



DATE: August 5, 2024

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council through City Manager

FROM: Dannielle Favela, Environmental Services Analyst, Public Works & Utilities (PW&U)
Oriana Hart, Water Resources & Conservation Manager, PW&U
Gina Benedetti-Petnic, PE, Interim Director of PW&U

SUBJECT: Resolution Authorizing the City of Petaluma to Accept a Grant Award from the US Bureau of Reclamation to Support Turf Removal Rebates and High-Efficiency Clothes Washer Rebates

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the City Council accept a Resolution authorizing the City of Petaluma to Accept a Grant Award from the US Bureau of Reclamation to support turf removal rebates and high-efficiency clothes washer rebates.

BACKGROUND

The WaterSmart Water and Energy Efficiency Grant (WEEG) program administered by the US Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) provides funding for projects that result in quantifiable water savings, implement renewable energy components, and support broader sustainability benefits. These projects conserve and use water more efficiently, increase the productivity of renewable energy, mitigate conflict risk in areas at a high risk of future water conflicts, and accomplish other benefits that contribute to sustainability in the Western United States.

In July 2022, on behalf of the Sonoma-Marín Saving Water Partnership (Partnership), Sonoma Water applied for \$2,000,000 in grant funds for the Sonoma-Marín Drought Resiliency Program (Program) for eleven of the Partnership's water utilities. These funds will provide rebates for water-saving measures throughout the North Bay.

Eleven water utilities (Participating Agencies) will implement the Program. Participating agencies include the City of Cloverdale, City of Cotati, City of Healdsburg, Marin Municipal Water District, North Marin Water District, City of Petaluma, City of Rohnert Park, City of Santa Rosa, City of Sonoma, Valley of the Moon Water District, and Town of Windsor.

On February 16, 2024, Reclamation and Sonoma Water executed a grant agreement for \$2,000,000. Sonoma Water will act as the pass-through entity to administer the grant for Participating Agencies. Sonoma Water and Participating Agencies have committed to providing an additional \$2,444,447 in non-Federal matching funds, for a total project cost of \$4,444,447.

DISCUSSION

Reclamation is granting the City of Petaluma up to \$22,500 for the Mulch Madness turf replacement program (up to \$0.50 per square foot of turf replaced), which transforms lawns into drought-tolerant, mulched landscapes and includes free sheet mulching supplies (compost, cardboard, mulch) and delivery. An additional \$1,519 is allocated for the high-efficiency clothes washer rebate program, which offers a \$75 rebate to residential water and/or sewer service customers who purchase and install a new, qualifying high-efficiency clothes washer. The total available funding through this grant is \$24,019, and the City's match obligation is \$29,356. The intended purpose of this grant is to supplement the costs of the current rebate programs and continue to provide water conservation opportunities for Petaluma water customers.

The grant agreement is attached to the Staff Report as Attachment 1 and outlines the scope of the grant, reporting requirements, and stipulations the programs must follow.

Currently, staff are seeking the Council's acceptance of the grant to continue providing Petaluma water customers with water conservation rebates.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

This agenda item appeared on the City's tentative agenda document on July 15, 2024, which was a publicly-noticed meeting.

COUNCIL GOAL ALIGNMENT

The City Council has identified "An environmental legacy that we can be proud of" as one of its main goals. This goal and the current State Water Conservation regulations will allow the City of Petaluma to continue to provide water saving providing water-saving rebates and outreach to the community.

CLIMATE ACTION/SUSTAINABILITY EFFORTS

In September 2023, the City of Petaluma launched a climate action plan, Blueprint for Carbon Neutrality. This Blueprint includes a chapter on "Water Strategy", which includes an action plan to use water efficiently and help ensure a safe and resilient water supply. This plan includes strategies for water conservation, primarily in buildings and landscaping. This grant provides additional resources to the City to reduce water use by using high-efficiency clothes washers and removing high-water-use turf grass.

ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE

The proposed action is exempt from the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) in accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3), (Commonsense Exemption) which establishes the general rule for projects concerning which can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment as it can be seen with certainty that this Resolution will not have a significant negative effect on the environment as it will be used to continue the City's existing practice of providing mulch turf replacement and water conservation rebates to Petalumans.

FINANCIAL IMPACTS

Reclamation's WEEG program is awarding the City of Petaluma up to \$24,019 for preexisting Water Conservation rebate programs. These are current programs already implemented in Water Conservation's suite of rebate and outreach programs. There are no financial impacts to the City's Water Conservation funds/budget.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Resolution with Exhibit A (Grant Agreement)