



Agenda Item Summary

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Agenda Item Title

A Resolution Approving a First Amendment to the Professional Services Agreement with Graef-USA Inc. to Change the Not to Exceed Amount from \$125,000 to \$134,000 and Authorizing Its Execution

Overview

On March 22, 2021, the Village Board approved the use of sustainability funds to develop a comprehensive sustainability and climate action plan for Oak Park. On September 20, 2021, the Village Board approved the selection of GRAEF to assist with the development of the plan. On October 18, 2021, the Village Board of Trustees unanimously voted to approve a contract with GRAEF, including a detailed community engagement scope.

The approved Climate Plan engagement strategy is both “broad” and “deep.” “Broad engagement” means providing every Oak Parker with an opportunity to provide input on the plan, through the highly interactive Climate Plan website, in-person events such as A Day In Our Village, and hosting a community discussion using the DIY Meeting Kit. “Deep engagement” means ensuring the participation of residents who are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, have borne the brunt of historical and ongoing inequities, and face economic barriers to participation in community engagement. To successfully reach these residents, a more tailored approach is required.

The Climate Plan community engagement process has been structured to partner with community-based service agencies to conduct deep engagement, including Affinity Group and Human-Centered Design sessions. Affinity groups participants will devote significant time in assisting the Village in the creation of the Climate Plan, meeting monthly over a six-month period. Human-centered design sessions, which often include interviewing and observing individuals to learn about their daily experience, will be conducted in collaboration with community-based organizations that serve highly vulnerable community members, such as unhoused individuals. Affinity group and human-centered design sessions will be co-hosted by community partners that formally partner with the planning team on recruiting participants, planning and facilitating each meeting, and distributing resources to participants.

Exhibit C of the approved GRAEF PSA states that the Village will provide additional Sustainability funds to enable the full participation of community members and community partners in affinity group and human-centered design sessions. Staff have identified available \$9,000 in unused funds from the Sustainability

budget. These funds were originally budgeted for printing expenses related to community solar subscription outreach. This cost was subsequently absorbed the Village's community solar vendor. These funds are currently unencumbered.

Staff proposes to amend the GRAEF professional services agreement to include the available \$9,000. GRAEF will be directed to use the additional funds to provide pass-through grants to community-based organizations who agree to host affinity groups and human-centered design sessions. The community partners will subsequently use the pass-through grant to distribute resources to community members who participate in affinity group and human-centered design sessions for the Climate Plan, and to defray the cost of organizational expenditures related the Affinity Group and Human-Centered Design sessions.

Recommendation

Adopt the resolution.

Fiscal Impact

Reallocated from unused Sustainability Budget printing expense. Account No - 2310.41020.101. 550601.0000 - \$9,000. No impact to the total Sustainability Budget.

Background

Oak Park is home to many community-based service agencies that have existing meaningful relationships with residents, through supporting basic needs such as housing, utility, and food assistance. These issues have an important nexus to climate justice. Individuals who interact with service agencies may not have the resources to donate their personal time for civic participation, yet their participation in community engagement activities is essential for crafting an equity-centered plan.

The Climate Plan community engagement process has been structured to partner with community-based service agencies to connect with and receive input from residents who are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, have borne the brunt of historical and ongoing inequities, and face economic barriers to civic participation.

Current best practices for community engagement recognize that community members who invest significant time and lived experience should be resourced accordingly, particularly when this is necessary to enable full civic participation. Oak Parkers who participate in affinity group and design sessions are functioning as "citizen planners." They are an extension of the professional planning team. The community information provided by these citizen planners is essential to creating an equity-centered climate plan, and cannot be achieved without providing adequate resources.

The Village Manager's Office has identified \$9,000 in unspent funds from the Sustainability printing expense appropriation. This funding can be used to enable the participation of community members who participate deeply in certain time-intensive Climate Plan engagement activities, namely, affinity groups and community and human-centered design sessions.

Monthly Affinity Groups

Affinity Groups will seek representation of community groups that are both most vulnerable to climate change

impacts, and have been historically underserved in planning and development, namely, Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC); youth; seniors; individuals with disabilities; and individuals with limited English proficiency. Numerous studies show that these groups disproportionately experience lower income, worse health, and other adverse life outcomes, and are among those most vulnerable to climate change impacts such as flooding and extreme heat.

Affinity groups participants will be expected to devote significant time in assisting the Village in the creation of the Climate Plan. Affinity group members will meet monthly with the planning team, over a period of six months, to evaluate, develop, and modify plan content and process. Participants will provide sustained time commitment and specialized community knowledge that the Village would otherwise not have access to. Affinity groups will be co-hosted by community partners that collaborate closely with the planning team on recruiting and distributing resources to participants, and planning and facilitating each meeting.

Human-Centered Design Sessions

Human-centered design sessions will be conducted in collaboration with community-based organizations that serve highly vulnerable community members, such as unhoused individuals. Human-centered design (HCD) is an approach that combines ethnographic research with innovation design. It has been used globally by local governments and other organizations to tackle complex social problems. The heart of HCD is understanding the individuals who will be the target audience of a solution - getting to know how they think, feel, and interact with each other and the world around them. The methods used might include interviews, storytelling, arts activities, home/provider tours, and other “day in the life” approaches. At the end of this process, the planning team will have a deeper understanding of the activities, behaviors, needs, and assets of these community members in relation to climate resiliency.

Conversations with Oak Park Leaders regarding Affinity Groups

Staff held several conversations with Oak Park leaders, including Village staff, elected officials, appointed commissioners, and community organizations. Findings included the following themes:

- In order to enable the full participation of vulnerable residents, especially for time-intensive and multi-month community engagement commitments, resources must be provided to support basic needs of participants. These community members are already facing many challenges due to their identities, and many cannot afford to donate their time.
- Community-based organizations need support in order to partner with the Village on the time- and resource-intensive work of co-hosting affinity group and human-centered design sessions.
- Some community members perceive past community engagement efforts as perfunctory measures that have no real impact on the outcome. Providing resources to community members can address this negative perception, as a tangible demonstration of the Village’s willingness to value the input of community members.

Survey of Government Policies and Practices for Community Engagement Compensation

A survey of governments across the U.S. demonstrates that compensation is currently being formally implemented as a best practice in planning. Evanston’s Office of Sustainability is one example of successfully implementing compensation for affinity groups and human-centered design sessions. All participants were low

-to-moderate income, people of color, linguistically isolated, and/or individuals with disabilities. Kumar Jensen, Chief Sustainability and Resiliency Officer, offered these reasons for the approach: “Compensation demonstrates the City is valuing community voice and expertise and acknowledging the effort (time, energy, emotional labor, etc.) of project participants. We as the City compensate other experts for their opinions and work so compensating community members is an extension of a practice of not expecting free labor. Compensation helped formalize a relationship with participants and allow us to enter into a mutually agreeable arrangement with clearer expectations of the participant and the City. Unpaid volunteers and labor tend to be less formal and more likely to exacerbate existing power dynamics between participants and the City.”

The City of Milwaukee has adopted a policy and implementation plan that includes a commitment to compensate both community groups as well as individuals for their time when assisting in planning efforts in a formal partnership. Milwaukee developed the plan and action plan utilizing the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE) Racial Equity Toolkit. The implementation plan aligns with the City of Milwaukee’s adopted policy directing all City Departments to examine current practices and make strategic improvements to further racial equity. It also reflects the American Planning Association’s Code of Ethics that obligates planners to seek social justice, with a special responsibility for planning for the needs of historically disadvantaged groups and altering policies that oppose such needs.

Staff identified a number of other governmental bodies that formally compensate residents who engage deeply in the planning process, including Chicago, Denver, Durham, Honolulu, San Diego, California air quality districts, and the State of Montana.

Alternatives

- Not adopt the resolution.
- Defer action and seek additional information from staff or Commissions.

Previous Board Action

- On October 19, 2020, the Village Board received a report on the Greenhouse Gas Inventory update (ID 20-284).
- On February 8, 2021, the Village Board discussed staff recommendations for a community engagement process to develop a Climate Action Plan (CAP) and Resiliency Plan aligned with the ICLEI ClearPath platform (ID 21-74).
- On March 22, 2021, the Village Board approved a motion for the use of sustainability funds and directed staff to issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) for consultant services for the preparation of a sustainability and climate action plan (MOT 21-45).
- On April 19, 2021, the Village Board approved a budget amendment for this project. (ORD 21-36)
- On June 28, 2021, the Village Board received a staff report of the 2021 Sustainability Initiatives, including the RFP for Comprehensive Sustainability, Climate Action, and Resiliency Plan (S/CARP) consultant services (ID 21-171).
- On September 20, 2021, the Village Board approved a motion to select GRAEF to perform the Village’s S/CARP consulting services (MOT 21-89).
- On October 18, 2021, the Village Board approved a resolution to approve a Professional Services Agreement with GRAEF for Sustainability, Climate, and Resiliency Planning services (RES 21-250).

Citizen Advisory Commission Action

- On August 24, 2021, the Environment and Energy Commission received a report from staff concerning the bid selection process for the Comprehensive Sustainability and Climate Action and Resiliency Plan (S/CARP) consultant.
- On October 5, 2021, the Environment and Energy Commission received a presentation from GRAEF concerning the draft scope of work and provided feedback during a facilitated discussion.
- In November, staff solicited feedback from the Energy and the Environment Commission regarding draft community engagement materials, including the community engagement metrics and Climate Plan website.
- On November 17, 2021, the Community Relations Commission received a presentation from staff on the Climate Plan process, including details on community engagement, and provided feedback.

Anticipated Future Actions/Commitments

Following the approval of the amendment to the consultant's contract by the Village Board, GRAEF will formalize agreements with community partners who will co-host Climate Plan affinity group and human-centered design sessions.

Intergovernmental Cooperation Opportunities

The climate planning process will include stakeholder engagement with the Village's intergovernmental partners through the PlanIt Green platform and other identified opportunities.