

Response to Grand Jury Report

Report Title: Electrifying Marin's Buildings: A Countywide Approach

Report Date: June 6, 2022

Respondent/Agency Name: Ross Town Council

FINDINGS

- I (we) agree with the findings numbered: F1-F6

RECOMMENDATION

- Recommendations numbered R1, R2, and R3 require further analysis.

Date: 8/11/22 Signed: Breck Hall
Mayor

Number of pages attached: 3

ATTACHMENT 1

TOWN OF ROSS RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY REPORT: *ELECTRIFYING MARIN'S BUILDINGS: A COUNTYWIDE APPROACH*

FINDINGS AND RESPONSES

F1. With the building sector accounting for approximately 34 percent of greenhouse gas emissions in Marin County, it will be necessary to substantially reduce emissions from that sector if the county and its cities and towns are to meet their 2030 greenhouse gas reduction goals.

Response: Agree.

F2. Reducing or eliminating natural gas as a fuel source in buildings will dramatically reduce greenhouse gas emissions from Marin County's building sector.

Response: Agree.

F3. The use of natural gas in buildings gives rise to health and safety risks, including adverse health effects attributed to exposure to natural gas, and safety risks posed by pipeline leaks, ruptures, and explosions. These health and safety risks serve as additional reasons to eliminate natural gas as a fuel source in new and existing building.

Response: Agree.

F4. The timely reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from Marin County's building sector will require in-depth, comprehensive, and coordinated planning. A countywide planning process, coordinated by Marin Climate and Energy Partnership or the county's Sustainability Team, would be an effective and efficient means of sustaining focus and leveraging the resources needed for developing a Countywide Building Electrification Plan.

Response: Agree.

F5. Underserved communities and lower income households have greater vulnerability to rising energy costs and will likely require extra financial support to mitigate those costs and reduce household greenhouse gas emissions through measures that require significant up-front investment.

Response: Agree.

F6. The timely electrification of existing buildings will likely require one or more mandatory measures, supported where necessary by financial subsidies and rebates.

Response: Agree.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESPONSES

R1. On or before January 1, 2023, Marin County and each of its cities and towns that have not already done so should adopt a reach code banning natural gas connections in newly constructed buildings.

Response: This recommendation requires further analysis.

It is important to note there are several variables not discussed in the Report and that require further analysis. Some of these variables include supply chain issues that are causing a shortage or delay in electrical equipment; there are a shortage of technical experts to manage the increasing demands for electrification; unknown adoption costs; a lack of clarity for what is needed to limit the impact to existing equipment; and triggers for when existing construction requires replacement. Town staff are working with the County of Marin and neighboring cities to develop model reach codes and to try to provide consistency across jurisdictions. However, there are significant differences amongst jurisdictions in terms of building stock and development that require different considerations. The Town Council will consider a reach code ordinance later this fall and if adopted it would go into effect January 1, 2023.

R2. On or before January 1, 2023, Marin County and each of its cities and towns that have not already done so should adopt a reach code requiring energy efficiency measures in connection with renovations of existing residential buildings. The reach code should specify the size of the renovation that will trigger the requirement and provide flexibility by allowing the applicant to choose from a list of energy efficiency measures, including electrification of gas appliances.

Response: This recommendation requires further analysis.

Town staff have been participating in the Green Building Steering Committee led by the County's Sustainability team along with other jurisdiction staff and Marin Clean Energy staff. The Steering Committee has been drafting a model reach code since September 2021 with the goal of having all Marin jurisdictions adopt it by October 2022, and go into effect on January 1, 2023. The model reach code may require all-electric requirements for new construction (including residential, multifamily, and commercial). In addition, for remodels, it may require a target energy score to be met using a point system that allows for a flexible range of electrification and energy efficiency measures (e.g., window and wall insulation, HVAC heat pumps, heat pump water heaters).

The Steering Committee has hosted several Technical Working Group meetings with Marin jurisdictions' building officials to discuss challenges/concerns associated with building electrification and how to overcome them. Members of the building community (i.e., architects, contractors) have also been invited to these meetings to provide their input along with utility

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representatives. To gather input from the larger Marin community, the Steering Committee hosted a virtual community workshop on June 2, 2022 that included discussions about impacts of building electrification on affordable housing, the power grid, the environment, and public health.

The next steps in this process are to draft the model reach code and then to solicit feedback from jurisdiction staff, sustainability/climate action committees, and advocacy groups. After incorporating this feedback, staff from each jurisdiction will draft an ordinance based on the model reach code and then work with their respective council or board of supervisors to introduce the ordinance in the fall.

R3. Marin County and each of its cities and towns, collaborating through the Marin Climate and Energy Partnership or otherwise, should develop a comprehensive Countywide Building Electrification Plan to be completed on or before January 1, 2024. The Plan should identify those strategies, programs, and concrete actions necessary to bring about an equitable, prompt, and material acceleration of building electrification throughout the county.

Response: This recommendation requires further analysis.

Town staff currently serve as a member of the Marin Climate and Energy Partnership (MCEP), and the Town is cautiously supportive of having MCEP, the County Sustainability team, or another entity lead such an effort to develop a comprehensive Countywide Building Electrification Plan to be completed on or before January 1, 2024.

MCEP may be well-positioned to develop a Countywide Building Electrification Plan as it has been working on a similar Countywide EV Acceleration Strategy that includes strategies for accelerating the adoption of EVs that can be utilized by Marin jurisdictions. The funding for this strategy was provided by the Transportation Authority of Marin (TAM). MCEP members could seek out sources of local, regional, and state funding for the development of a Countywide Building Electrification Plan, if needed.

While developing and implementing a Countywide Building Electrification Plan may be an effective model, and there may be a solid foundation (e.g., existence of MCEP) from which to build such a plan, there would need to be agreement by all jurisdictions to agree and contribute to the plan. There would need to be adequate resources available to implement the plan. In addition, utility partners that serve Marin County such as MCE and PG&E, would need to participate and contribute to the effort.