

Keith Ervin  
for Interfaith Climate Action - First Hill

January 16, 2020

Mayor Jenny A. Durkan  
Office of the Mayor  
City of Seattle

Dear Mayor Durkan:

I am writing on behalf of Interfaith Climate Action - First Hill in regard to your Executive Order 2020-01, Advancing a Green New Deal for Seattle. Interfaith Climate Action - First Hill is a collaboration between Seattle First Baptist Church and Bet Alef Meditative Synagogue. The people of faith who founded this group recognize that saving a livable planet for the least among us and for future generations is the most profound moral challenge of our time.

We are pleased that you have taken action to advance solutions to the climate emergency and make the Green New Deal for Seattle a success. Among the positive policies included in your Executive Order are the directive to departments to work with key stakeholder groups, creation of a Green New Deal City Team, the focus on high-impact and “top 10” climate actions, and decarbonizing the buildings and transportation sectors that account for most of Seattle’s core greenhouse gas emissions. We applaud your intention to move toward fossil-free municipal buildings, as an important first step toward citywide decarbonization of buildings of all ownerships.

However, we are concerned that installation of natural-gas heating in the remodeled Seattle Center Arena will lock in additional greenhouse gas emissions for years or decades to come. We understand from Daniel Beekman’s January 9, 2020 article in *The Seattle Times* that the arena is not subject to the Executive Order’s ban on fossil fuel heating and cooking sources in new or substantially altered municipal buildings. Heating the arena for the projected 130 annual sports events and concerts per year is projected to emit 1,207 metric tons of greenhouse gases (DEIS, April 2018, p. 10-12).

*We ask that you change the heating source for the arena from natural gas to a renewable source, such as ground-to-air or air-to-air heat exchangers. We are aware that demolition and excavation are taking place and that this is not an ideal time to negotiate change orders with the City’s arena partners and contractors. But given the climate emergency we are in, we ask that you and your staff work with the City Council and the Oak View Group to find a negotiated path -- and funding -- that will lead to installation of a carbon-neutral heating system at the Seattle Center Arena. Although this could carry a significant price tag outside of the budgeting season, it would avoid the cost of installing separate heating and cooling systems as well as conversion of the heat source in a future year. We know this is not an easy task, but it is one that, once*

accomplished, will demonstrate that Seattle is serious and aggressive about reducing carbon emissions.

Installation of a natural-gas heating system at the arena is contrary to the goals of Seattle's long-standing goal of reducing carbon emissions by 2030 to 50 percent below 2008 emissions and by 2050 to net zero emissions. As you are aware, the City Council-adopted Green New Deal Resolution calls for zero carbon emissions in Seattle by 2030, and Executive Order 2020-01 calls for emissions reduction consistent with no more than a 1.5-degree Celsius worldwide increase above pre-industrial temperatures (a goal that requires 45 percent emissions reduction by 2030, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change). *To accomplish any of these ambitious but necessary goals, every action by the City of Seattle must reduce, not increase, carbon emissions.*

Thank you for your attention, and we hope you will take this urgent step to slow the pace of climate devastation. We look forward to working with you in the future and supporting other emissions-reducing actions your administration will propose.

Sincerely,

Keith Ervin  
for Interfaith Climate Action - First Hill  
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