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MEMORANDUM
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

TO: George Burgess
County Manager

DATE: July 2, 2009

FROM: Katy Sorenson
County Commissioner, District 8

SUBJECT: Climate Change and
Sustainability Plans

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COUNTY MANAGER'S OFFICE

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Recently I had the pleasure of speaking to the members of the County's Climate Change Advisory Task Force (CCATF). During my interaction with the group and after evaluating the significant implications of the initial sea level rise projections developed by DERM, I sensed that there was a frustration among the members that the County was not proceeding rapidly enough with the Task Force's initial recommendations accepted by the Board of County Commissioners in April 2008.

After again reviewing the initial report to the Board, I see that quite a few of the CCATF policy recommendations have been either acted upon or are being included in other discussions that the County is currently having on sustainability, land use planning, and changes to County operations. I think it would benefit the Task Force to receive a status report from the County on the set of initial recommendations to show how their thoughtful deliberations have influenced the direction of the County.

As the County embarks on the development of a sustainability plan through our partnership with ICLEI and the City of New York, the CCATF should be brought in as policy advisors on aspects of the plan that address climate change adaptation. Additionally, the CCATF will be a great resource for ideas on how to meet our adopted policy mandate for reducing our "carbon footprint" by 80% by 2050. The CCATF endorsed the County's mandate with a recommendation that we achieve an annual reduction of 2% per year for an intermediate goal of a 20% reduction by 2020.

The County's obligation to this effort should be to develop a new climate change mitigation plan, working from the final Urban CO2 Reduction Plan, that would meet these greenhouse gas reduction targets. The CCATF should be involved in the development of that plan, suggest revisions and make their recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners. I believe that this report can be both a part of the larger sustainability plan, and a separate blueprint for meeting the challenge of climate change.

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Further, as the Department of Environmental Resources Management refines their draft maps projecting sea level rise based on the feedback they have received from the Climate Change Task Force Science Committee, the County needs to start preparing an inventory of public assets and planned capital projects that could be affected within the 2050 planning horizon. These maps are the starting point for determining an effective strategy for adaptation, and also highlight the additional research needed to reasonably predict where more refined planning will be most needed. The County should continue its efforts to collaborate with our State and Federal partners to further refine these maps, develop new surface and ground water models, and identify areas of highest vulnerability. This will aid the Task Force in making recommendations for adaptation.

The CCATF is required to report to the Board of County Commissioners every June, so I would anticipate that the next Miami-Dade CO2 reduction plan, with an endorsement from the Task Force be presented to the Board for our review by June 2010. Additional recommendations from the CCATF are expected to be received by the Board soon. The policy recommendations presented and accepted by the Board should be worked into a climate change adaptation plan that incorporates the sea level rise maps and any further adaptation recommendations for Board review by June 2010 as well.

Now that the County has partnered with the City of New York and ICLEI-USA as a pilot community to adapt the PlaNYC sustainable city plan for Miami-Dade County, I would encourage the Office of Sustainability to incorporate the requested Climate Change adaptation and mitigation plans into the larger sustainability plan. Additionally, the County is now in the process of developing recommendations for the 2010 Evaluation and Appraisal Report. Integration of policy recommendations from the CCATF as well as the sustainability plan, Comprehensive Development Master Plan, and Climate Change mitigation and adaptation plans will be critical to creating a cohesive sustainability policy. I would request that you provide the Commission with a timeline for the development of our Sustainable County plan and that you provide the necessary resources to this effort.

Thank you for your attention and continued commitment to this important issue.

cc: Honorable Harvey Ruvin, Chairman
and Members of the Climate Change Advisory Task Force