Item No. {{item.number}}
Town of Atherton

CITY COUNCIL STAFF REPORT – REGULAR AGENDA

TO: **HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL**

FROM: **RACHAEL LONDER, MANAGEMENT ANALYST II**

DATE: **JANUARY 18, 2023**

SUBJECT: **APPROVAL OF PROPOSAL FROM THE AMERICAN GREEN ZONE ALLIANCE (AGZA) FOR A WORKSHOP FOR PROFESSIONALS TRANSITIONING TO BATTERY ELECTRIC LAND CARE EQUIPMENT AND OPERATIONS**

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council review, provide comments, and approve the proposal for the American Green Zone Alliance (AGZA) Workshop as recommended by the Environmental Programs Committee (EPC).

BACKGROUND

In an effort to curb greenhouse gas emissions, the State, through AB 1346, has banned the sale of new gas off-road equipment including equipment for lawn and garden care starting January 1, 2024. In Atherton, landscaping equipment accounts for 4% of the greenhouse gas emissions in the Town of Atherton as of 2019. In anticipation of upcoming regulations and environmental concerns, the EPC has an interest in supporting homeowners and landscapers operating in Atherton to make the transition to electric landscaping equipment.

In alignment with the EPC's duties of creating proactive community engagement programs for residents, commercial, and public enterprises, the EPC formed an Electric Landscaping Tools / Sustainable Landscaping Technology to address these emissions through education and outreach to residents and landscapers doing business in Atherton. Education and outreach can drive behavior change, catalyze the purchase and use of electric equipment, and can connect the community to valuable incentive programs to achieve local and State climate action goals. During their November 17th EPC meeting, this subcommittee presented an idea for the Town to bring in an industry expert, American Green Zone Alliance (AGZA) to host an in-person workshop for landscapers and residents to learn about available electric technologies and incentive programs. The EPC elevated the idea to the City Council's Leaf Blower Subcommittee including Councilmember Hawkins Manuelian and Councilmember Widmer. The Council's Leaf Blower Subcommittee requested that a full proposal be made to the EPC including costs, timing, topics covered, outreach plan, and that workshop would be bilingual offered in both English and Spanish.

The subcommittees decided that this proposal would go to the EPC for review and approval before being recommended to the City Council. Town staff worked with the EPC Subcommittee and AGZA to finalize a proposal. During the EPC's Special Meeting on December 15, 2023, the EPC voted to recommend that staff bring the proposal and request for funding to the City Council.

ANALYSIS

EPC committee members informally surveyed local landscapers, residents, and organizations with land in Atherton to identify barriers to transitioning to electric equipment and gauge interest for an in-person workshop. This surveying revealed a need for increased education and outreach to landscapers. Additionally, landscapers provided insight to support the Town in successful engagement including the best timing for a workshop, topics to include, and equipment to showcase. EPC committee members researched organizations that could deliver a workshop geared to the needs identified. The EPC identified the American Green Zone Alliance (AGZA) whose mission is to help promote and facilitate lower-impact operations and sustainable land care through peer-to-peer engagement, training, and certification with the landscape maintenance industry. The EPC determined an initial half-day training with hands-on equipment demonstrations would be an appropriate starting place to engage landscapers and homeowners.

If the Town were to move forward with a workshop, Town staff and EPC committee members would work together to schedule, promote, and host the workshop with the AGZA, as outlined in Attachment A.

Town staff would report back on the success of the event including attendee numbers and results from a post-workshop survey indicating the workshop's impact on catalyzing the transition to electric landscaping equipment and operations.

FISCAL IMPACT

The Fiscal Year 2022/23 Budget does not include any allocation for an electric landscaping equipment and operations workshop. Thus, the recommended budget of $6,500 would need to be approved by the Council out of the Town's General Fund.

GOAL ALIGNMENT

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

- Goal Area 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 pro-active community engagement programs for residents, commercial and public enterprises active within the Town's jurisdiction.

This recommendation for the Council to approve and allocate funding for a battery-electric landscape equipment and operations workshop is in alignment with the EPC's duty to assist staff in the creation of proactive community engagement programs. Considering costs, staff time, and policy initiatives relative to electric equipment, it is appropriate for the Council to review, provide direction, and approve the proposal and budget before the EPC and staff proceed.

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 provides (water, power, and sewer), and regional elected officials.

COMMISSION/COMMITTEE FEEDBACK/REFERRAL

Environmental Programs Committee (meets every other month)

ATTACHMENTS

1. Attachment A: AGZA Workshop Proposal

2. Attachment B: Proposed Budget