



MEMORANDUM

TO: Freeport Town Council
FROM: Meddy Smith, Sustainability Coordinator
DATE: August 24, 2023
SUBJECT: Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reductions Target Setting for the Climate Action Plan

This memorandum provides information for Town Council review related to the Freeport Sustainability Advisory Board (FSAB) recommendation for setting targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. As you are aware, the Town of Freeport is working to develop a Climate Action Plan with the support of the Greater Portland Council of Governments. Typical with these climate action planning processes, targets are set to reduce both community-wide and municipal greenhouse gas emissions.

Greenhouse gas emissions, generated from the burning of fossil fuels, are polluting gases that trap heat in the atmosphere and disrupt normal climate patterns. Changing climate conditions – like more extreme heat and storms - cause a range of impacts on our public health and safety, the resilience of our economy, and the health of our natural environment. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions (i.e., mitigation) is the primary solution to address climate change.

Developing emissions reductions targets is valuable for:

- Setting benchmarks for measuring progress towards reducing emissions contributed by Freeport – allowing future Emissions Inventories to reflect directional trends
- Creating tailored and measurable key indicators that demonstrate progress
- Defining an aspirational long-term commitment that town staff, leadership, and the community can pursue

Freeport currently does not have targets for reducing the contribution of greenhouse gas emissions from residents, businesses, or municipal operations – although many actions have already been taken by the community and municipality to promote a sustainable future. As reflected in the Comprehensive Plan (2011) and the Downtown Freeport Vision Plan (2022), efforts to prepare for and mitigate climate change impacts are a clear priority of the wider Freeport community. Effective mitigation requires reducing greenhouse gas emissions in all sectors and setting reduction targets can greatly facilitate these efforts. The Town is currently in the process of drafting a Climate Action Plan that will include targets to reduce emissions.

The Freeport Sustainability Advisory Board recommends that the Town Council approve the following emissions reductions targets:

- **Community-wide (residential, commercial, industrial sectors etc.)**
 - *65% reduction in emissions from a 2019 baseline by 2030*
 - *85% reduction in emissions from a 2019 baseline by 2040*
 - *Net zero emissions by 2050*
- **Municipal Facilities and Operations**
 - *Net zero emissions by 2040*

Relevant to the recommended targets above, Net Zero is defined as:

- Net Zero is when the greenhouse gases going into the atmosphere are balanced by reduction and removal from the atmosphere. Removal is pursued only after all reduction strategies are exhausted (as advised by the Freeport Sustainability Advisory Board).

The Freeport Sustainability Advisory Board has made these recommendations with consideration of the unique context of the Freeport community, municipal resource capacity, [the tailored analysis of GPCOG](#), and the emissions reductions endorsed by current scientific consensus. The above recommended targets have taken into account the International Climate Agreement targets that have been adopted by many communities around the world, including in Maine, in addition to the targets adopted by the State itself.

The Freeport Sustainability Advisory Board is recommending the Council approve the emissions reductions targets as presented above. Setting these targets is a critical step in the Climate Action Planning process and one that directs the remainder of this planning effort – both in plan content and process timeline.

The Freeport Sustainability Advisory Board looks forward to presenting these recommendations to the Town Council.