



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
AGENDA LETTER

Agenda Number:

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
(805) 568-2240

Department Name: Planning and
Development
Department No.: 053
For Agenda Of: 01/12/2021
Placement: Administrative - Set
Hearing
Estimated Time: 1 hour on 01/26/2021
Continued Item: N/A
If Yes, date from: N/A
Vote Required: Majority

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Department Lisa Plowman, Director, Planning and Development (P&D)
Director (805) 568-2086
Contact Info: Daniel T. Klemann, Deputy Director, Long Range Planning
(805) 568-2072

SUBJECT: Interim Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions Thresholds of Significance

County Counsel Concurrence

As to form: Yes

Other Concurrence

As to form: N/A

Recommended Actions:

That the Board of Supervisors (Board):

On January 12, 2021, set a hearing for January 26, 2021, to consider the County Planning Commission's recommendation to amend Chapter 11, GHG Emissions, of the County *Environmental Thresholds and Guidelines Manual* (County of Santa Barbara, P&D, September 2020) to implement interim GHG emissions thresholds of significance (interim thresholds) in compliance with the Guidelines for the Implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA Guidelines) Section 15064.4, Determining the Significance of Impacts from GHG Emissions.

On January 26, 2021, the Board's action should include the following:

- a) Determine that the proposed amendment to the *Environmental Thresholds and Guidelines Manual* is not a project pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Sections 15060(c)(3), 15378(b)(5), and 15064.7(b); and
- b) Adopt a resolution approving the proposed amendment to the *Environmental Thresholds and Guidelines Manual* to include new interim thresholds for determining the significance of impacts from GHG emissions from land use projects and plans under CEQA.

Auditor-Controller Concurrence

As to form: N/A

Summary Text:

CEQA requires the County and other lead agencies to analyze and determine the significance of GHG emissions from projects that are not exempt from CEQA. The County adopted a GHG emissions threshold of significance for industrial stationary source projects (e.g., oil, gas, mining, and renewable energy projects) in 2015. However, the County does not have a threshold of significance for land use projects, land use plans, or other projects not subject to the industrial stationary source threshold. County staff previously relied on the 2015 Energy and Climate Action Plan and associated Environmental Impact Report to assess whether GHG emissions from an individual project would have a cumulatively significant impact on the environment.

As part of the upcoming 2030 Climate Action Plan, County staff will propose final thresholds of significance for evaluating cumulative impacts from GHG emissions. County staff expects to complete the 2030 Climate Action Plan in 2022. In the meantime, P&D staff and its consultant, Ascent Environmental (Ascent), recommend that the Board adopt interim thresholds for non-industrial stationary source projects. The interim thresholds will assist the County in complying with State CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.4 regarding the evaluation of impacts from GHG emissions. They will also streamline the environmental review process and help meet the 2030 GHG emissions reduction target set by the Board on July 7, 2020 (50 percent reduction by 2030, based on 2007 levels).

Staff recommends two interim thresholds—a Screening Threshold and Significance Threshold—for land use projects and plans. The proposed Screening Threshold equates to 300 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (MTCO_{2e}) per year. Land use projects and plans with GHG emissions below the Screening Threshold would have an insignificant impact from GHG emissions and, therefore, would not require further analysis. If a project or plan exceeds the Screening Threshold, County staff will apply the Significance Threshold. The proposed Significance Threshold would be 3.8 MTCO_{2e} per year, per the service population of the project or plan (i.e., residents and employees). County staff will generally conclude that a project will have a significant environmental impact due to GHG emissions if it exceeds the Significance Threshold.

P&D staff will provide additional analysis when the full Board Agenda Letter is docketed.

Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:

Budgeted: Yes

Funding for this project is budgeted in the P&D's Long Range Planning Division Budget Program on page D-294 of the County of Santa Barbara Adopted Budget, Fiscal Year 2020-2021. There are no facilities impacts.

Special Instructions:

The P&D will satisfy all noticing requirements. The Clerk of the Board shall forward a copy of the minute order and an executed copy of the resolution to the P&D, attention Selena Evilsizor Whitney.

Authored by:

Selena Evilsizor Whitney, Senior Planner, Long Range Planning Division, (805) 568-3577