

05/10/2021
05/17/2021

ORDINANCE NO. _____

AN ORDINANCE further extending for an additional period of six months the moratorium first enacted by Ordinance No. M-4295, and extended by Ordinance No. M-4323, prohibiting the establishment of new, or expansion of existing, large-scale fossil fuel facilities; directing staff to continue efforts to develop recommendations addressing the circumstances necessitating the moratorium; and establishing an effective date.

WHEREAS, the City of Vancouver is a Charter City of the First Class and has the authority to adopt and renew temporary moratoria pursuant to the City’s constitutional police powers, home rule authority, RCW 36.70A.390, and RCW 35.63.200; and

WHEREAS, on June 8, 2020, the Vancouver City Council adopted Ordinance No. M-4295, enacting a six-month temporary moratorium prohibiting the establishment of new, or expansion of existing, large-scale fossil fuel facilities; and

WHEREAS, the City Council held a public hearing on July 20, 2020, and thereafter adopted findings of fact supporting the enactment of the moratorium; and

WHEREAS, on December 7, 2020, the City Council held a subsequent public hearing, at the conclusion of which it made additional findings of fact and adopted Ordinance No. M-4323, extending the moratorium for another six months, until June 8, 2021; and

WHEREAS, “Goal 1” of the City of Vancouver’s 2016-2021 Strategic Plan is to “[e]nsure our built urban environment is one of the safest, most environmentally responsible and well maintained in the Pacific Northwest;” and

WHEREAS, local governments have a core responsibility for upholding the public health, safety, and welfare, mitigating and preparing for disasters, protecting and preserving natural systems and supporting economic development; and

WHEREAS, the City of Vancouver and the greater Pacific Northwest are vulnerable to powerful subduction zone earthquakes that occur with periodic frequency along the Juan de Fuca and North American plates; and

WHEREAS, geologic research has shown that subduction zone earthquakes have occurred along the Pacific Northwest with relative regularity over the last 10,000 years, and if averages from past events are predictive, the region could be overdue for another powerful subduction zone earthquake; and

WHEREAS, many of the city's buildings and critical infrastructure were built before the city's seismic exposure was widely understood; and

WHEREAS, the Clark Regional Emergency Services Agency has identified Critical Facilities and Infrastructure (including Hazardous Materials, Energy Facilities, Transportation Systems, and Water and Sanitation Systems) to be co-located within areas of the City with a "Moderate to High" liquefaction susceptibility; and

WHEREAS, the City of Vancouver's drinking water (almost 26 million gallons per day) is supplied entirely from groundwater resources; and

WHEREAS, the vast majority of Vancouver's drinking water (approximately 90%) is supplied from the Troutdale, Upper Orchards and Lower Orchards Aquifers, the boundaries of which are often blurred (the Orchards Aquifer is likely an alluviated portion of the Troutdale with little or no silica cementing), and historical water monitoring indicates that water moves vertically through the hydrogeologic layers of these aquifers; and

WHEREAS, facilities that store or process hazardous materials have been recognized to present an increased risk of spills or leaks, and a greater concentration of such facilities renders the City's water supply at an increased susceptibility to contamination, particularly in the event of a powerful earthquake; and

WHEREAS, prior Vancouver city councils have endeavored to protect City water resources by establishing development regulations and minimum standards to reduce the risks of contaminants entering water resources by enacting local ground and surface water regulations, now codified in Chapter 14.26 VMC, the Water Resources Protection Ordinance; and

WHEREAS, recognizing the risks posed by transportation of petroleum, prior Vancouver city councils have encouraged agencies to deny permits for facilities that increase the transportation of Bakken crude oil through Clark County (June 2014, Resolution M-3821), restricted the expansion of crude petroleum facilities by way of a moratorium (Sept. 2014, Resolution M-4090), and made corresponding revisions to the City land use code (Chapter 20.150 VMC); and

WHEREAS, this City Council recognizes that the storage, transfer, processing and handling of other fossil fuels within the City pose risks to safety, health, and livability, including mobility of people, other freight, and other commercial vehicles which are potentially catastrophic in magnitude; and

WHEREAS, this City Council finds that it is appropriate to conduct review and analysis of the City's current vulnerabilities to determine if the purposes of Title 20 and Chapter 14.26 VMC may continue to be fulfilled while accommodating the establishment of new, or expansion of existing, large-scale fossil fuel facilities; and

WHEREAS, the siting of large-scale fossil fuel facilities raises issues of social equity, as these types of facilities have historically been disproportionately located in close proximity to low-income communities and communities of color; and

WHEREAS, in addition to the foregoing, on January 17, 2020, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals found that “Copious expert evidence” establishes that an unprecedented rise in the Earth’s carbon concentration levels stems from fossil fuel combustion, and if left unchecked, such levels will wreak havoc on the Earth’s climate; stating further: “The problem is approaching ‘the point of no return.’ Absent some action, the destabilizing climate will bury cities, spawn life-threatening natural disasters, and jeopardize critical food and water supplies.” (Hon. Andrew D. Hurwitz, Circuit Judge authoring the majority opinion of Juliana v. United States, No. 18-36082, p.13 (9th Cir., Jan. 17, 2020); and

WHEREAS, studies conducted by the University of Oregon have found that the effects of climate change on water supplies, public health, coastal and storm damage, wildfires, and other impacts, will cost Washington almost \$10 billion per year after 2020, unless additional actions are taken to mitigate these effects; and

WHEREAS, the University of Washington has found that Washington State has experienced long-term warming, a lengthening of the frost-free season, more frequent nighttime heat waves, rising sea levels along most of Washington’s coast, increased coastal ocean acidity, declining glacial area and spring snowpack, and changes in the peak streamflows in many rivers to earlier in the year; such that three key areas of risk, specifically changes in the natural timing of water availability, sea level rise and ocean acidity, and increased forest mortality, will likely bring significant consequences for the economy, infrastructure, natural systems, and human health of the region; and

WHEREAS, the scientifically projected increase of forest mortality poses a unique, and heightened threat to the quality of life enjoyed by residents of the City of Vancouver, which has been annually recognized as “Tree City USA” since 1989; and

WHEREAS, the scientifically projected changes to streamflows pose a unique, and heightened threat to the life, health, safety, and economic vitality enjoyed by residents of the City of Vancouver, as it has been long-recognized that “one of the greatest assets of Vancouver is its shoreline along the Columbia River” (August 1991, Resolution M-2739); and the City has made significant financial investments to complete capital improvements such as the Waterfront Development Project and Columbia River Renaissance Trail, in order to “draw walkers and bikers to the water’s edge” and “reinforce recognition of the [Columbia River] waterfront as a place of community-wide enjoyment” (June 1993, Resolution M-2836); and

WHEREAS, large-scale fossil fuel facilities create significant public health risks, including air pollution resulting in impaired respiratory functions from fine particulates, noise pollution affecting hearing loss and psychological health, and exposure to heavy metals and contaminated drinking sources resulting in cancers, premature death and lung and heart diseases; and

WHEREAS, fossil fuels, including petroleum, coal and natural gas, are a major source of carbon dioxide, heavy metals, nitrogen oxide and sulfur dioxide, and each has a demonstrated nexus to climate change and environmental pollution; the Vancouver City Council has grave concerns regarding the safety of Vancouver City residents and the environment, and the strain on public services and existing infrastructure resulting from the siting and operation of new, or expansion of existing, large-scale fossil fuel facilities; and

WHEREAS, the City of Vancouver is preparing to update the City Strategic Plan, the Vancouver City Center Vision (“VCCV”), and make annual updates to Title 20 VMC; and it is

appropriate at this time to facilitate citizen engagement, undertake appropriate review of large-scale fossil fuel zoning and siting considerations in order to mitigate avoidable risks of catastrophic harm, ensure that the resiliency goals adopted as part of the City Strategic Plan are capable of being fully realized, focus more economic development on safe and renewable energy sources and “green” businesses, and account for the social and environmental impacts on traditionally marginalized communities; and

WHEREAS, the City Council finds that in order to preserve the ability to develop the Strategic Plan, VCCV, and Title 20 updates, with the widest range of choices and alternatives for future development, it is necessary to temporarily restrict the establishment of new, or expansion of existing, large-scale fossil fuel facilities until the strategy and corresponding code updates are completed; and

WHEREAS, City staff has continued to engage with interested stakeholders, in order to better understand the interests of all parties potentially affected by more comprehensive regulation of large-scale fossil fuel facilities, but still more time is needed to integrate this information with possible amendments to existing regulations; and

WHEREAS, extending the moratorium for another six months will allow City staff enough time to finalize appropriate strategies to mitigate risks associated with the establishment of new, or expansion of existing, large-scale fossil fuel facilities in the future, through amendments to existing zoning ordinances if necessary; and

WHEREAS, extending the existing moratorium will enable the City to continue to maximize public input in the siting of new, or expansion of existing, large-scale fossil fuel facilities, without jeopardizing any possible land use options that may be precluded by unrestricted development; and

WHEREAS, the extension of the existing moratorium prohibiting the establishment of new, or expansion of existing, large-scale fossil fuel facilities, for an additional six months, promotes the public health, safety, and general welfare of the people of Vancouver, and will encourage the most desirable and productive use of land and community resources; and

WHEREAS, it is necessary that this ordinance go into effect immediately in order to keep the existing moratorium in place, maintain continuity of the status quo, and avoid a rush of applications for new or expanded development of large-scale fossil fuel facilities.

NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY OF VANCOUVER:

Section 1. Findings of fact. The recitals to this ordinance are hereby incorporated by this reference and adopted as the City Council’s findings of fact justifying renewal of the existing moratorium prohibiting the establishment of new, or expansion of existing, large-scale fossil fuel facilities, for an additional period of six months, in accordance with RCW 36.70A.390 and RCW 35.63.200. The City Council held the requisite public hearing on May 17, 2021, prior to final adoption of this ordinance and renewal of the existing moratorium.

Section 2. Definitions. For the purposes of this ordinance:

A. “Fossil fuels” means petroleum and petroleum products, coal, and natural gasses, including without limitation methane, propane and butane, derived from prehistoric organic matter and used to generate energy. Fossil fuels do not include by-products such as asphalt, plastics, fertilizers, paints, or denatured ethanol.

B.1. “Large-scale fossil fuel facilities” means:

a. Facilities engaged in the wholesale distribution, extraction, refinement or processing of fossil fuels;

b. Terminals engaged in the bulk movement of fossil fuels (excluding railyards, fuel storage for airports, and fuel storage for marine servicing facilities);

c. Bulk coal storage: any structure, group of structures, equipment, or device that stores or transfers coal for use in the production of electricity or power.

d. Coal power plant: a thermal power station which burns coal to generate electricity or other usable power.

e. Natural gas processing: any facility which (i) separates natural gas components to recover usable natural gas liquids (*i.e.*, liquefied petroleum or natural gas), or (ii) produces natural gas suitable for transport (*i.e.*, pipeline quality dry natural gas), or (iii) processes natural gas to create methanol or other chemical products.

f. Natural gas storage and handling: any structure, group of structures, equipment, or devices that stores or transfers natural gas for use in the production of electricity or power, or for further processing (excluding facilities that create energy from landfill gas).

g. Bulk storage of one type of fossil fuel, or a combination of multiple types of fossil fuels, in excess of two million gallons.

2. “Large-scale fossil fuel facilities” do not include facilities that solely provide direct sales or distribution to consumers (*e.g.*, gas stations are not large-scale fossil fuel facilities).

Section 3. *Six-month renewal of moratorium.* As authorized by the City’s constitutional police powers, home rule authority, RCW 36.70A.390 and RCW 35.63.200, the City Council hereby renews the temporary moratorium on the acceptance, processing, and granting of applications for permits for establishment of new, or expansion of existing, large-scale fossil fuel facilities, for an additional period of six months.

Section 4. Exemptions. The moratorium, which was enacted by Ordinance No. M-4295 and extended by Ordinance No. M-4323, and which was renewed for an additional six months by Section 3 of this ordinance, shall not apply to permits required for upkeep, repair, or maintenance of existing buildings or properties, or work mandated by the City to maintain public health and safety.

Section 5. Duration. The moratorium enacted by Ordinance No. M-4295, as extended by Ordinance No. M-4323, shall not expire on June 8, 2021, as stated in Ordinance No. M-4323, but instead shall remain in effect for an additional six months therefrom, until December 8, 2021, unless earlier terminated by the City Council.

Section 6. Vested rights. The moratorium renewed and extended by this ordinance does not apply to properties with vested rights existing on the date of the initial adoption of this moratorium. “Vested Rights” shall be defined in accordance with VMC 20.210.110.

Section 7. Severability. If any provision of this ordinance or its application to any person or circumstance is held invalid, or should any portion of this ordinance be preempted by state or federal law or regulation, the remainder of the ordinance or the application of the provision to other persons or circumstances shall survive and be unaffected.

Section 8. Effective date. The City Council hereby finds and declares that an emergency exists which necessitates that this ordinance become effective immediately in order to preserve the public health, safety and welfare. This ordinance shall become effective immediately upon passage at second reading, following public hearing. The City Clerk is directed to publish a summary hereof including the title at the earliest possible publication date.

Read the first time:

Ayes: Councilmembers

Nays: Councilmembers

Absent: Councilmembers

Read the second time:

PASSED by the following vote:

Ayes: Councilmembers

Nays: Councilmembers

Absent: Councilmembers

SIGNED this _____ day of _____, 2021.

Anne McEnery-Ogle, Mayor

Attest:

Natasha Ramras, City Clerk

Approved as to form:

Jonathan Young, City Attorney

SUMMARY

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The full text of this ordinance will be mailed upon request. Contact Raelyn McJilton, Records Officer at (360) 487-8711, or via www.cityofvancouver.us (Go to City Government and Public Records).