

Concord accepts \$860,000 grant to create environmental plans

Paul Thissen, Contra Costa Times, 12-22-10

Concord -- The city's staff thought it would be a formality -- the official acceptance of a grant of nearly \$1 million to fund the creation of a climate action plan for Concord, which the city was required to do next year.

But for the five residents who spoke at the City Council meeting to oppose the city's acceptance of the grant, it was a dangerous step toward totalitarianism.

The council voted unanimously to accept the \$859,970 grant from the California Strategic Growth Council, an arm of the state government charged with disbursing grants for sustainable community planning, according to a city staff report. It was created after the passage of Proposition 84 in 2006, which allocated \$65 million for that purpose.

Concord was one of 24 cities and counties selected to receive the money, from among 100 that applied, according to the report.

The grant will pay for the creation of the city's climate action plan, which is required under AB32 and SB375, the state's landmark laws aimed at curbing greenhouse gas emissions. If Concord had not received the grant, the city would have had to foot climate action plan costs with its own money.

The plan will set a baseline for the city's greenhouse gas emissions and include policies intended to cut that emission level by about 20 percent by 2030, said Michael Wright, the city's project manager for the reuse of the Concord Naval Weapons Station.

Those policies may include anything from traffic management to green building standards to water conservation, Wright said. Once consultants develop a plan, the city will hold public hearings on it and the City Council can request revisions before any approval.

A separate climate action plan for the weapons station is almost complete; set to be released early next year, it would be incorporated in the citywide plan.

The grant will also pay for development of a natural resource conservation strategy for the weapons station. For example, it would consider what should happen with Mt. Diablo Creek on the entire property, rather than requiring each individual property owner to obtain permits from state and federal wildlife agencies, Wright said.

One resident spoke at the meeting to support the grant. Five spoke to oppose it.

Spurred to the meeting by an e-mail they received, the opponents said the climate plan would lead to limitations on personal freedoms, like bans of SUVs and even limits on the consumption of meat in favor of vegetarian diets.

Concord should refuse to go along with the state laws requiring the climate plans, because they are based on "junk science" propagated by international environmental organizations, the speakers said.

"I don't believe that you're fully informed on global warming," said resident Scott Goodwin. "There is no global warming. Global warming is only affected by sunspot activity. We will do nothing on this earth that will affect

global warming."

After the meeting, Goodwin said he did not think the council had fully considered the implications of their vote.

"They were not listening to what I had to say; they had already made up their minds," Goodwin said. "They're in a budgetary crunch and they're going to accept money from whatever source they can, whether or not they're credible."

According to NASA, a majority of climate scientists have concluded that human activities are responsible for most of the warming that has occurred since the late 1800s. A "small number" of scientists say the warming has occurred because of the sun's energy, not human activity, according to the agency's website.

"But the vast majority of climatologists believe that increases in the sun's energy have contributed only slightly to recent warming," according to the agency's website.