

CITY OF SANTA ROSA
CITY COUNCIL

TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
FROM: CLAIRE NORDLIE, SUSTAINABILITY COORDINATOR, SANTA ROSA WATER
SUBJECT: SUPPORTING SUBMITTAL OF A GRANT APPLICATION TO THE U.S. BUREAU OF RECLAMATION'S WATERSMART GRANT OPPORTUNITY: SMALL SCALE WATER EFFICIENCY PROJECTS TO SUPPORT THE ONGOING CASH FOR GRASS REBATE PROGRAM AND COMMITTING ANY NECESSARY MATCHING FUNDS

AGENDA ACTION: RESOLUTION

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended by Santa Rosa Water that the Council, by resolution: 1) support the City's submission of a grant application for \$75,000 for implementation of the Cash for Grass Rebate program to the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation WaterSMART: Small Scale Water Efficiency Projects Grant program and commit the City to the financial and legal obligations associated with the grant; 2) delegate authority to the Director of Water or her designee to enter into a grant agreement with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and file any necessary applications, execute any contracts and/or related documents related to the grant, subject to approval as to form by the City Attorney; and 3) authorize local matching funds for the grant.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Santa Rosa Water (SRW) submitted a grant application for the U.S Bureau of Reclamation WaterSMART: Small Scale Water Efficiency Projects for \$75,000 for the Cash for Grass Rebate Expansion project. SRW will use these funds to increase the amount of the existing Cash for Grass rebate for commercial landscapes from \$0.75 to \$2.00 per square foot of lawn removed. The City submitted its application on March 18, 2021, pursuant to staff authority to apply for grants under Council Policy 000-62 (Grant Application and Administration Policy) and adoption of the proposed resolution by Council would complete the City's application.

BACKGROUND

SRW's Cash for Grass program has successfully helped SRW customers reduce water use since 2007 when the program was implemented. To date, over 3.5 million square

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feet of lawn have been removed and replaced with low water use plants through the Cash for Grass program. While successful, additional funding to increase the amount of the rebate could incentivize more commercial customers to participate, especially for local businesses in the difficult financial climate of the COVID-19 health emergency. Additionally, Senate Bill 606 and Assembly Bill 1668 require water utilities to meet a water budget target. This grant funding will provide additional support for the Cash for Grass program, removing 37,500 square feet of turf and saving over 1.2 million gallons annually, helping Santa Rosa meet this legislative requirement.

PRIOR CITY COUNCIL REVIEW

Not applicable.

ANALYSIS

For the second year in a row, the North Bay is experiencing extremely dry conditions. Last year was the third driest year on record in the Russian River Watershed. To preserve water supply, SRW continues to offer water use efficiency programs and rebates, such as the Cash for Grass program, which provides a rebate for removing turf and installing low water use plants.

Santa Rosa Water is applying for these grant funds to support outdoor water conservation through lawn removal and replacement with low water use plants. SRW will use these funds to increase the amount of the existing Cash for Grass rebate for commercial landscapes from \$0.75 to \$2.00 per square foot of lawn removed. The Cash for Grass program has been independently evaluated for water savings, and achieves savings of 31 gallons per square foot of lawn converted to low water use plants. Grant funding from the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation would increase program capacity, incentivize additional landscape transformations, and save water.

The grant funding from the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation requires a 50% recipient cost share of the total project cost. This \$75,000 grant match would come from existing Santa Rosa Water O&M budget.

FISCAL IMPACT

Approval of this resolution would allow the Water Department's submittal of a grant application for funding of \$75,000 for the Cash for Grass Rebate program. The required 50% total project grant match of \$75,000 would come from the existing Water Department O&M budget in FY 21/22 and 22/23. There is no impact to the general fund.

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ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

The Council finds that the proposed action is exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under section 15061(b)(3) and 15378 in that there is no possibility that the implementation of this action may have significant effects on the environment, and that no further environmental review is required.

BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Board of Public Utilities Water Conservation sub-committee approved grant submittal on April 6, 2021.

NOTIFICATION

Not applicable.

ATTACHMENTS

- Resolution

CONTACT

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