



Item No. 9 Town of Atherton

CITY COUNCIL STAFF REPORT – REGULAR AGENDA

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: RACHAEL LONDER, MANAGEMENT ANALYST II

DATE: OCTOBER 18, 2023

SUBJECT: DISCUSSION AND DIRECTION REGARDING THE 2024 EARTH DAY EVENT

RECOMMENDATION

Discuss and provide direction on whether the 2024 Earth Day Event shall be held in partnership with neighboring jurisdictions and community-based organizations.

BACKGROUND

Every year in April, the Town comes together to honor Earth Day. The Environmental Programs Committee (EPC) assists staff in planning and facilitating an Earth Day Event designed to engage and educate the community on sustainability and climate-related topics as well as promote the goals of the Town's Climate Action Plan (CAP). In 2020 and 2021, the EPC decided not to host an in-person Earth Day Event due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2022, the EPC hosted an Earth Day Event at Holbrook-Palmer Park that included 35 vendors and over 300 attendees. Additionally, neighboring jurisdictions came together to host a We Love Earth Festival in Menlo Park which included similar activities and vendors as Atherton's Earth Day Event.

In 2023, the Town was invited to participate in coordinating a collaborative event between neighboring jurisdictions, Menlo Park, East Palo Alto, Palo Alto, and the County, and community-based organizations. The collaborative event, titled the Love Our Earth Festival, leveraged funding, resources, volunteers, and staff to improve event coordination and the experience for the community. The goal of the event was to educate residents and drive behavior change to support meeting the Town's Climate Action Plan goals by offering a "one-stop-shop" to check out a suite of practical climate solutions including electric appliances, clean vehicles, bicycles, and e-bikes, green landscaping resources, and more. The Town contributed \$5,000 and the other agencies contributed just over \$15,000. The Festival was held on April 22, 2023 at Menlo-Atherton High School from 11:00 AM to 4:00 PM with set-up starting at 6:30 AM and clean-up going until 5:30 PM. There were 1,338 individuals registered to attend.

The 2023 Love Our Earth Festival details are as follows:

Food

- There were 20 vendors in the food marketplace. One food truck backed out last minute. Eclipse gave away 700 ice cream samples by 2:00 PM. It was reported that food ran out early in the event and only samples, baked goods, or food to take home was left in the afternoon.

Clean Vehicle Showcase

- There were 40 different models of clean vehicles to browse. Cheryl Schaff from the Menlo Park Climate Team coordinated with all the dealerships that attended.

Speakers & Movie Screening

- The speaker series was kicked off with a welcome from Vice Mayor Hawkins Manuelian followed by the Vice Mayor from Palo Alto, the Mayor of Menlo Park, and the Mayor of East Palo Alto. Presenters included Dr. Rob Jackson, Dr. Rodolfo Dirzo, Dr. Pam Rittelmeyer, and Gary White. These speeches were not recorded and had low attendance.
- The City of Menlo Park paid for a movie screening of Motherload about a parent's journey using a cargo bike.

Kids' Activities

- There were three story times hosted by the Atherton Library and the Menlo Park Library. Kat Kid Adventure hosted a workshop on talking to kids about climate change. The Lizard Lady brought various reptiles for two 1-hr long shows. Additionally, local elementary schools and parent volunteers hosted arts and craft activities. There were also many exhibits catering to children including the chickens from the Peninsula Feed Store, dogs with the Humane Society and Pets in Need, and succulent plants from Cal Water.
- There was a green career panel hosted by a local high school student.

Exhibits

- There were 80 vendors representing local Atherton organizations and resources, countywide programs, small businesses, and non-profits.

Volunteers

- There were 57 volunteers from the National Charity League, Tesla, 350 Silicon Valley, and the local high schools.

ANALYSIS

After the 2023 Love Our Earth Festival, the EPC determined that there would be value in collaborating with neighboring jurisdictions and community-based organizations to provide an engaging event for Atherton community members. Before moving forward, the EPC wanted to first check in with the City Council to determine if this was a direction the Council wanted to support. As the Council is aware, the EPC typically presents a plan for Earth Day to the City Council for approval *prior* to the City Council authorizing the event each year. A joint event would provide additional staffing, volunteers, budget, a larger selection of family-friendly activities, and

more exhibitor interest; but such an event would also mean that the Town would need to commit to participation before having a complete event plan.

If the Town were to move forward with the collaborative approach, as recommended by the EPC, staff, and the EPC would need to commit to collaborative efforts, and it would not be practical to return to the Council along the way for approval on a specific workplan. Additionally, such an event would need to be hosted at a partner school or institution where the facilities can accommodate a variety of activities and a large crowd. If Council supports a collaborative event, staff will take the lead and work with the EPC and neighboring jurisdictions for a 2024 Earth Day event that stays within the Town's \$5,000 budget.

If the Town were to plan an event without partners at either Town Center or Holbrook Palmer Park, the event would need to be scaled down as the previous two years exceeded the budgeted \$5,000. Additionally, facilities at both Town Center and Holbrook Palmer Park would not accommodate a cross-jurisdiction event and registration would be capped at 1,000 individuals.

FISCAL IMPACT

The Fiscal Year 2023/24 Budget includes funding for an Earth Day event in the amount of \$5,000.

Any materials, efforts, or staffing resources associated with an Earth Day event that exceed this existing \$5,000 budget would need to be authorized by the Town Council.

GOAL ALIGNMENT

This Report and its contents are in alignment with the following Council Policy Goals:

- Goal F – Be Forward-Thinking, Well-Managed and Well-Planned

POLICY FOCUS

The EPC is charged under Resolution 2018-11 to “*provide the City Council with recommendations, outreach programs, and education on environmental issues facing the Town's natural and built environment.*” Acting in an advisory capacity, the EPC has the following powers and duties:

- a. Upon request, make recommendations (programmatic and legislative) to the City Council on all matters pertaining to the Town's natural and built environment and the Town's regional role and responsibilities as one of the communities on the San Francisco Bay Peninsula.*
- b. Pursuant to established City Council programs and policy, assist staff in the creation of proactive community engagement programs for residents, commercial and public enterprises active within the Town's jurisdiction.*

Historically, the Town's EPC has been the primary body in creating and supporting an annual Earth Day event for the Town, as approved by the Council. Considering costs, staff time, and

vacancies on the EPC and in the Committee's advisory role, the EPC is proposing a collaborative approach to celebrating Earth Day with an event by building off partnerships and successes from the 2023 Love Our Earth Festival. Further, as an advisory Committee, the EPC would only be allowed up to \$5,000 as budgeted for Fiscal Year 2023/24, with those funds disbursed through staff. As a policy matter, it would be appropriate for the Council to review and provide direction on the Earth Day Event and use of the \$5,000 budget.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notification was achieved by posting the agenda, with this agenda item being listed, at least 72 hours prior to the meeting in print and electronically. Information about the project is also disseminated via the Town's electronic News Flash and Atherton Online. There are approximately 1,200 subscribers to the Town's electronic News Flash publications. Subscribers include residents as well as stakeholders –to include, but be not limited to, media outlets, school districts, Menlo Park Fire Protection District, service providers (water, power, and sewer), and regional elected officials.

COMMISSION/COMMITTEE FEEDBACK/REFERRAL

This item X has or has not been before a Town Committee or Commission.

 Audit/Finance Committee (meets every other month)

 Civic Center Advisory Committee (meets as needed)

X Environmental Programs Committee (meets every other month)

 Park and Recreation Committee (meets each month)

 Planning Commission (meets each month)

 Transportation, Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Committee (meets every other month)

ATTACHMENTS

1. No Attachments