



The League of Women Voters of Portland

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DATE: November 10, 2016

TO: Mayor Hales, Commissioners Fish, Fritz, Novick, and Saltzman

FROM: League of Women Voters of Portland
Fran Dyke, President
Julie Chapman, Action Committee Member

RE: Fossil Fuel Terminal Zoning Amendments

Since the 1950s the League of Women Voters has worked at federal and state levels to protect air, land and water resources. More recently, the League has lobbied vigorously for comprehensive legislation to control global climate change. Any increase in fossil fuel infrastructure is not consistent with the current League of Women Voters natural resources and climate change positions, nor with Portland's Climate Action Plan.

We want to thank the Planning and Sustainability Commission and the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability for their work to develop the zoning code recommendations for City Council Resolution 37168. Several drafts were submitted to industry stakeholders and to the community for feedback before the Commission recommendations were incorporated. The resulting draft now before the City Council is closer to the Resolution's intention to reduce fossil fuel use in our region.

We would like to discuss the proposed increased capacity in new and existing terminals, and the climate goals adopted by Oregon, Portland and Multnomah County.

The current zoning code recommendations allow for new terminals, with a maximum capacity of 2 million gallons, and restrict new tank construction in the existing 10 bulk petroleum terminals to a 10% increase above current capacity. This has been suggested as an incentive for the fossil fuel companies to replace old tanks with those complying with current seismic guidelines.¹

Having followed the process of code development, we observe that the recommendation for allowing 10% increases in capacity for existing terminals is arbitrary. If you are looking for coherence in policy, we suggest that a 5% increase in capacity would be consistent with the maximum capacity of 2 million gallons allowed for new terminals.²

However, we find that any increase in fossil fuel terminal development is not compatible with the state climate goals, nor with Portland's Climate Action Plan. These goals do not state the exception "unless we have an increase in regional population." In fact, regional population increases are assumed in the calculations.³ The goals are a reflection of the important task before us to leave behind the "business as usual" paradigm and to adopt a clean energy policy.

Climate impacts on Oregon's economy have been analyzed in many spheres: forest fires and timber loss, extreme weather events, public health, sea level rise and storm surge flooding, Pacific ocean acidification with severe impacts for the shellfish industry, and drought impacts on fisheries and agriculture. Remediation costs and loss of revenue for the state (and by extension, for Portlanders) will increase as weather extremes intensify and water resources become less predictable.

The good news is that costs for developing alternative energy resources are coming down all the time and in much of the world are actually lower than the costs for constructing new fossil fuel infrastructure.⁴ We live in a state without a petroleum extraction industry, and with a wealth of water, sun and wind. If any region in the world is well-suited to shift to renewable energy, it is Portland and Oregon.

We urge you to exercise foresight and to stick to the goals you have adopted in Resolution 37168. If "cities lead," we'd like to head in the right direction.

1. Portland Planning and Sustainability Commission, October 11, 2016.

2. The total capacity for petroleum in the 10 existing terminals is 386 million gallons, giving an average capacity of 39 million gallons per terminal. A 5% increase in size would give each terminal an average increase of 1.95 million gallons, consistent with the 2 million gallon new terminals allowed.

3. 2015 Climate Action Plan, p. 20, www.portlandoregon.gov/bps/climate

4. <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-04-06/wind-and-solar-are-crushing-fossil-fuels>

