the Dane County Office of Energy and Climate Change as a new division of the Office of the County Executive in his 2017 budget. Keith Reopelle is the Office’s first director and will be responsible for overseeing the council’s work and progression. Director Reopelle has championed Wisconsin’s natural resources for more than three decades and is a well-respected expert in the field of clean energy, environmental sustainability, and climate change.

“This is a critical opportunity to make Dane County a national leader in the fight to reduce dangerous carbon pollution, reap the economic benefits that result from reducing that pollution, and give our children a safer and healthy future,” said Reopelle. “I am honored and humbled to work with so many outstanding community leaders that are assembled on this council.”

An agreement with the La Follette School of Public Affairs at the University of Wisconsin has helped Dane County assess the progress it has made at reducing carbon emissions, increasing green energy production and consumption, and making energy efficiency improvements to facilities. The Climate Change Council will also have access to the intellectual resources available through the University of Wisconsin-Madison’s Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies. Both will help the council better prepare Dane County for the impact of climate change while working to mitigate its effects.

Prior to the Climate Change Council’s inaugural meeting, County Executive Joe Parisi announced a partnership with leaders from Cook County, Illinois to join “We Are Still In,” a coalition of governmental and institutional leaders dedicated to keeping America’s promise of mitigating climate change by meeting the Paris Climate Agreement. Under the Accord, the United States agreed to reduce its 2005 carbon emission levels between 26 and 28 percent by 2025. Dane County reduced its greenhouse gas emissions by 26 percent from 2007 to 2015—already meeting the Paris Agreement’s goal.

In fact, Dane County has developed enough carbon-free, renewable electric generation to offset nearly all of the county government’s electricity use. Not only does the county use compressed natural gas (CNG) in county fleet vehicles, offsetting the use of more than 20,000 gallons of fossil-fuel gasoline and saving county taxpayers roughly \$40,000 each year, but the county also converts landfill gas into electricity, generating \$3.75 million in gross revenues.

Those interested in following the activities of the “Dane County Climate Change Council” or learning more about the Office of Energy and Climate Change can visit <https://climatechange.countyofdane.com>.

County Executive Parisi and Director Reopelle may be available today to answer questions about the Climate Change Council and the Office of Energy and Climate Change.