

# **TOWNSHIP OF MAPLEWOOD**



## **RESOLUTION NO. 219-21**

### **RESOLUTION URGING THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY TO HOLD FOSSIL FUEL COMPANIES ACCOUNTABLE FOR CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION AND RESILIENCE COSTS**

**WHEREAS**, the Township of Maplewood located in Essex County, New Jersey with approximately 25,000 residents, and the Township is home to the largest public nature reserve in the Essex County park system; and

**WHEREAS**, Essex County and communities across the state of New Jersey are experiencing the increasingly severe impacts of climate change and rising global temperatures. In New Jersey, sea levels are rising more than twice the global average; and

**WHEREAS**, North and Central New Jersey have antiquated combined sewage and stormwater systems that flood contaminants into the Hudson, Hackensack, Passaic, Raritan and Elizabeth rivers during heavy rains, which have become more frequent as the climate warms; and

**WHEREAS**, climate impacts including drought will exacerbate the stress already put on state water supplies due to development and agricultural land use. Water turbidity is also likely to increase with more severe storms, raising treatment costs and reducing effectiveness; and

**WHEREAS**, upgrading New Jersey's stormwater, drinking water and wastewater infrastructure systems would cost \$40 billion over the next 20 years statewide, according to 2020 testimony from the New Jersey League of Conservation Voters to the Assembly Special Committee on Infrastructure and Natural Resources. During Hurricane Sandy, more than 10.9 billion gallons of sewage overflowed, and the costs of cleanup and remediation will continue to rise as storms increase; and

**WHEREAS**, as documented in the 2020 Essex County Hazard Mitigation Report, the Township of Maplewood has already begun planning for flood damage prevention, stormwater management, and stormwater pollution prevention, and has already incurred costly climate-driven

damages: a severe winter storm in 2018 that cost the Township over \$64,000, for example; increasing the capacity of a drainage culvert on Mountain, Maple and Berkley Streets for flood mitigation cost about \$800,000; stabilizing the banks of Lightning Brook will cost an estimated \$3,000,000 to \$5,000,000, and doing the same for the East Branch of the Rahway River will cost millions more; and

**WHEREAS**, in 2019, Governor Phil Murphy signed a bill into law that gives towns and counties the ability to impose fees on property owners to finance upgrades to stormwater systems based on how much their property contributes to runoff, which is set to increase as precipitation grows more intense and frequent; and

**WHEREAS**, due to an ongoing history of systemic inequality and racism, people of color and low-income people bear a disproportionate burden of climate damages including from extreme heat, flooding, and supercharged storms, yet often go without access to the resources necessary in order to adapt, treat public health impacts, and build resilience. Researchers at Climate Central found that working class Black and immigrant populations in Essex County are most exposed to the deadly impacts of extreme heat; and

**WHEREAS**, in the United States, carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions from burning fossil fuels amounted to 76% of total human-caused greenhouse gases (GHGs) and NASA explains the “greenhouse effect” as when carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxides trap heat in the atmosphere and cause temperatures to rise, known as “global warming;” and

**WHEREAS**, fossil fuel companies have knowingly produced, marketed, promoted, and sold fossil fuels over the last 50 years despite their contribution to global warming, without protecting or warning consumers about the dangers, and have spent millions of dollars on campaigns to obscure the truth to protect their own assets; and

**WHEREAS**, 26 states and municipalities throughout the United States have filed lawsuits against major oil and gas companies for the costs of adapting to climate damages those companies knowingly caused, and/or for defrauding consumers as to the risks those companies knew their products would cause.

**NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Township Committee of the Township of Maplewood, County of Essex, State of New Jersey that:

1. Governor Murphy is urged to take legal action against the fossil fuel industry for their role in creating and perpetuating the climate crisis to ensure that the costs of adaptation and resilience does not fall solely on the shoulders of taxpayers.
2. Copies of this Resolution shall be forwarded to our representatives in Congress, the members of the New Jersey General Assembly and the State Senate, the Lieutenant Governor, the Governor of the State of New Jersey, and to the Attorney General of the State of New Jersey.

I, Elizabeth J. Fritzen, Township Clerk of the Township of Maplewood, in the County of Essex and State of New Jersey, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of a Resolution adopted by the Township Committee of the Township of Maplewood, County of Essex, State of New Jersey, at a regular meeting of said Committee held on July 20, 2021.

**IN WITNESS WHEREOF**, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed the seal of the Township of Maplewood in the County of Essex and State of New Jersey, on this 20th day of July, 2021.

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**ELIZABETH J. FRITZEN, R.M.C.**  
Township Clerk