

October 3, 2019

SCARSDALE FORUM INC.

President's Statement on Behalf of the Special Committee on Climate Resilience

Scarsdale and the wider local, national and international communities have already begun to experience extreme weather events corresponding to the scientific phenomenon known as climate change.

Expert projections of the effects of climate change indicate that they will endanger our infrastructure, economy, agriculture and livelihoods; harm our plant life, soil, storm water infrastructure and ecological communities, including native fish and wildlife populations; spread invasive species and exotic diseases; reduce drinking water supplies and recreational opportunities; and pose health threats to life globally.

The need to respond to climate change provides us with an unprecedented opportunity to build livable, energy-independent and secure communities, vibrant innovation economies, healthy, safe and innovative schools, and resilient and sustainable infrastructures. The enormous scale of greenhouse gas emission reductions required for climate stabilization will require sustained and substantial efforts. But even if emissions of greenhouse gases were dramatically reduced today, communities such as Scarsdale would still be required to adapt to the effects of climate change for decades to come.

The Scarsdale Forum created a Climate Resilience Committee in June 2019 tasked with studying the global challenges of climate change and how Scarsdale can best address them here at home. Owing to the fact that young people across the globe have taken an active role in driving both advocacy and local community planning on the issues of climate change and climate preparedness, the Forum took special care to invite members of Scarsdale High School to participate in the work of this committee, particularly the members of the Project Green Club.

Our committee has fully engaged in these issues and, in the best traditions of the Scarsdale Forum, intends to make a study of comparable communities' work on this issue, the public climate resilience and climate action plans they have produced, the techniques they employed by which slight modifications to existing policies or projects helped their communities more effectively prepare for climate change, and the opportunities for funding that their local governments availed themselves of in the wake of such community planning. We plan to deliver a report with specific recommendations to the Board of Trustees and the School District.

However, our committee has two preliminary recommendations that we believe warrant immediate mention and do not need to wait for the final report. Specifically, our committee believes:

1. That the Village ought to join the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Climate Smart Communities program by (a) passing the required municipal resolution to effect policies that will help the Village mitigate and adapt to the effects of global warming, and (b) initiating a community discussion to educate residents about the effects of climate change and practical measures they can take to become more energy resilient; and
2. That the Village should issue a proclamation establishing a "Sustainability Day" on a Sunday in May 2020 to celebrate the accomplishments to date by the Village to make Scarsdale a more sustainable and environmentally friendly community on a number of fronts, including climate, to

educate the community about existing programs and services available to residents on these issues, and to call for every member of the community to do their part to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change in their everyday lives.

Scarsdale Is Already Ideally Positioned to Compete for Grant Money Under the Climate Smart Communities Program

With regard to Scarsdale joining 34 other municipalities in Westchester County currently participating in New York's Climate Smart Communities Program, DEC provides numerous and compelling reasons for certification of a municipality like Scarsdale as a Climate Smart Community. As listed on <https://climatesmart.ny.gov/>, these benefits include:

- Better scores on grant applications for some state funding programs, like DEC's Climate Smart Communities Matching-Fund Grants to support both comprehensive planning and specific implementation projects
- State-level recognition for each community's leadership
- A robust framework to organize local climate action and highlight priorities
- Streamlined access to resources, training, tools and expert guidance
- Networking and sharing best practices with peers

By implementing certification actions, communities experience the following benefits:

- Cost savings through greater efficiency
- Greater energy independence and energy security
- Improved air quality from switching to clean energy
- Healthier, more walkable urban centers through smart growth
- Conservation of green spaces for recreation and biodiversity
- Reduction of future flood risk through climate change adaptation strategies
- Investment in an economy that supports sustainability and green businesses
- Greater engagement with residents who care about the future of their hometowns.¹

Scarsdale's existing sustainability and climate resilient practices and programs make the Village an ideal candidate to begin the CSC certification process, among them: village-wide residential LED street lighting, interior lighting and HVAC upgrades in government buildings and the new public library, LED and solar traffic signals and signage, residential food scrap recycling, commingled materials recycling, resource recovery, yard waste collection, recycling bins in government buildings and public parks, a residential solar panel policy, an anti-idling policy, a village-wide tree planting program, wetland-floodplain restoration, conservation of natural habitats, green infrastructure for stormwater management, implementation of traffic calming measures, and creation and promotion of a local farmers' market. These numerous existing programs would already yield a formidable certification score.

More can and should be accomplished however. In order for the Village to join the thirty-four Westchester County communities that have affirmatively worked to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to a changing climate,² the Village should adopt with passage of a municipal resolution³ the CSC pledge, which comprises the following ten elements:

¹ "Why Become Certified?" (retrieved from <https://climatesmart.ny.gov/actions-certification/why-become-certified/>); Climate Smart Communities Certification Action Checklist – Version 3.5 (June 24, 2019), retrieved from <https://climatesmart.ny.gov/fileadmin/csc/documents/CSCC-ActionChecklist-6-24-2019.pdf>.

² List of New York State Climate Smart Communities, retrieved from <https://www.dec.ny.gov/energy/56876.html>.

1. Build a climate-smart community.
2. Inventory emissions, set goals, and plan for climate action.
3. Decrease energy use.
4. Shift to clean, renewable energy.
5. Use climate-smart materials management.
6. Implement climate-smart land use.
7. Enhance community resilience to climate change.
8. Support a green innovation economy.
9. Inform and inspire the public.
10. Engage in an evolving process of climate action.⁴

Signing up as a Climate Smart Community imposes no financial obligations on the Village until, in each instance, the Village decides it wants to participate in something specific such as a grant, applies for it, and agrees to some specific fiscal and/or other commitment. Our committee believes there is no reason to delay taking such an action, beginning the process of getting certified, and making the Village eligible to apply for state grant money in the future.

Declaring and Hosting a “Sustainability Day” in the Village

The purpose of holding a “Sustainability Day” event is not only to celebrate the work the Village has already supported to make Scarsdale a municipal leader on so many fronts, but also to share with the community a vision of meeting the challenges of climate change through available, practical options that will benefit all of us by reducing carbon/greenhouse gas emissions, promoting health, and saving residents and the Village significant costs in the long term.⁵

The goal would be to hold an educational fair on this important issue. Topics that might be covered by invited experts, and residents who are experienced in reducing their residential carbon footprint, include but are not limited to:

- Solar Panel Electricity: savings through federal and state tax and other incentives in addition to free electricity for several decades after the brief, initial payback period.
- Food Scrap Recycling and Composting
- Recycling Grass Cuttings and Leaf Mulching: savings on water bills, fertilizer costs, costly curbside leaf collection; reduced leaf blowing.

³ A copy of the New York State CSC model resolution can be retrieved from

https://climatesmart.ny.gov/fileadmin/csc/documents/CSC_Model_Resolution/ModelResolutionCSC-Oct2018.docx.

⁴ CSC elements retrieved from <https://www.dec.ny.gov/energy/65494.html>. The CSC program is explained in more detail on the CSC portal, retrieved from <https://climatesmart.ny.gov/actions-certification/getting-started/>. See also CSC Certification Action Checklist cited in fn.1 above, retrieved from <https://climatesmart.ny.gov/fileadmin/csc/documents/CSCC-ActionChecklist-6-24-2019.pdf>.

⁵ Efforts to mitigate the potential financial impacts of climate change are critically important. See, e.g., Press Release, NYS Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli, “NYS Comptroller Continues to Hold Corporate America Accountable for Poor Climate Policies, Reaches Agreements with Companies Across a Variety of Sectors Facing Climate Risk” (Sept 19, 2019), retrieved from <https://www.osc.state.ny.us/press/releases/sept19/091919.htm> (“Climate change is a significant threat to our pension fund’s investments. We take a broad approach when it comes to mitigating climate risk by encouraging the companies we invest in to disclose climate change’s impact and to set meaningful goals for lowering their emissions and using renewable energy sources.”).

- LED Bulb Replacement: savings on electricity and cost of bulb replacement.
- Energy Efficient Appliances: rebates available on new appliances.
- Buildings: green, healthy, and regenerative building components for all new construction and renovation projects; deconstruction recycling.
- Landscaping Practices: eliminating the use of toxic pesticides and fertilizers that harm people, pets and the environment.
- Trees: implement Scarsdale's version of New York City's successful Million Tree NYC initiative in which one million new trees were planted among the five boroughs, as a way to preserve existing canopy cover; plant trees to help sequester carbon, lower ambient temperatures, protect ecosystems, and provide a healthier environment.
- Electric Cars: savings on mileage costs, maintenance and carbon emissions; clean energy, electric vehicles and curbing energy consumption are all strategies to mitigate climate warming.
- Emergency and natural disaster preparedness: planning, relief and recovery.

The Scarsdale Forum has long supported these initiatives⁶ from the initial idea through implementation and evaluation, and would be happy to collaborate with the Village, the School District, and other civic institutions and non-profit organizations to help plan and execute a successful Sustainability Day.

Respectfully submitted,
Tim Foley, President of the Scarsdale Forum

Members of the Special Committee on Climate Resilience in Support:
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⁶ For example, Scarsdale Forum Sustainability and Municipal Services Committees: Joint Report on Benefits of Organic Landscape Management to Protect Public Health, Safety and Environment, Sept 2018, <https://www.scarsdaleforum.com/Reports/Committee/26#>; Scarsdale Forum Sustainability Committee: Report on Residential Food Scrap Recycling, Dec 2015, <https://www.scarsdaleforum.com/Reports/Download/545>; Report on Village of Scarsdale LED Streetlights, Jan 2015, <https://www.scarsdaleforum.com/Reports/Download/519>; Report on Ban of Single Use Disposable Plastic Bags and Polystyrene Containers, Nov 2014, <https://www.scarsdaleforum.com/Reports/Download/513>; Village of Scarsdale Leaf Collection Practice, May 2014, <https://www.scarsdaleforum.com/Reports/Download/494>; Scarsdale Forum Municipal Services Committee: Report on Traffic Assessment, Safety and Improvement, Nov 2015, <https://www.scarsdaleforum.com/Reports/Download/560>; Traffic Survey Report, Jan 2018, <https://www.scarsdaleforum.com/Reports/Download/684>; Report on Public Library Renovation and Expansion Project, June 2016, <https://www.scarsdaleforum.com/Reports/Download/571>; Scarsdale Forum Municipal Services and Fiscal Affairs Scarsdale Committees: Joint Report on Public Library Renovation and Expansion Project Option A-1, Nov 2016, <https://www.scarsdaleforum.com/Reports/Download/622>.

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