

August 29th, 2017

WESTPORT NET-ZERO BY 2050 & THE PARIS AGREEMENT - CONTEXT

1. SUMMARY

- **Aligned ambition & intention** - The ambition contained within both the Paris Agreement and Westport's Net-Zero By 2050 goal are consistent and necessary for a sustainable world. We need to keep temperature rise under 2 degrees (preferably 1.5), and action is needed at a global and multi-local level.
- **Slightly Clearer Goal and More Comprehensive Scope in Westport** - While the Paris Agreement focuses on Greenhouse Gases and their effect on Climate Change, Westport has taken care to broaden the definition of a 'Net-Zero' goal to include Energy, Water and Waste – with the aim of creating and nurturing a truly sustainable town where our children will want to raise their children.
- **Westport helping the wider effort** - Westport's goals and associated efforts will likely feed in to USA's discussions regarding Paris Agreement irrespective of the federal administration's position. With the USA 'out of Paris', the efforts of America's Climate Pledge and 'WeAreStillIn' will mean that our reporting will be aggregated and submitted with other sub-national entities.

2. THE PARIS AGREEMENT

What is it? - The Paris Agreement is the world's first comprehensive climate agreement - signed by all the world's functioning governments – demonstrating a global, collective ambition to reduce greenhouse gases enough to limit global temperature rise to 2 degrees Celsius from pre-industrial levels (and pursue a safer 1.5 degrees limit). It's scope covers greenhouse gas emissions, climate adaptation and finance mechanisms to promote the solutions (especially in countries that can least afford it).

Who's it for? – It's global in reach, falling within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and was negotiated by 196 countries (known as "Parties") at COP21 - the 21st Conference of the Parties of the UNFCCC. As of August 2017, 195 countries have signed, and 160 have more formally ratified it in their own

parliaments¹, so it is now “in force”. The recent stated intention for the US to withdraw would come in to effect November 2020.

How Legal/Non-Legal is it? - The Agreement is a hybrid of binding and non-binding elements. The binding elements center around the *process* governing the global effort to reduce emissions, including transparency and reporting. The non-binding part of the agreement is each country’s actual *target* - known, and submitted to the UNFCCC, as Nationally Determined Contributions, or ‘NDCs’. There are no UN-enforced penalties for non-compliance for either portion.

What does it ask for? - Essentially the Paris Agreement asks for countries to come together regularly to measure their progress, reaffirm their ambition to reduce greenhouse emissions, and to ratchet up their targets as they make and declare their progress.

3. THE WESTPORT NET-ZERO BY 2050 PETITION

What is it? - The petition and proposed RTM resolution builds upon the Westport Net-Zero by 2050 goal publicized in October 2015². The petition is seeking a sense-of-the-meeting resolution from the RTM: “Be it resolved that the Town of Westport shall commit to using its best efforts to become a Net Zero community by the year 2050, where the community has reduced its impacts across energy, water and waste so that they are sustainably managed, using approaches that are economically viable, of social benefit, and environmentally responsible.” **Link here:**

<https://www.gopetition.com/petitions/commit-westport-to-becoming-a-net-zero-community-by-2050.html>

Who’s it for? – It is intended to convey an ambition to create a sustainable town for the current and future residents of Westport. We already report to the Carbon Disclosure Project’s Municipalities Initiative (often shortened to ‘CDP Cities’), as well as participate in other forums, so our efforts can be recognized at a national and international level.

How legal/non-legal – It is not structured to commit the town to any specific expenditure of money or time – rather to clearly communicate our goal, and provide a useful basis for discussions on how to prioritize efforts and resources for the good of current and future generations. E.g. Sustainability criteria has already been part of Town department budget submissions since 2016.

What does it ask for? – It is intended to only rally ambition for a necessary and inspiring goal.

¹ The Paris Agreement entered into force on 4 November 2016, 30 days after the date on which at least 55 Parties to the Convention accounting in total for at least an estimated 55% of the total global greenhouse gas emissions have deposited their instruments of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession with the UNFCCC.

² <http://www.westportct.gov/index.aspx?page=35&recordid=3947&returnURL=/index.aspx>

4. HOW THEY ARE SIMILAR AND HOW ARE THEY DIFFERENT?

A. Ambition

- Both the Paris Agreement and Westport's Net-Zero by 2050 goal are aimed at addressing the same problem with similar levels of ambition
- While the Paris Agreement is more vague in the target dates (referring to 'in the second half of the century'), Westport has chosen '2050' to be both clearer and in recognition of the need for towns like Westport to be at the lead edge of the solutions

B. Definitions

- The Paris Agreement has expanded on the definition for Net-Zero in Article 4 for international clarity: "achieve a balance between anthropogenic emissions by sources and removals by sinks of greenhouse gases"
- Westport has adopted 'Net-Zero' along with many other municipalities and companies for the sake of brevity. It also allows us to communicate our intended wider scope...

C. Scope

- The Paris Agreement is focussed on Greenhouse Gas Emissions, and countries' plans have addressed wider issues within their respective plans ("NDCs")
- Westport explicitly wanted to aspire to create a Town that will be fully sustainable for future generations (so that the town's children will want to raise their own children here in due course). This prompted us to include Net-Zero definitions for Water and Waste in addition to Energy & Emissions.

D. A Wish to Measure and Manage

"you can't manage what you can't measure"

- The reporting process at the international level has been extensively negotiated and well-established. Important update following US administration signaling a wish to withdraw from the Paris Agreement: To replace future US national efforts at UNFCCC, Bloomberg Philanthropies have recently pledged to help coordinate and fund a continued roll-up of sub-national reporting to still enable USA to participate at the global level³
- Westport has started to benchmark GHG emissions (CDP for Town, Municipal, and BOE in 2015 and 2016), and would continue to do so. Westport GTF has provided volunteer support for this and can provide an annual report of implementation efforts.

³ <https://www.bloomberg.org/program/environment/americas-pledge/>