

Dear San Francisco Board of Supervisors,

On behalf of the San Francisco Commission on the Environment, I write to you today about the Department and its funding sources. As you know, the world is facing an existential climate crisis. In 2019, the Board of Supervisors recognized the urgency and severity of this crisis and declared a Climate Emergency.<sup>1</sup> At the Environment Commission, we fully supported this declaration because there is not a moment to spare. We already see the harsh reality of climate change all around us and it is disproportionately affecting San Francisco's communities of color. Now is the time to pull out all the stops and move forward with new and bold climate action if we are going to truly have an impact.

The Department is in the middle of developing a Climate Action Plan that will tell us how we protect our most vulnerable communities from the impacts of climate change and meet the City's ambitious, and necessary, environmental goals. Once it is complete and released, we need to ensure that the Department is able to support implementation if we are determined to make progress in preventing the worst effects of climate change.

Maintaining the City's leadership, implementing the Climate Action Plan, and continuing to make significant contributions to resolving the climate crisis depends on a strong and financially secure Department of the Environment. This is the opposite of what we have now. The Commission hears a presentation on the Department budget every year and it never includes any predictable or stable funding from sources such as the General Fund. This leaves the Department dependent on uncertain sources such as grants and work orders as well as from restricted funds such as the "Impound Account" from refuse rates. This cannot continue. In order to truly set an example and maintain our leading role in the fight for climate stability and justice<sup>2</sup>, we need to match our City's values with a reliable source of funding for the Department of the Environment.

Given the scale, complexity, and magnitude of this climate emergency, we call upon the City to acknowledge that the Department's traditional funding model is no longer sufficient. While it has become clear that the Department does do great work with outside sources of funds, the Department must have additional funding that is both secure and stable for the long-term if we are to truly build the all-electric, resilient City of the future. As we continue to experience the increasing visceral effects of climate change each year, not fully funding the implementation of our Climate Action Plan is unthinkable.

The Department stands ready to continue to inspire and innovate to keep San Francisco a leader in responding to the climate crisis. But we need your help to do so. On behalf of the Department, this Commission would be happy to meet with you to discuss your thoughts on securing long-term funding for the Department.

Sincerely,

Heather Stephenson  
President, Commission on the Environment

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<sup>1</sup> <https://sfbos.org/sites/default/files/r0160-19.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://carbonneutralcities.org/cities/san-francisco/>, <https://www.sfchronicle.com/science/article/S-F-mayor-urges-global-leaders-to-join-city-13224838.php#photo-16157732>,  
<https://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/article/No-more-natural-gas-in-new-San-Francisco-15717658.php>