



SONOMA'S MOST WIDELY READ NEWSPAPER

December 6, 2008

## City climbs aboard county climate plan

Neal Ross | Sonoma Valley Sun

With a few comments about timing and transit, an ambitious plan to cut county greenhouse gas emissions by 25 percent within six years won the support Wednesday night of the Sonoma City Council.

The 66-page Sonoma County Community Climate Action Plan is a two-year product of the Climate Protection Campaign (CPC), an across-the-board effort of all nine Sonoma County cities, its board of supervisors and water agency to meet the reduction goals each pledged in 2005. CPC executive director Ann Hancock noted that Councilmembers Steve Barbose and Laurie Gallian were among the 50 people who helped craft the plan, and said the group was looking for council feedback – as well as two city representatives (Gallian and City Manager Linda Kelly) for ongoing campaign liaison and attending a January workshop targeting specific solutions.

Project manager Renata Brillinger said the solutions fall into three major categories: maximizing water and energy efficiency through retrofits and “green building” ordinances; shifting away from heavy fossil-fuel use through more public transit, biking, walking and zero-emission vehicles; and investing in such renewable energy resources as solar, wind and hydroelectric power. Total costs countywide are estimated at \$3.5 to \$4 billion, or less than a quarter of the \$18.5 billion which flowed through the county economy in 2007. Although several of the solutions don’t yet have a price tag Brillinger listed a battery of existing and potential funding sources on the state, county and city level.

“The sooner we get started on it, the cheaper it’ll be,” Brillinger said, stressing that the plan will put the county ahead of the curve with regard to anticipated state and federal reduction mandates – and also create the potential for new jobs. “The economic stimulation will establish Sonoma County as a leader in the field of burgeoning technologies,” she said.

Councilmember Joanne Sanders supported the plan but was skeptical about the transit component, which she said wasn’t designed for sparsely populated rural and semi-rural areas. She also questioned the mandatory-compliance aspect of the “green building” solution, saying city staff had advised against a similar effort due to enforcement costs.

“I just want to make sure we have choices,” Sanders said. “There’s always going to be the balance between property rights and personal liberties which are the cornerstone of our country.”

Barbose countered that the plan is “all about choices,” but questioned the timing since state and federal emission standards are currently being revised.

Public comment was enthusiastic. Sonoma architect Bill Willers said the plan’s cost will be more than offset by its benefits, adding, “We will be the bellwether for the nation ... and that’s an exciting thing for Sonoma County to be.” Nickolai Mathison, who chairs Sonoma’s Community Services and Environment Commission, simply quoted the plan’s conclusion: “Bold Action Required.”

“This is not a time for being so deliberate that we fail to act at this moment in history,” Sonoma Ecology Center director Richard Dale said. “This is a time we need to act.”