

April 27, 2021

Request to Cotati City Council to consider an ordinance prohibiting the construction of any new gas stations in Cotati.

To: Cotati City Council members
Cc: City Manager

Dear City Council Members:

We urge you to consider passing an ordinance to prohibit the permitting or construction of any new gas stations in the City of Cotati.

[The Coalition Opposing New Gas Stations \(CONGAS\)](#) has been working to stop the construction of new gas stations in Sonoma County since February 2019, when you may remember there was an application to construct a new ARCO gas station two miles west of Cotati in unincorporated Sonoma County, at Hwy 116/Stony Point Road. The applicant withdrew in the face of fierce public opposition. We are grateful that the City of Cotati did not support the proposal. CONGAS has actively opposed other gas station proposals in Sonoma County and the City of Santa Rosa since then, and to date two other applications have been withdrawn and one is on hold.

As you know, the City of Petaluma passed an ordinance in February 2021 prohibiting the construction of any new gas stations, apparently the first City in the nation to do so. CONGAS is urging the County of Sonoma and the City of Santa Rosa, and now the City of Cotati, to do the same.

The City of Cotati unanimously passed a [Climate Emergency Resolution](#) on November 26, 2019. The urgency to act in response to the climate crisis has only increased since then.

We know that the burning of fossil fuels is a major cause of the climate crisis, and that transportation is a major source of greenhouse gas emissions in Sonoma County. Fossil fuels including gasoline leave a wake of destruction to people around the world and to the planet, whether due to extraction, pipeline construction and leaks, or processing. Indigenous people and communities of color are disproportionately affected.

Cotati already has an abundance of gas stations (five within 2 miles, plus an abandoned gas station site) and there is no demonstrated need for any new ones.

Although there are no current proposals to build any new gas stations in Cotati at the moment that we know of, a prohibition would be an important pre-emptive measure to show solid support for enacting the goals of the Climate Emergency Resolution. New gas stations only prolong dependency on fossil fuel infrastructure into the future. To pass an ordinance prohibiting new gas stations would save the staff time, money, and effort should any applications come to Cotati in the future.

We urge you to agendize the issue of a prohibition on new gas stations at a forthcoming City Council meeting. Please let us know if you have any questions or would like further information. Thank you.

Sincerely

Jenny Blaker
Co-coordinator, Coalition Opposing New Gas Stations (CONGAS)
Cotati resident

Woody Hastings,
Co-coordinator, Coalition Opposing New Gas Stations (CONGAS)

Laurie-Ann Barbour,
Member, CONGAS
Cotati resident

Karen Preuss
Member, CONGAS
Cotati resident

Carol Williams
Member, CONGAS
Cotati resident

Sarah Raker, PG, CHG (Licensed Professional Geologist and Certified Hydrogeologist),
Cotati resident

Richard Senghas,
Cotati resident

Leslie Warren,
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Aishwarya Kincharla,
Cotati resident

Claudia Theis,
Cotati resident

Cathie Haynes,
New Cotati resident

Chris Cone,
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Marlina Eckel,
Cotati resident

Dwight Sims,
New Cotati resident

Linell Hardy,
Cotati resident

Christian Miedler,
Cotati resident

Jeanne Bendick,
Cotati resident

Adrienne Lauby,
Cotati resident

Eris Weaver,
Cotati resident

Julia Hawkins,
Cotati resident

Debora Hammond,
Isabel Drive, Cotati

Lindee Reese,
Eucalyptus Ave., Cotati

Theresa Abts,
Eucalyptus Ave., Cotati

Background

Gas stations are hazardous to human health, [emitting toxic fumes including the carcinogen, benzene](#). This [Scientific American article](#) outlines the human health effects of living near a gas station.

Leaks and spills from gas pumps and storage tanks are inevitable at some point, even with the new, double-hulled, underground storage tanks, and [contaminate surface and ground water and soil](#), eventually leaking into the groundwater which supplies our drinking water. Sonoma County

is already riddled with [leaking underground storage tanks, including in Cotati](#), where there is at least one abandoned old gas station site. One gallon of oil can pollute 1 million gallons of water. One pin-prick size hole in an underground gas tank can leak 400 gallons of fuel a year. Runoff from gas stations impacts soil, wildlife and habitat due to the presence and spread of materials that are toxic to all living organisms. Even small spills and leaks can have a significant impact, and [researchers estimate](#) that 1,500 liters (almost 400 gallons) of gasoline are spilled at a typical gas station each decade.

In the light of the climate crisis and climate justice issues, we should be promoting and supporting clean, affordable, convenient, connected public transportation; safe, accessible and connected facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists; and planning that minimizes the need for individual vehicle transportation. In addition we should be continuing to support infrastructure for charging for electric vehicles where people already live, work, and spend time. In September 2020 Governor Newsom passed an Executive Order prohibiting the sale of new fossil fuel-powered vehicles beyond 2035. GM has pledged not to build new gas-powered cars beyond 2030 and others are following suit, so the transition has begun, [sales of EVs are increasing](#), prices will decrease and the [demand for charging stations will increase](#) as time goes on.

For further information on the negative impacts of gas stations and the transition taking place away from fossil fuels, see www.coltura.org