

RESOLUTION

BY: COUNCIL PRESIDENT LESNICK, MAJORITY LEADER TERRERO and
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RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF YONKERS IN SUPPORT OF REDUCING GREENHOUSE GAS POLLUTION UNDER THE CLEAN AIR ACT

WHEREAS, the decade from 2000 to 2010 was the warmest on record, 2005 and 2010 tied for the hottest years on record; and January through September 2012 were the warmest first nine months of any year on record for the contiguous U.S.; and

WHEREAS, the current level of CO₂ in the atmosphere is approximately 392 parts per million (ppm); and

WHEREAS, one of the world's leading climate scientists, Dr. James Hansen, stated in 2008: "If humanity wishes to preserve a planet similar to that on which civilization developed and to which life on Earth is adapted, paleoclimate evidence and climate change suggest that CO₂ will need to be reduced from its current 385 ppm to at most 350 ppm; and

WHEREAS, the Environmental Protection Agency determined that current and future greenhouse gas concentrations endanger public health, and according to the Global Humanitarian Forum climate change is already responsible every year for some 300,000 deaths, 325 million people seriously affected, and economic losses worldwide of U.S. \$125 billion; and

WHEREAS, extreme weather events, most notably heat waves and precipitation extremes, are striking with increased frequency, with deadly consequences for people and wildlife; in the United States in 2011 alone, a record 14 weather and climate disasters occurred, including droughts, heat waves, and floods, that cost at least \$1 billion each in damages and loss of human lives; and

WHEREAS, climate change creates conditions that lead to more destructive storms like 2012's Superstorm Sandy, by loading storms with more energy and more rainfall, raising sea levels and causing storm surge to ride on a higher sea surface so that more coastline floods, and warming the Arctic and melting sea ice, which causes changes in the jet stream that are bringing more extreme weather to the U.S.; and

WHEREAS, climate change is affecting food security by reducing the growth and yields of important crops; droughts, floods and changes in snowpack are altering water supplies; as of October 2, 2012, 64.6 percent of the contiguous U.S. was experiencing moderate-to-exceptional drought; and in 2012, the U.S. Department of Agriculture designated more than half (50.3 percent) of all U.S. counties disaster areas, mainly due to drought; and

WHEREAS, scientists have concluded that by 2100 as many as one in 10 species may be on the verge of extinction due to climate change; and

WHEREAS, the world's land-based ice is rapidly melting, threatening water supplies in many

regions and raising sea levels, and Arctic summer sea ice extent has decreased to about half what it was several decades ago, and reached a record low in 2012, with an accompanying drastic reduction in sea-ice thickness and volume, which is severely jeopardizing ice-dependent animals; and WHEREAS, global sea level is rising 60 percent faster than projected by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change; the U.S. East Coast is a hotspot for sea level rise with rates three to four times faster than the global average; sea level rise is accelerating in pace; and sea level could rise by one to two meters in this century, threatening millions of Americans with severe flooding; and

WHEREAS, for four decades, the Clean Air Act has protected the air we breathe through a proven, comprehensive, successful system of pollution control that saves lives and creates economic benefits exceeding its costs by many times; and

WHEREAS, with the Clean Air Act, air quality in this country has improved significantly since 1970, despite major growth both in our economy and industrial production; and

WHEREAS, between 1970 and 1990, the six main pollutants covered by the Clean Air Act — particulate matter and ground-level ozone (both of which contribute to smog and asthma), carbon monoxide, lead, sulfur and nitrogen oxides (the pollutants that cause acid rain) — were reduced by between 47 percent and 93 percent, and airborne lead was virtually eliminated; and

WHEREAS, the Clean Air Act has produced economic benefits valued at \$2 trillion or 30 times the cost of regulation; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Massachusetts vs. EPA* (2007) that greenhouse gases are “air pollutants” as defined by the Clean Air Act and the Environmental Protection Agency has the authority to regulate them; and

WHEREAS, The City of Yonkers prides itself on being a leader in the fight against climate change and for clean air; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that climate change is not an abstract problem for the future or one that will only affect far-distant places but rather climate change is happening now, we are causing it, and the longer we wait to act, the more we lose and the more difficult the problem will be to solve; and we, the Yonkers City Council, on behalf of the residents of Yonkers, do hereby urge the administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency and President Barack Obama to move swiftly to fully employ and enforce the Clean Air Act to do our part to reduce carbon in our atmosphere to no more than 350 parts per million.