

Warren County Environmental Committee meeting 8/24/2023

Public Statement by Diane Collins

(Warren County citizen and co-founder North Country Earth Action.org)

Climate has been “the elephant in the room” and not talked about at public meetings. But today in this room it is being talked about (and seen by the public who watch YouTube) thanks to your chair Claudia Braymer. I’ve been to several county Board of Supervisors meetings as well as committee meetings and climate warming has never been mentioned or discussed for the public to hear. Of course you are aware, but does the public know what mitigation actions (reducing fossil fuel use) you are taking, or recommending, in response to worsening climate warming.

We know it is getting worse. This year has been the hottest year on record. Extreme heat, rain, fire, floods, and drought are worsening across the globe. All these disasters have been linked to climate change. Towns are being destroyed. Fires are raging. Food production is at risk.

We cannot look the other way. We must not go forward with programs and projects as if the climate crisis does not exist. Warren County Supervisors need to let their electorate know that they recognize the immensity of the climate crisis facing the earth. Climate awareness and climate action need to be part of our daily lives.

What is the Board of Supervisors doing about climate?

We read Don Lehman’s Warren County Weekly News. We know about preparedness classes for weather extremes. We know about creating a comprehensive plan mapping the county’s future for the next two decades. All good. But the words “climate warming” or “climate crisis” have not been spelled out for the public. Hopefully, reducing fossil fuel use significantly will be prominently recommended in the comprehensive plan.

The climate problem is so big, so looming, that it is tempting to step aside. Warren County must not step aside. Warren County might consider hiring a “Climate Advisor” to track Federal and State climate bills, follow climate science news, advise on county projects, inform the public on climate actions and issues, develop a county wide Climate Action Plan. This is where leadership comes in. To show the public it’s important to act. Warren County can be a model announcing their recommendations for county employees to take mitigation actions (actions that reduce fossil fuel use) such as ride sharing, drive less for county tasks, future purchase of electric vehicles, climate savings incentives, rebates, value of heat pumps, etc. The public may follow. Address climate issues at county meetings which are also on YouTube. Are towns developing climate action initiatives? Share with the public. Use the Warren County Weekly News to let the public know that Warren County Supervisors are responding with positive actions, that this big looming climate issue is in our headlights, and we can all take part.

Thank you very much.