

March 6, 2021

Kevin Gough, Bloomfield Town Councilor
5 Bear Ridge Dr
Bloomfield, CT 06002

Public Hearing Monday, March 8, 2021

Re: Testimony IN SUPPORT of HB 6441: An Act Concerning Climate Change Adaptation – Particularly Sec. 3, Municipal Funding Option

Members of the Environment Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony. I write to strongly support HB 6441, particularly Section 3 establishing a municipal funding option.

I serve on the Bloomfield Town Council. I am pleased to say that Bloomfield has a dedicated and forward-looking environmental body (the Conservation, Energy, and Environment Committee (CEEC)) which has worked diligently to provide the community a roadmap to a sustainable future. Recently CEEC presented a Climate Emergency Resolution to the Council. I strongly support this resolution and I believe it articulates the principles behind the specific provisions of HB 6441. I'm hopeful of an affirmative vote by the Bloomfield Council in early April. (A draft of the resolution is attached; it is currently undergoing review at the Council subcommittee level.)

Climate change adaptation will, however, cost money. Even simple strategies, such as preserving undeveloped land, promoting healthy forests and local agriculture, and planting and maintaining trees, require municipal funds. For example, Bloomfield has never created or funded a program to adequately maintain our urban tree canopy. I am pleased that HB 6441 contains funding mechanisms, particularly Sec. 3 allowing a municipal conveyance fee, that make such programs possible.

The conveyance fee option would allow municipalities a needed source of funds, apart from property taxes, for conservation and stewardship of critical natural resource lands, forests, and farms. It also allows the funds to be used for environmental remediation, tree planting, and a Climate Change Reserve. It is urgently needed.

I do urge the Environmental Committee to remove subsection (b)(2) of section 3 from the bill. That provision prohibits towns from using conveyance fee funds for land preservation if the town has less than 10% 'affordable housing.' While the provision would not currently or likely in the future impact Bloomfield (as we have more than 10% affordable housing stock), the provision is ill-considered as it is not germane to the availability of affordable housing. A lack of affordable housing results from rental price and cost of living, not from land preservation; it is, quite literally, a question of affordability not availability. Subsection (b)(2) promotes a false narrative that land

preservation efforts are undertaken to prevent construction of affordable housing. It creates a false dichotomy between affordable housing and land preservation. Does anyone really believe that climate change adaptation will be well-served by destroying our remaining forest and farmland to build more housing? This subsection needs to be removed in order to prevent perverse outcomes that would only make the effects of climate change worse.

I am introducing a resolution supporting this section at the next Town Council meeting on Monday night. Again, I expect it will go through subcommittee review before returning to the Council for what I hope is an affirmative vote. I attach the draft resolution as part of my testimony supporting this section of HB 6441.

HB 6441 is an ambitious bill with many details that warrant careful review and the benefit of public input. After consideration, I urge you to support HB 6441 and vote to bring it forward for affirmative action by the General Assembly. As a species we have no more time to wait to take action to adapt to the problems we have caused with our lack of foresight.

Thank you for your consideration.

Resolution that the *Town of Bloomfield supports Sec. 3 of the Governor’s climate change legislation, HB 6441, AN ACT CONCERNING CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION. This portion of the legislation allows municipalities to establish a real estate conveyance fee to fund various climate change mitigation efforts, including preservation of undeveloped land, farmland, and forests (if certain conditions are met), creation of a climate change reserve fund, and urban forestry and planting trees.*

TO SUPPORT LEGISLATION ALLOWING ESTABLISHMENT OF A REAL ESTATE CONVEYANCE FEE TO BE USED FOR CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION EFFORTS

WHEREAS, much of the impact of climate change is the result of the unbridled growth and extractive practices related to industrial ‘development’ that has increased greenhouse gas emissions while eliminating many natural carbon sinks such as forests and farmland; and

WHEREAS, a relatively low-tech and low-cost way of mitigating these impacts is to preserve and manage undeveloped land, forests, and farms, as well as planting trees; and

WHEREAS, Sec. 3 of the Governor’s proposed comprehensive climate change legislation, AN ACT CONCERNING CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION (HB 6441), allows municipalities to create a funding mechanism for such actions by establishing a new conveyance fee for real estate transactions above \$150,000; and

WHEREAS, this fee can also be used to fund a Climate Change Reserve to pay for actions proposed under Bloomfield’s Climate Change Plan to be created by the Town Administration and ratified by the Town Council; and

WHEREAS, the fee allows towns to establish a fee on large real estate transactions, appropriately charging land speculators and developers for the civic and environmental harms (“externalities”) their projects levy on the community and using the resulting funds for the betterment of the community by mitigating these harms; and

WHEREAS, funding these projects through the conveyance fee reduces the property tax burden of residents; and

WHEREAS, the Town Council has twice before supported similar stand-alone pilot legislation in 2018 (SB 181) and 2019 (HB 5254);

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Town of Bloomfield hereby states its support for Sec. 3 of HB 6441; and

BE IT RESOLVED, that The Town of Bloomfield will indicate this support to our legislative delegation, the officers of the state legislature, and the Governor’s office; and

BE IT RESOLVED, that, if the legislation is enacted, the Town of Bloomfield will initiate the extensive review process, inclusive of all stakeholders, required to enact the conveyance fee in order to fund climate change mitigation actions in Bloomfield.



Bloomfield Climate Emergency Resolution

WHEREAS, there is overwhelming evidence and scientific consensus that man-made greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions have caused a 2° F increase in surface temperature over preindustrial levels with a resulting increase in ocean level (threatening the Connecticut shoreline) and famine and drought worldwide creating a population of climate refugees; and

WHEREAS, the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the world's most respected research organization for climate change, notes in its 2014 *Fifth Assessment Report*, "Continued emission of greenhouse gases will cause further warming and long-lasting changes in all components of the climate system, increasing the likelihood of severe, pervasive, and irreversible impacts for people and ecosystems"; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to the 2008 *Global Warming Solutions Act (P.A. 08-98)* and the 2018 *Act Concerning Climate Change Planning and Resiliency, (P.A. 18-82)*, Connecticut, in an effort to cut GHG emissions to 45% below 2001 levels by 2030 and to 80% below 2001 levels by 2050, seeks to substantially decarbonize electricity generation, the transportation system, and thermal energy for buildings; and

WHEREAS, Governor Ned Lamont's September, 2019, *Executive Order #3* declared that the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection ("DEEP") shall "analyze pathways and recommend strategies for achieving a 100% zero carbon target for the electric sector by 2040;" and

WHEREAS, Black, Brown, Indigenous, and other communities of color, as well as low-income communities in the United States and around the world have suffered the gravest consequences of the extractive economy since its inception and also suffer first and most acutely from climate disruption and environmental hazards, including air, water, and land pollution and a portion of Bloomfield is designated as an Environmental Justice Community by DEEP; and

WHEREAS the massive scope and scale of action necessary to stabilize the climate and biosphere will require unprecedented levels of public awareness, engagement, and deliberation to develop and implement effective, just, and equitable policies to address the climate emergency; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Bloomfield has exhibited strong leadership in promoting energy efficiency, renewable energy and sustainability, and seeks to maintain a leadership role in meeting the challenge of this crisis by joining local and global efforts to transition to a steady-state sustainable economy not based on fossil fuels.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE TOWN OF BLOOMFIELD:

1. Declares that the climate crisis is an ecological emergency which threatens our town, state, nation, and world and that this resolution provides the foundation upon which the Town of Bloomfield shall develop future priorities, legislation, policies, plans, budgets, and actions; and
2. Declares that the Town Council will instruct the Town Manager to create and present a plan to the Town Council no later than six (6) months after the effective date of this resolution to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and energy consumption in Town offices, transportation fleets and the wider community to achieve an end to GHG emissions by or before December 31, 2030, placing the highest priority on providing the benefits of a clean-energy economy to all community members on an equitable basis; and
3. Declares that such a plan will include review and update of Town policies and ordinances; and
4. Declares that potential ways of achieving this goal include reducing or eliminating the use of fossil fuels and related infrastructure, installing zero emissions and renewable energy systems on both present Town buildings and future private, commercial and municipal construction, promoting the mass transit and Complete Streets initiatives, and monitoring Town energy consumption thereby defining where efficiency can be improved; and
5. Declares that the Town Council will encourage the Board of Education to create its own plan which will include a student climate advisory committee at Bloomfield's high schools with students encouraged to attend the monthly Conservation, Energy & Environment Committee meetings and present a student perspective on climate action; and
6. Calls on the State of Connecticut to declare a Climate Emergency and to provide appropriate legislative, regulatory, and financial support to municipalities to implement local climate initiatives through a Climate Action for Connecticut Towns and Cities Line Item in the General Budget; and
7. Endorses an effort for the state to enact a carbon fee and dividend approach to pricing carbon.

This Resolution was approved by the Town Council on the ___ day of _____ 2021.

Signed: Suzette DeBeatham-Brown, Mayor, Town of Bloomfield, Connecticut