

## **REPORT TO COUNCIL**

### **SUBJECT**

Proposal for the 2017 Sustainability Speaker Series

### **BACKGROUND**

In 2016, Sunnyvale City Council adopted the on-going yearly budget allocation of \$25,000 to fund a Sustainability Speaker Series for five years starting in FY 2016-2017. This was done to help the Sustainability Commission fulfill part of its mission to “advise Council on ways to drive community awareness, education, and participation in best practices.”

The 2017 Sustainability Speaker Series seeks to educate, engage and motivate city residents and businesses to take action on key sustainability issues in Sunnyvale. This proposal will embrace “Practical Sustainability”, i.e., make sustainability personal and relevant to city residents and businesses.

This draft proposal from the Sustainability Commission is for the first 3 events in the Sustainability Speaker Series. The Series is anticipated to continue into FY 2017-2018 for an additional four years. The topics of the proposal are relevant to residents and businesses in Sunnyvale and complement the roll-out of two local initiatives that are launching this year (2017):

- Silicon Valley Clean Energy (SVCE), and the
- Sunnyvale Food Scraps Program

The first topic to be addressed in the first two events in this initial 3-event series is “Electrification” for both homes and businesses.

The proposed first community discussion in the Electrification Topic addresses a two-step approach to sustainable energy; (a) clean up electricity and then (b) electrify as much as possible. Silicon Valley Clean Energy, which begins service in April 2017, is the method to clean up the electricity grid with 100% greenhouse gas free electricity. The Electrification of homes and businesses topic builds on this base and educates consumers about what can be electrified. Content for this discussion asks the question, “why convert from natural gas to electricity for heating homes and businesses?” Current and future cost effective options for residential space heating, water heating and clothes drying will be discussed. Additionally, options for commercial building fuel switching to electricity will also be discussed. The proposed speaker to lead this discussion is Pierre Delforge of the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC). Pierre is the Director, High Tech Sector Energy Efficiency, Energy and Transportation Program at the NRDC, an excellent speaker and an expert in his field.

The second proposed community discussion in the Electrification Topic will focus on transportation. This community discussion addresses the issue of converting transportation from petroleum fuels to electricity. The many benefits for such a conversion, for public transportation, municipal fleets, personal automobiles and

shipping/rail/trucking will be discussed. Topics will include discussions about costs and incentives for electric vehicles, charging infrastructure, train electrification, case studies and resources available. The proposed speaker to lead this discussion is Sarah Jo Szambelan of the San Francisco Bay Area Planning and Urban Research Association (SPUR). Sarah Jo is the Research Manager for Public Policy and Economic Research and Data Science at SPUR.

The second topic to be addressed is “Zero Waste.” Accordingly, the third event in this series is designed to complement the roll-out of Sunnyvale’s Food Scraps Program. This community discussion will focus on simple and practical personal choices and changes in purchasing habits residents can make at the grocery store and other businesses, both brick and mortar and on-line, that will lead to dramatic reduction in household waste. The impact of near zero waste for the City, its residents and businesses, will be discussed along with practical approaches to solving current waste challenges and available resources for residents and businesses to use. The proposed speaker to lead this discussion is Bea Johnson, a noted expert and speaker on reducing waste and the author of the book, “Zero Waste Home”. This is the only speaker that has been identified that will include a speaker fee of \$1,000.

### **EXISTING POLICY**

The speaker series directly aligns with the adopted Climate Action Plan which includes a strategy to “increase and retain awareness of sustainability issues” with the goal that “community members are knowledgeable about GHG emissions and are all taking actions to reduce them.”

As stated previously, this Series is part of the Sustainability Commission’s duties, which include advising the Council on ways to drive community awareness, education and participation in best practices.

### **DISCUSSION**

The City Council has approved \$25,000 for a Sustainability Lecture Series in FY2016-2017. These three proposed community discussion events are planned to begin meeting the City’s goals for such a series. The timing of the events will be coordinated with initiation of the SVCE and Food Scraps Program, respectively, and serve to increase community awareness of these initiatives. In order for the three proposed events to have significant impact, a “marketing” effort and community-wide publicity will be necessary.

Additionally, refreshments, hopefully donated by local Green Businesses, will be served. The Sustainability Commission proposes that each event be videotaped and made available on the Community TV channel as well as on a corresponding City website. Following each event, a survey will be administered to collect feedback from the attendees so that future lectures and community discussions can be better shaped to address the interests and needs of the community. Finally, as a supplement to the speakers series we recommend a curated website of on-line free videos be established to further educate and inform City residents and businesses on various aspects of

sustainability.

Recommendations for links into this curated website would be made by the Sustainability Commission with ESD staff having the role of curating the content that could be added to the existing Sustainability website. Approvals for website content would go through established city channels.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

The three events proposed here, along with staff time for logistics support will not exceed the previously approved budget for FY 2016-2017. A request to carry over any unused funds to the next fiscal year will be submitted.

Prepared by:

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