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Mayor Bob Foster is among the many guests that spoke about the dangers of global warming at the Aquarium of the Pacific Thursday night.

Long Beach joins push for climate sustainability

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Top Long Beach officials and civic and community leaders gathered Thursday night at the Aquarium of the Pacific to take on the business and passion of saving the planet.

Kicking off the first-ever event of its kind, Long Beach was among at least 70 cities across the country to participate in a national day of dialogue on global climate change and sustainability.

The key word of the evening was "action," according to Long Beach Mayor Bob Foster, who said confronting the threat of global warming by finding solutions to thwart it is one of the most important issues of our time.

A free event open to the public, the forum encouraged people to envision what they would like their cities to be like in the year 2030, and to start an ongoing discussion on how to reach those goals in ecologically sound ways.

Highlighting the necessity of a sustainable future, the event was held outdoors, next to the marina. The mayor and city officials spoke before an audience of about 170 people, comprised of concerned citizens and members from the environmental, business, educational and spiritual communities.

The mayor and other city officials listened to more than 20 speakers who raised concerns, shared ideas, environmental success stories and offered suggestions for innovative, real-world solutions to the challenges of global warming. There was a spirit of cooperation among the crowd and a sense of urgency to start building a sustainable future now, not later.

Cal State Long Beach President F. King Alexander was among those in attendance to voice support for the goals and initiatives proposed. After the event, the president emphasized the vital role CSULB plays in addressing the growing environmental concerns of the community.

"We're involved in multiple initiatives that promote a sustainable society, as well as educating the next generation of students," Alexander said.

Campus projects include solar-paneled roofs, marine biology research on Catalina Island, and the proposed "ECCO Project," the first magnetic levitation transport system of its kind in the world, the

president said. If and when completed, the goal of the maglev would be "to reduce truck-traffic pollution [in and out of the port] by 60 percent."

Alexander cited the volunteer efforts of 35 percent of the student body as an example of the tremendous potential for CSULB students to make a real difference for a greener planet.

Various speakers underscored the connections between personal and large-scale actions. They pointed to a range of positive outcomes already being implemented in Long Beach.

Among those noted were stronger, eco-friendly building design, construction and material standards, significantly reduced individual and commercial water and electrical energy consumption, Long Beach Transit's cutting-edge hybrid fleet technology, recycling programs, including e-waste, and more energy-efficient lighting systems in new schools and public buildings.

The mayor drew the loudest applause when he called for the urgent need to replace the use of high-pollution diesel fuel in the port with environmentally friendly alternatives. He drew similar approval in confronting the hard truth that alternatives to non-gasoline transportation must be found to meet the demands of a sustainable future.

The audience also reacted enthusiastically to the announcement of a proposal for the city to join the California Climate Action Registry, a non-profit organization which measures carbon-emissions output.

Once registered, cities, public institutions and businesses will be able to determine exactly how much pollution they create and strategize effective ways to reduce it. Gary Gero, executive vice-president of the registry, said Long Beach has shown true leadership by participating in this event.

To extend the dialogue, other forums on the environment will take place throughout the year at the Aquarium, said Jerry Schubel, president and CEO of the Aquarium.

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