

Letter to be read at August 11th UAB meeting re GRU Gas Rebates

We, the undersigned, are urging the UAB to recommend to the City Commission that GRU discontinue all natural gas rebates.

Methane, the greenhouse gas released during the production, transportation, and burning of natural gas, has 80 times the warming power of carbon dioxide for the first 20 years after being released. Levels of methane in the atmosphere have been growing rapidly over the last 15 years, spurred on by our increased consumption of natural gas. We now know that curbing our methane emissions is just as important to mitigating climate change as reducing CO₂, maybe even more so in the short term.

We also know that methane is accompanied by highly toxic chemicals and poses major health and safety hazards. In the home, gas appliances, especially gas stoves, have been linked to poor indoor air quality and negative health impacts in vulnerable populations, including children with asthma and the elderly.

Recognizing the urgency, cities across the nation have started banning new gas infrastructure and [passing laws to prohibit the expanded use of gas in buildings](#).

By promoting and subsidizing increased use of gas in our homes, GRU is doing the exact opposite of what we need to do. Adding long-term fossil fuel customers is incompatible with the City of Gainesville's 2018 commitment to moving toward 100% clean renewable energy.

We must instead create a plan to transition away from using gas in our buildings. The first obvious step is to eliminate the rebates. Additionally, we must:

- stop any proposals for new gas infrastructure;
- slow down gas infrastructure replacement programs while aggressively seeking out and repairing leaks;
- decommission aging gas lines through targeted, neighborhood-level electrification;
- design a robust incentive program that will allow low to moderate income neighbors to participate in the transition by replacing aging appliances and air conditioning systems with more efficient electric appliances and systems using recognized heat pump technologies.

We know a shift away from fossil fuel infrastructure is inevitable and that we must do it quickly. To protect utility customers from bearing the costs of an outdated infrastructure in the future, we must stop investing in it today.

Organizations signing on:

AC League of Women Voters Natural Resources Committee, Roberta Gastmeyer & Jay Rosenbek

NAACP Environment and Climate Justice Committee, Nkwanda Jah

Alachua County Labor Coalition, Shelia Payne

Suwannee St-Johns Sierra Club, Sarah Younger

Citizens' Climate Lobby – Gainesville, Bob Tancig

Climate Reality Project – Gainesville Area, Kathleen Pagan

Zero Waste Gainesville, Amanda Waddle & Nina Batthachayra

The Repurpose Project, Sara Goff

North Florida Right to Clean Water, David Moritz

Creation Care and Climate Justice Task Force, United Church of Gainesville, Jim Harper