



Environment

City Council members push for global warming initiative

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By Daniel Barbarisi

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PROVIDENCE — Two Providence city councilmen are urging the state to set targets for reducing global warming-related emissions, in the hope that an initiative that starts at the ground level will push lawmakers to back statewide legislation on global warming.

Democratic Councilmen Seth Yurdin and Cliff Wood have submitted a resolution to be heard at tomorrow's City Council meeting that would ask the state to reduce Rhode Island global warming-related pollution 20 percent by 2020 and 80 percent by 2050, versus levels in 1990.

"The city has done work to get its house in order. It's appropriate to push the state to do the same thing," said Wood, who works with Yurdin and others on the city's Environmental Sustainability Task Force.

The action comes in advance of the expected General Assembly introduction next week of a bill setting those goals for the state, said Agatha Wein, global warming associate for the Environment Rhode Island, an environmental advocacy group.

Environment Rhode Island has been working with local communities to create a groundswell of city and town support before the legislation hits the floor of the Assembly.

"We think that it's really time for the state to step up with a comprehensive plan to reduce pollution all over the state," Wein said. "We want to build momentum for this bill, and it would be great to see it come right out with a strong showing of support."

Warren and Newport might also pass similar measures in the next few days, she said.

Wein said that this would be the first time that such a large statewide global warming target initiative would come before the Assembly. According to Environment Rhode Island, the state has previously committed to reducing global warming pollution 10 percent by 2020, but is not on track to hit that goal.

"The initiatives we've been pushing for have been sort of piecemeal," she said. "This is the first time that we're trying to go for this big umbrella solution for global warming at the state level."

The legislation would not specify how the state must meet these targets, but would mandate that Rhode Island come up with a plan for doing so.

Providence has already embarked on much the same path, Yurdin said, and is cataloguing all of its leading pollutants and greenhouse gas emitters, with an eye towards determining where the greatest impact can be found.

“They’ve started to zero in based on the inventory on what the biggest producers of greenhouse gases in the city are,” he said.

Among the areas they plan to address are improving the efficiency of heating systems, turning off lights and computers in city buildings and making the city’s fleet of vehicles more efficient.

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