RESOLUTION NO. 20 - ____

RESOLUTION ENDORSING THE DECLARATION OF A CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND EMERGENCY MOBILIZATION EFFORT TO RESTORE A SAFE CLIMATE

WHEREAS, world leaders have recognized the urgent need to combat climate change by signing the Paris Agreement, agreeing to keep global warming “below 2°C above pre-industrial levels,” and pursuing “efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C”; and

WHEREAS, in 2016 Mayor Esther Manheimer signed the Paris Climate Agreement on behalf of the City of Asheville (the "City"); and

WHEREAS, the loss of life and damage caused by current global warming demonstrates that the Earth is already too hot for safety and has resulted in the increased frequency and intensity of wildfires, floods, sea level rise, disease, drought, and extreme weather; and

WHEREAS, according to the United Nations’ Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty, a 1.5°C increase in global temperature could expose 500 million people to water poverty, 36 million people to food insecurity because of lower crop yields, and 4.5 billion people to heat waves; and

WHEREAS, in October 2018, the United Nations released a special report which projected that limiting warming to even a 1.5°C target this century will require an unprecedented transformation of every sector of the global economy by 2030; and

WHEREAS, the United States of America and other industrialized countries have disproportionately contributed to climate change and accordingly bear an extraordinary responsibility in rapidly solving this crisis; and

WHEREAS, scientists have warned that we are currently overshooting our ecological limits and potentially driving the sixth mass extinction of species that could devastate much of life on Earth for millennia, and pose as great a risk to humanity as climate change, according to the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services; and

WHEREAS, restoring a safe and stable climate requires an emergency climate mobilization on a scale not seen since World War II in order to: (1) reach zero greenhouse gas (“GHG”) emissions across all sectors of the economy, (2) rapidly and safely drawdown and remove all excess carbon from the atmosphere until safe, pre-industrial climate conditions are restored, and (3) implement measures to protect all people and species from the consequences of an abrupt climate breakdown; and

WHEREAS, such necessary measures to restore a safe climate include: (1) a rapid and just phase-out of fossil fuels; (2) ending GHG emissions as quickly as possible to establish a zero-emissions economy; (3) a widespread effort to safely drawdown excess carbon from the atmosphere; and (4) a full transition to a regenerative agriculture system; and (5) widespread conservation and restoration of ecosystems; and

WHEREAS, justice requires that frontline and marginalized communities actively

participate in the planning and implementation of this climate mobilization effort and equally benefit from the transition to a climate-safe economy; and

WHEREAS, the 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, at present, the City does not currently have the local legislative authority to phase out fossil fuel production, power generation, or use within the City as a whole; and

WHEREAS, the City adopted Resolution 11-77 to increase its Municipal Carbon Footprint reduction goal to 4% annually on April 12, 2011, and as of 2017 the City had achieved a 31% reduction; and

WHEREAS, the City adopted Resolution 13-228 Supporting a Clean Energy Economy on October 22, 2013; and

WHEREAS, the City adopted Resolution 15-200 for a Community Clean Energy Policy Framework on October 27, 2015; and

WHEREAS, the City adopted Resolution 16-64 establishing a joint City, County and Utility Energy Innovation Task Force ("EITF") for the purpose of researching, prioritizing, recommending, and implementing recommendations to create energy efficiency, demand-side management and renewable energy opportunities to reduce energy use in Buncombe County on March 22, 2016; and

WHEREAS, the work of the EITF and its partners successfully achieved, among other notable accomplishments, the long-term and likely permanent delay to the construction of an additional natural gas fired peaking power plant at Duke Energy's Lake Julian facility; and

WHEREAS, the City adopted Resolution 17-119 supporting a state goal of 100% renewable energy by 2050 and increased protection for standing forests and the creation of green jobs on June 13, 2017; and

WHEREAS, in 2018 Buncombe County and the City adopted Resolution 18-279 that committed the City to transitioning all municipal operations to 100% renewable energy by December 31, 2030, and a community energy use to 100% renewable energy goal by 2042; and

WHEREAS, starting in 2018, the City initiated a climate resilience assessment in cooperation with the National Environmental Modeling & Analysis Center where representatives from all 14 City departments, along with community members and environmental sustainability experts, were assembled to discuss the latest climate science and develop a climate resilience strategy that would allow the City and community to adapt and become more resilient to climate change; and

WHEREAS, in 2019 the City completed its resiliency process and released a Climate

Resilience Resource Guide that provides strategies for community members to become more resilient to the extreme weather caused by climate change; and

WHEREAS, in 2014, the City adopted Resolution 14-27, which committed the City to a 50% reduction in waste by 2035; and

WHEREAS, in 2017 the City adopted Resolution 17-257, which established a Food Policy Action Plan to increase food access and distribution, support sustainable agriculture practices in locally grown foods, and expand community food education; and

WHEREAS, in 2018, the City purchased five electric buses and adopted a Transit Master Plan that calls for a massive expansion of the City's transit system to better serve people who have to ride the bus and to give elective riders a viable option to driving; and

WHEREAS, the above-listed resolutions and associated work plans collectively constitute a multifaceted response to the climate crisis we face; and

WHEREAS, the City has been an environmental leader and must **accelerate** its efforts to create an ecologically regenerative local economy that is socially, racially, and economically just. The City must accomplish this task **at emergency speed**, through broad community mobilization and by advocating for the regional, national, and international efforts needed to reverse global warming and our current ecological crisis; and

WHEREAS low-income communities and communities of color in Asheville and Buncombe County have historically faced unfair levels of displacement, violence, discrimination, and governmental apathy and underfunding; currently face unequal access to suitable housing, education, health services, and healthy food; and are projected to be more heavily impacted by the effects of climate change due to a lack of the funding and resources necessary for stability and resiliency.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE THAT:

1. The City declares that a climate and ecological emergency threatens our city, region, state, nation, civilization, humanity, and the natural world; and

2. The City commits to an equitable and just citywide mobilization effort to reverse global warming that, if met with all necessary financial and regulatory assistance and authorization from State and Federal authorities, would end citywide GHG emissions as quickly as possible and no later than 2030. Further, the City commits to more deeply incorporate sustainability considerations into its departmental decision making and programs; and

3. The City recommits to its current annual and overall carbon and GHG reduction goals and **recommits to evaluate these goals as necessary** to identify additional adaptation and resilience strategies in preparation for intensifying local climate impacts; and

4. The City will continue to recognize that the full participation, inclusion, support, and leadership of community organizations, faith communities, youth, labor organizations, academic institutions, indigenous groups, and racial, gender, family, immigrant and disability justice organizations and other allies are integral to an equitable response and mobilization effort; and

5. The City recognizes the need for and supports additional public engagement throughout the city and county to discuss the current climate emergency and develop a plan to reach the community's renewable energy and GHG reduction goals. This outreach must ensure the voices of marginalized communities are included. This input will be incorporated into the city's Climate Justice Plan and the broader community wide plan. The city and SACEE commit to engaging community partners in holding an initial public input session in May 2020; and

6. The City will continue to utilize and revise the City's Comprehensive Plan, *Living Asheville*, as a tool to identify land use and zoning authority in order to reduce GHG emissions and adopt climate-adaptive land use strategies. The city will incorporate the Climate Justice Plan into the Comprehensive Plan and all other plans as appropriate; and

7. City Council commits to discussing how to generate the revenue needed to fund its carbon reduction, 100% renewable, waste, energy, transit, and urban forestry goals at its 2020 annual retreat; and

8. The City hereby recognizes that there is a global climate emergency which demands a massive-scale mobilization to halt, reverse, and address its consequences and causes, and supports the passage of legislation that would initiate a national emergency-speed mobilization to reverse global warming and the ecological crisis described in this Resolution, which could include, but not be limited to, **H.Con.Res.52 and S.Con.Res.22,** a carbon fee and dividend policy, cap and trade policy, or other similar comprehensive GHG emission reduction policy; and

9. The City commits to call on Buncombe County, sister North Carolina municipalities, the State of North Carolina, the United States Congress, the President of the United States, and all governments and people worldwide to declare a climate emergency and cooperatively initiate a climate mobilization to reverse global warming and the ecological crisis, and provide maximum protection for all people and species of the world; and

10. The City Council supports the delivery of this resolution to all relevant State and Federal agencies and elected representatives representing constituents within the City along with a request that all necessary support and assistance needed to effectuate this resolution be provided as soon as possible; and

11. The City will also continue to provide an annual Sustainability Management Report regarding its efforts to expand renewable energy use and maximize GHG emission reductions within each energy sector. As required by City Resolution

18-279 (100% Renewable Energy Resolution) the Sustainability Management Report will also indicate: (A) whether the City is on track to meet its renewable energy transition goals, and (B) whether adequate funding has been allocated by City Council to fund the necessary renewable energy transition goals; and

12. The City will engage with all relevant local, and state entities to identify the feasibility of and opportunities for gaining local authority to phase out fossil fuel production, power generation, and use within the City; and

13. Through the City's Capital Improvement Plan ("CIP") and budget process, the City will identify the projects and funding needed to fulfill the City's existing 100% renewable and carbon reduction goals and address the current climate and ecological emergency. When identifying funding needs, the City Manager will report to City Council whether existing funding is sufficient or if additional revenues will be needed; and

14. City Council supports staff efforts to consolidate the various separate sustainability goals and department initiatives into an updated Climate Justice Plan by December 2020; and

15. Beginning in fiscal year 2021 (which begins in 2020), the City will consider GHG emissions in its assessment of CIP project requests and provide a sustainability impact statement for all new CIP projects included in the Adopted Annual Budget Document; and

16. The City commits to keeping the concerns of vulnerable communities central to all climate program planning processes and to invite and encourage such communities to actively participate in the development and implementation of the City's climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts. This engagement should result in real benefits for these communities without exacerbating the current lack of affordable housing within the City. Examples of such benefits include, but are not limited to, pollution reduction, healthier homes, and reduced energy costs; and

17. The City will work with business, land development, and other private sectors to identify and incentivize effective ways to reduce GHG emissions and meet our community wide 100% renewable energy goal.

Read, approved and adopted this the 28th day of January, 2020.

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City Clerk Mayor

Approved as to form:

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City Attorney