



Agenda Item Summary

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CLP

Agenda Item Title

Staff Presentation of the 2021 Sustainability Initiatives Status Report including the Public Marketing Campaign, Residential Retrofit Grant and Energy Efficiency Rebates, Consultant Services Request for Proposals (RFP) for Comprehensive Sustainability, Climate Action and Resiliency Plan, and Additional Sustainability Staffing

Overview

Staff will present a 90-day update for discussion as a follow-up to the Board's direction from March 22, 2021, regarding sustainability action planning and the April 19, 2021, Village Board approval of \$1,145,617 in budget amendments (ORD 21-36) for the sustainability initiatives.

Background

On March 22, 2021, the Village Board approved recommendations from staff regarding suggestions made by the Environment and Energy Commission (EEC) for sustainability action planning in Oak Park related to five specific initiatives and funding needs.

1. Public information campaign to market Energy Efficiency Audits and Retrofits: \$35,000

Staff solicited proposals from outside marketing firms to assist staff in promoting existing and new sustainability programs. The scope of service is documented in the communications plan outline developed by staff and attached for review.

The firm chosen has the most subject-matter expertise in representing the renewable energy industry with numerous campaigns focusing on passing Illinois legislation to properly fund and expand the state's renewable portfolio standard. Additionally, the proposal provided is within the Village Manager's spending authority.

2. Sustainability Residential Retrofit Grant Fund: \$200,000

Staff created a program to motivate residents to reduce their home's consumption of energy. Simple energy efficiency enhancements can improve occupant comfort and reduce energy costs. As an example, newer LED lights use about 75% less energy and last 15 times longer than incandescent bulbs. Heating and cooling upgrades also reduce energy costs while providing more efficient temperature control, all the while

utilizing less energy.

The sustainability residential retrofits grant extends to owner-occupied multi-family rental properties of up to 4 units, as they are classified as single-family homes. This extends the benefits of the program in a manner that would provide economic benefit to renters, while also providing insight on the feasibility of further expansion of residential retrofits to rental properties on a grander scale. This residential energy efficiency retrofit grant program will provide financial assistance to homeowners/renters who may qualify for a Grant of 50% of the total cost of energy efficiency improvements, up to a maximum of \$10,000.

Homeowners can qualify for up to a \$10,000 grant funding under the program by adding any or all of the following: (1) Installation of insulation; (2) Installation of energy-efficient lighting, including automatic light sensors or timed light sensors; (3) Installation or upgrade of heating, venting and air conditioning (HVAC) and high-efficiency shower/faucet upgrades, including thermostat upgrades; (4) Upgraded water heater; (5) Air sealing; and/or (6) Installation of solar panels as described in the proceeding program.

3. Creation of an Encourage Solar program (aka solar rebates): \$225,000

Installation of solar panels has become an excellent alternative to providing energy to your home, however, solar is still cost-prohibitive to many residents. A solar installation incentive encourages homeowners who would like to take advantage of the technology but are limited in their capabilities due to the expense. The Encourage Solar program allows for homeowners to apply 50% of the total cost up to \$10,000. To streamline the process, staff rolled this program into the previously mentioned retrofit program for administrative efficiency and ease of implementation for both staff and residents. The Village's Solar Panel Guidelines, which include a required permit submittal checklist, will be provided as part of the program application process.

4. Contract short-term, one-time specialized expertise: \$125,000

It was noted that the work of the EEC and staff to date in Oak Park has been impactful and meaningful. With that said, staff recognized the need for additional expert advice in order to move forward both as quickly and effectively as possible with the development of a comprehensive Sustainability Plan that includes an integrated Climate Action and Resiliency Plan.

While drafting the Request for Proposal (RFP), staff requested and captured feedback from the Environment and Energy Commissioners during the scheduled May 12, 2021 meeting. The meeting focused on what the Commission wanted in the consultant's scope of services. The feedback received from the Commissioners was incorporated into the RFP, with a planned public release the week of June 21, 2021.

The next step of the RFP process will include reviewing submitted proposals and selecting a consultant to develop the comprehensive Sustainability Plan which would include a Climate Action and Resiliency Plan emphasizing Residential (owner and rental) Sustainability, and Energy Retrofit Planning to address the Village's residential housing stock.

5. Hire a permanent, full-time staff person and part-time graduate-level fellows: \$120,000

Staff had concurred with the need for additional staffing. The increased staffing will include both a graduate-level 'Sustainability Fellow' with specific expertise in data collection and analysis experience. Moreover, an additional full-time 'Sustainability Coordinator' to assist with all program and project management tasks.

These positions will support the development, coordination, and implementation of the recommendations contained herein and provide overall guidance to coordinate multifaceted sustainability efforts.

Requisitions for both jobs were posted. An offer has been extended for the fellowship position with an estimated start date to be the second week of July. Additionally, highly qualified applications were submitted for the Sustainability Coordinator position. Interviews have commenced and staff anticipates a late July or early August start date.

Additionally, outside of the scope of the above initiatives, the total budget amendment that passed on April 19, 2021, included an allocation of \$400,000 earmarked to financially support the IL Clean Energy Foundation Grant for the development of a net-zero Community Recreation Center. As a reminder, the additional funding will only be allocated if all other funding has been raised by the Park District, as well as, the Park District successfully being awarded the grant.