

**CITY OF SEBASTOPOL
CLIMATE ACTION COMMITTEE
WORKING GROUP AGENDA ITEM**

Meeting February 13, 2024

To: Climate Action Committee

From: Energy Working Group

Subject: Council Letter in Support of Zero-Emission New Construction Building Standards

Recommendation: The Climate Action Committee recommends that Sebastopol issue a public letter in support of zero-emission new construction building standards for the 2025 upgrade to the building efficiency standards. The letter would be sent to Governor Newsom, and to staff of the Office of the Governor, and staff at the following agencies: State Energy Commission, Cal EPA, Air Resources Board, Natural Resource Agency, and Department of Housing & Community Development.

Funding: Funding Needs: NA

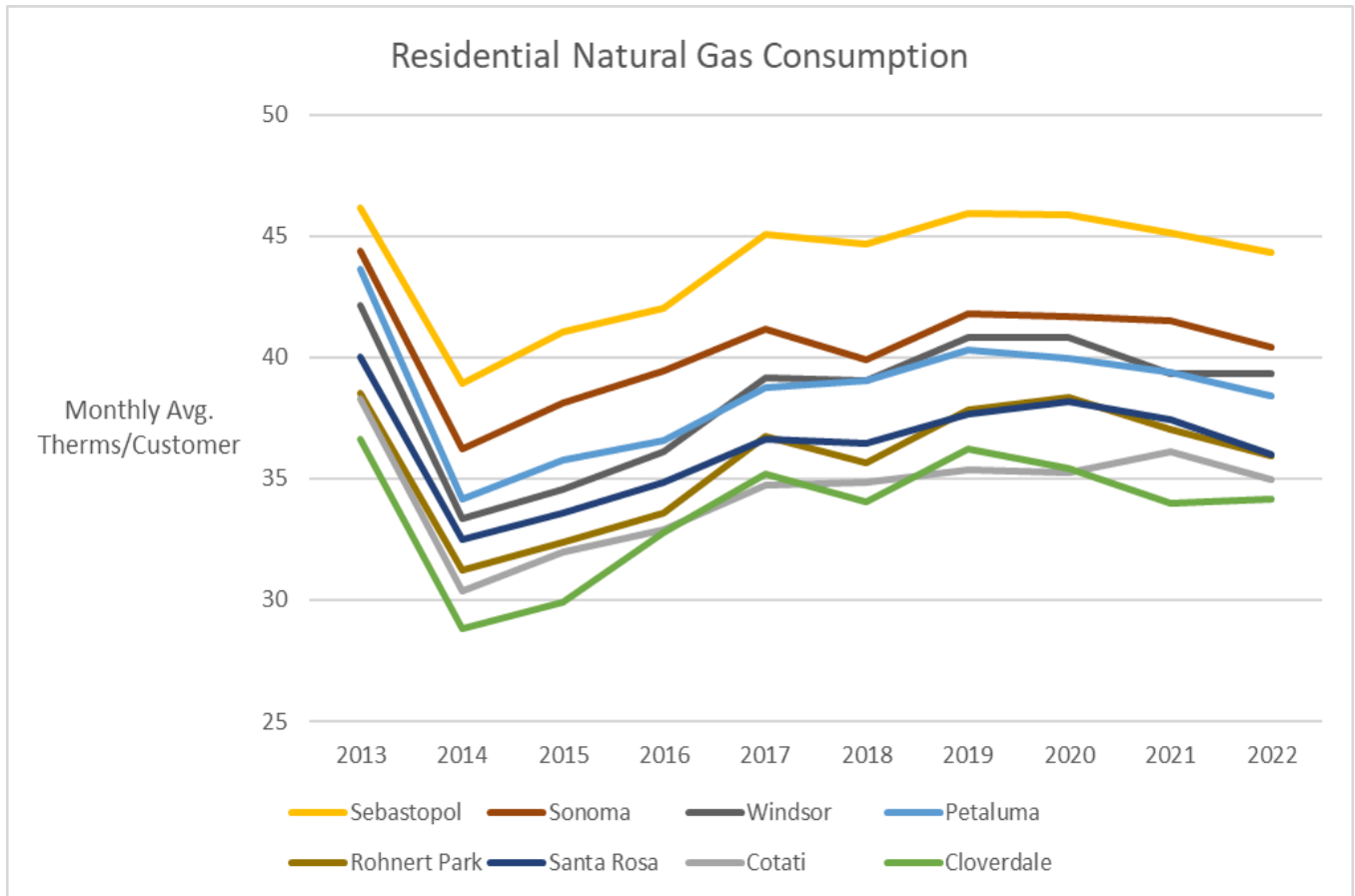
Funding Source(s): NA

BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION:

On September 7, 2023, twenty-six cities and counties sent a letter to Governor Newsom and State Agencies supporting zero-emission new construction building standards statewide in the 2025 update to the State Building Energy Efficiency Standards. By supporting this effort, Sebastopol will join these other jurisdictions and organizations in encouraging the State to move towards zero-emission buildings which refer to buildings that have no combustion-based equipment or appliances installed.

Over 50 local jurisdictions have shown their leadership by passing electrification building codes that go beyond California's building standards code. California can support local leadership by developing and supporting voluntary model building standards, for example in CALGreen, that support decarbonization and can be easily adopted by local governments which Sebastopol has already done.

As can be seen from this chart, Sebastopol, unfortunately leads the county in natural gas consumption in residential buildings for the average customer.



Data Source: PG&E Public Data Sets, gas use by Zip Code, compiled by Sebastopol Climate Action Committee https://pge-energydatarequest.com/public_datasets

Natural gas, otherwise known as Methane acts as a short term GHG. Though over a 100 year period, it is 34 times more impactful than CO₂, it is over the short term where it participates most heavily to climate change. Over a 2 year horizon, methane is 120 times stronger as a GHG than CO₂.

Studies have shown that the pipelines that deliver methane to buildings as well as the appliances that use it do leak considerably. The EPA estimates at wells 3.7% of the gas is emitted to the atmosphere. Recent reports estimate a further 1.3% is emitted from stove tops even when they are turned off representing a health risk.

Combustion of natural gas for space and water heating, cooking, clothes drying, and other end uses in residential and commercial buildings contributes about five percent of statewide oxides of nitrogen (NOx) emissions, and produces carbon monoxide (CO), ultrafine particles (UFPs, particles with diameters smaller than 0.1 micron) and fine particulate matter (PM2.5, particles with diameters smaller than 2.5 micron), and formaldehyde, which are harmful to human health and the environment.¹

¹ Zhu, Y., R. Connolly, T. Mathews, and Z. Wang. 2020. "Effects of Residential Gas Appliances on Indoor and Outdoor Air Quality and Public Health in California." UCLA Fielding School of Public Health Department of Environmental Health Sciences. Available at: <https://ucla.app.box.com/s/xyzt8jc1ixnetiv0269qe704wu0ihif7>

GOALS:

The City of Sebastopol will voice its support for the State eliminating use of natural gas in new buildings.

The following Goals of the Sebastopol General Plan are potentially supported by the State of California changing the State Building Code through CALGreen to require all electric construction in new buildings:

- COS1: Make Proactive, Forward-Thinking Environmental Protection and Resource Management the Cornerstone of Sebastopol’s Identity
- COS7: Improve Air Quality in Sebastopol and Reduce Air Quality Impacts from Future Development
- COS8: Reduce Emissions of Greenhouse Gasses from City Operations and Community Sources
- COS9: Promote Conservation of Energy and Other Natural Resources

The following Goals of the Sebastopol Climate Action Framework are potentially supported by the State of California changing the State Building Code through CALGreen to require all electric construction in new buildings:

- BE1. Reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from buildings and support better community health by eliminating natural gas use in new buildings, electrifying existing structures, minimizing embodied carbon in new construction and remodels, and making all buildings more energy efficient.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

As of the writing of this staff report, the City has not received any public comment. However, staff anticipates receiving public comment from interested parties following the publication and distribution of this staff report. Such comments will be provided to the City Council as supplemental materials before or at the meeting. In addition, public comments may be offered during the public comment portion of the agenda item.

PUBLIC NOTICE:

This item was noticed in accordance with the Ralph M. Brown Act and was available for public viewing and review at least 72 hours prior to the scheduled meeting date.

FUNDING NEEDS:

NA

RECOMMENDATION:

[Staff to provide recommendation]

ATTACHMENT(S):

- Draft Letter for Sebastopol Support of Zero-Emission New Construction Building Standards Statewide