

Portola Valley signs up for global-warming pact

■ Council joins other U.S. cities in climate-protection agreement.

By David Boyce
Almanac Staff Writer

Portola Valley, a town known for its sensitivity to environmental issues, has taken a big step on a big environmental issue: it is joining some 294 other U.S. cities and towns that have decided to commit to the goals of the international global warming treaty known as the Kyoto Protocol.

With Councilwoman Maryann Moise Derwin absent, the Town Council unanimously agreed on Wednesday, September 13, to sign the U.S. Mayors' Climate Protection Agreement, thereby committing the council and other town officials to encourage residents to join the town in an effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 7 percent below 1990 levels by 2012.

The council will be asking for volunteers to join a committee called the Climate Change Task Force, whose goal would be to come up

■ INFORMATION

A greenhouse gas traps heat in the earth's atmosphere. Carbon dioxide is a ubiquitous greenhouse gas because it is a byproduct whenever fossil fuel is burned. Levels of atmospheric CO₂ have been rising steadily since the start of the Industrial Revolution in the 18th century. For ideas on living a greener life:

- Check the link to the San Mateo County Green Building guide in the Building, Planning & Engineering page of the Portola Valley Web site at portolavalley.net.
- Check the Web site of Acterra, a Palo-Alto-based environmental organization, at acterra.org.
- Check the iGreen Gate Guide to the San Francisco Bay Area from the National Resources Defense Council at nrdc.org/greengate.

with ideas for reducing local greenhouse gas emissions. Mayor Steve Toben will host a meeting to discuss the committee's charter on Tuesday, October 3, at 7:30 p.m. at the

Historic Schoolhouse.

School children will be enlisted if they choose to participate, said Planning Manager Leslie Lambert, the committee contact person.

"I think it's a way to give these young people some sense of mission and control over their futures," she said. The mayors' program "is based on a recognition that this problem is real and that we have a civic obligation to respond."

Craig Breon, an environmental activist and a former member of the town's Planning Commission, reminded the council of the difference between measurable goals that the town staff may actually have some control over and moral suasion and education.

You can't control what kinds of cars people drive or how much they drive, he noted.

If the task force's brainstorming sessions could result in three or four measurable sources of reduced emissions per year, that would be

See GLOBAL-WARMING, page 8

September 20, 2006 ■ The Almanac ■ 5

GLOBAL WARMING

continued from page 5

satisfactory, he said, adding that he wants to be on the task force.

Councilman Ted Driscoll pointed out that any progress the task force makes would also reduce, however slightly, the country's dependence on foreign sources of energy and that that, too, is a good thing.

Other local cities and towns that have signed the Climate Protection Agreement include Palo Alto, Los Altos Hills, San Bruno, San Francisco and San Jose.

About 165 countries have ratified the Kyoto treaty since it was negotiated in December 1997. The United States has not ratified the treaty, in part because India and China are temporarily exempt from its restrictions. ■