



**SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION
CITY OF PALM SPRINGS, CALIFORNIA**

www.palmspringsca.gov/services/sustainability-and-recycling

July 18, 2023 5:30 PM	MEETING AGENDA	Palm Springs City Hall Large Conference Room
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COMMISSIONERS		
Don Barrett	Roy Clark	Kathleen Cohn
Dean Grubl	Bernard Rottner	Prema Walker

City of Palm Springs Vision Statement: Palm Springs aspires to be a unique world-class desert community where residents and visitors enjoy our high quality of life and a relaxing experience. We desire to balance our cultural and historical resources with responsible, sustainable economic growth and enhance our natural desert beauty. We are committed to providing responsive, friendly, and efficient customer service in an environment that fosters unity among all our citizens.

Pursuant to Assembly Bill 361, this meeting will be conducted by teleconference and there will be no in-person public access to the meeting location.

**To view/listen/participate in the meeting live, please use the following link:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87064801181> / call +1 669 900 6833 Meeting ID 870 6480 1181.**

- **Written public comment may also be submitted to cityclerk@palmspringsca.gov. Transmittal prior to the meeting is required. Any correspondence received during or after the meeting will be distributed to the Board/Commission as soon as practicable and retained for the official record.**
- **The meeting will be recorded, and the audio file will be available from the Office of the City Clerk and will be posted on the City’s YouTube channel, as soon as practicable.**

Staff representatives: Lindsey-Paige McCloy, Director, Office of Sustainability

Please **MUTE OR TURN OFF** all audible electronic devices for the duration of this meeting. Thank you!

CALL TO ORDER

ROLL CALL

ACCEPTANCE OF AGENDA (5 MINUTES)

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS (5 MINUTES)

PUBLIC COMMENTS: This time is for members of the public to address the Sustainability Commission on Agenda items and items of general interest within the subject matter jurisdiction of the Commission. The Commission values your comments but, pursuant to the Brown Act, cannot take action on items not listed on the posted Agenda. Three (3) minutes are assigned for each speaker.

If participating by video conference to provide comments, please try to minimize background noise at your location to ensure you can be heard. Please mute your microphone when you are not speaking.

REMARKS FROM RETURNING COMMISSIONER BARRETT (40 MINUTES)

1. Election of Interim Chair and Vice-chair
2. Commissioner Introductions (5 minutes each)
3. In-person or virtual?
4. Discuss orientation to the Sustainability Commission

STAFF COMMENTS (10 MINUTES)

1. Lindsey-Paige McCloy, Director
 - a. Introducing Christian Wheeler
 - b. Welcome to New Commissioners
 - c. Concluding the FY24 and FY25 Budget

A. OLD BUSINESS (40 MINUTES)

1. Review possible changes to Turf Conversion Rebate Match
2. Report on battery recycling program

B. NEW BUSINESS (40 MINUTES)

1. Recap FY23 shredding events and review proposal for FY24 procurement
2. Discuss subcommittees and commissioner appointments
Subcommittee history:
 - a. Ad Hoc Subcommittee on Strategic Planning and General Plan Update
 - b. Solar and Green Building
 - c. Bicycle Routes and Cycling
 - d. Water Conservation
 - e. Night skies
 - f. Wellness
 - g. Desert Community Energy / Inland Regional Energy Network

C. SUBCOMMITTEE AND COMMISSIONER REPORTS (10 MINUTES)

1. Standing Subcommittee on Waste Reduction – Commissioner Barrett

D. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS AND UPCOMING AGENDA (5 MINUTES)

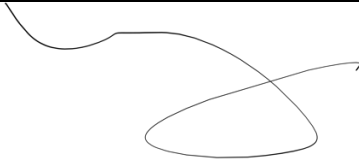
1. Commissioners will have two (2) minutes to provide thoughts on future agenda items or other Commission-related items of interest

E. ADJOURNMENT - The meeting of the Sustainability Commission will adjourn to the Regular Meeting of the Sustainability Commission to be held on Tuesday, September 19, 2023, at 5:30 p.m. [Format TBD]. The Sustainability Commission's regular meeting schedule is at 5:30 p.m. the third Tuesday each month except August unless otherwise noted or amended.

It is the intention of the City of Palm Springs to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in all respects. If, as an attendee or a participant at this meeting, you need special assistance beyond what is normally provided, the City will attempt to accommodate you in every reasonable manner. Please contact the Office of the City Clerk at (760) 323-8204 at least 48 hours prior to the meeting to inform us of your needs and to determine if accommodation is feasible.

Pursuant to G.C. Section 54957.5(b)(2) the designated office for inspection of records in connection with the meeting is the Office of Sustainability, City Hall, 3200 E. Tahquitz Canyon Way, Palm Springs, CA 92262. Agenda and staff reports are available on the City's website www.palmspringsca.gov. If you would like additional information on any item appearing on this agenda, please contact the Office of Sustainability at 760-323-8214.

AFFIDAVIT OF POSTING: I, Lindsey-Paige McCloy, Director of the Office of Sustainability of the City of Palm Springs, California, certify this Agenda was posted at or before 5:30pm on July 11, 2023, as required by established policies and procedures.



Lindsey-Paige McCloy, Director, Office of Sustainability



Staff Memo to the Sustainability Commission

Date: 11 July 2023

Subject: Turf Conversion Rebate Matching Program

From: Office of Sustainability

Summary

On June 29, 2023, the City Council approved a request for \$1.15 million in matching funds to Desert Water Agency's turf conversion (also known as grass removal) program. This memo summarizes the results of last year's program and identifies possible changes to improve program efficiency and support more target projects.

Recommendation

Provide direction on the amount of rebate offered, project size cap, and programs to support low-income and/or disadvantaged communities.

Background

For those who are interested in the background to the FY23 version of this program, please see Appendix A.

With the Commission and Council's support, Desert Water Agency (DWA) and the Office of Sustainability launched a match to DWA's rebate on December 1, 2023 with \$250,000 in funding. The rebate held the following parameters:

- Offered a 1:1 match to DWA's \$3/square foot for a total of \$6/square foot
- Capped the amount of square feet per project that could be matched at 5000 square feet per project
- Encouraged projects to limit the use of artificial turf
- Required projects to apply on or after the program launch date of December 1 to be eligible
- \$50,000 of the funding was reserved for customers participating in DWA's bill assistance program and living in state-designated disadvantaged communities (DACs). \$150,000 was reserved for single owner properties, and \$100,000 was reserved for HOAs

Property owners in Palm Springs who applied after the program launch date were automatically granted the rebate match if their project was approved by DWA, ensuring that only one application was required for the property owner. DWA staff vetted, approved, and monitored projects, and they also issued a combined check to the property owners. Due to the program's popularity, single-family home funding was fully subscribed within the first 24 hours, and HOA funding was subscribed within the first two weeks.

As a result of very high public interest, the City Council authorized \$300,000 in further funding in the first quarter of 2023. This funding was dedicated to projects on the first round’s waiting list, projects that applied between when the Council first announced funding and the program start date, and a few additional projects supported with remaining funds.

Program Results

As of May 2023, the program yielded:

- 154 approved projects (of which 55 had been completed by May)
- Partial funding of 437,344 square feet of conversions
- Based on analysis from the Southern Nevada Water Authority on projected water savings of 62 gallons per year for each square foot of turf removed, an estimated 27,115,328 gallons of water saved per year
- At 2023 rates of \$2.28 per 748 gallons, projected savings of \$82,651 per year across the program
- 8 projects supported under the low income enhanced rebate program of \$8/square foot

Projects received an average rebate of \$3243.83.

Due to the success and popularity of this program, staff presented a request for \$1.15 million for the FY24 budget to continue the match. The Council awarded this funding in the FY24 budget.

Staff Analysis

City staff have identified possible tweaks to make to the program based on learnings from the first two rounds and proposals from DWA staff. Considerations for how to allocate the funding are as follows.

Rebate Size

In order to maintain consistency with DWA’s and other neighboring programs, and to maximize the likelihood of project completion, staff still generally recommends offering rebates instead of project grants.

DWA has approved just over \$3 million in funding for turf conversion rebates this year, continuing their \$3 per square foot allocation. Program participants last year faced some confusion when the City’s funds were depleted – many projects were still able to receive DWA’s \$3/square foot rebate, but they were frustrated that they did not make it in time to access the City’s match. As a result, staff asks that the Commission consider the pros and cons of a 3:1 rebate match – allocating \$3 from DWA and 1 from the City, yielding \$4/square foot total.

A smaller rebate could support a greater number of total projects, whereas a larger rebate would cover more of the total cost. Based on DWA’s average project size (1500 square feet) and average cost (\$10 per square foot, updating our assumptions from last year due to increasing costs), our identified funding could support:

Match Size	Total Rebate Size	Number of Average Projects Supported	Avg City cost per project	Avg Rebate per project	Avg Property owner cost per project
\$1/square foot	\$4/square foot	767 projects	\$1500	\$6000	\$9000

\$2/square foot	\$5/square foot	383 projects	\$3000	\$7500	\$7500
\$3/square foot	\$6/square foot	256 projects	\$4500	\$9000	\$6000

Project Cap

The table above, however, assumes all of the projects are on the smaller side. The Commission, in approving the first two rounds of the matching program, agreed that HOAs and other large, high-water use, visible properties should be targeted for the funding. In order to encourage more HOAs to take advantage of the program, staff recommends changing the project size cap for the matching rebate – either by raising it or eliminating it entirely.

For example:

- At a \$1/square foot match (\$4/square foot total rebate), the City could support 1,150,000 square feet of projects. This could drive 11.5 projects at 100,000 square feet (which would be rare) or 115 projects at 10,000 square feet (or with a 10,000 square foot cap). Most HOA projects fall in this range.
- At a \$2/square foot match, the City could support 575,000 square feet of projects, or nearly 6 100,000 square foot projects (or 58 at 10,000 square feet). For \$3/square foot match, approximately 4 mega projects and 40 medium ones.

Low Income Program

DWA staff conducted extensive targeted outreach to eligible customers and launched a direct payment program for approved landscapers, meaning that eligible customers would only have to pay the difference between the rebate and the project’s total cost; however, the total number of projects that received the enhanced rebate was still relatively low. For this reason, DWA staff are planning to support the enhanced rebate using different funding streams and are not proposing a dedicated amount of City funding be reserved for this program. The City can still choose to allocate an enhanced rebate to eligible customers who apply, and staff seeks the Commission’s direction on this.

Conclusion

More Palm Springs property owners are likely to undertake turf conversions with a rebate match provided by the City. A larger rebate would serve fewer customers but provide greater cost savings to property owners, whereas a smaller rebate would serve more customers at a lower cost recovery percentage. Making some changes to the program can improve the experience for property owners, support larger projects, and ease the operational burden for DWA staff.

Appendix A – FY23 Background

Turf conversion projects, which can include everything from reducing grass coverage in an outdoor area to a full conversion to xeriscaping or desertscaping, provide multiple environmental benefits. Chief among them is a reduction in short- and long-term water use, with lawns that are converted to xeriscapes reducing their total home water use by roughly 30% per year (with a reduction in water used for landscaping of over 70% per year). Turf conversions can also increase native vegetation and habitats for local wildlife.

Figure 1: Water consumption in homes based on longitudinal studies in Nevada

Previous City of Palm Springs Programs

From 2011 to 2016, the City of Palm Springs operated a turf conversion program that was referred to as a “lawn buyback program.” The City provided grants up front with a cap and cash match requirements.

Versions of the lawn buyback program included:

- 50% cash match requirements (2011-12)
- \$1 per square foot rebate with a cap of \$2500 (2011-12)
- 2014 program offered up to \$500 for single family property owners and up to \$2500 for multifamily, HOA, or commercial at \$1 per square foot rate

In a report from 2016, the City estimated roughly 10 million gallons per year of savings across the 110 supported projects, 70 of which were single-family homes and 40 of which were HOAs. While roughly \$150,000 per year was budgeted for the program, approximately \$140,000 was awarded between FY11-12 and FY15-16.

Desert Water Agency Program

DWA began offering their current turf replacement rebate program in 2016. Property owners with single-family residences, HOAs, and commercial properties are eligible for a \$3 per square foot rebate on qualifying projects. The program’s guidelines are [available on their website](#) and cover the maximum allowable flow rate (.33 gallons per minute or less for any irrigation), types of plants and coverings allowed and required, and guidelines on receiving the rebate.

This year, the program has 100 projects approved and active and another 40 in the approval pipeline. Since drought conditions are prevalent this year, DWA is seeing more applications. Based on data they’ve collected over the past few years of running the program, the average cost of turf conversions hovers around \$7 per square foot, with estimates of around \$6 per square foot for projects completed independently and roughly \$8 per square foot for projects including a contractor. Most projects funded by DWA come from HOAs (roughly 70%) and are approximately 1500 square feet.

Some projects supported by DWA are pictured below.



Villa de las Flores HOA, Before and After



Oasis Hotel, Before and After



Single Family Home, Before and After

Rancho Mirage and other Valley Programs

This year, the City of Rancho Mirage is offering matching rebates to encourage further turf conversions in their municipality. The [City of Rancho Mirage](#) offers \$3 per square foot, or a 100% match to the Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD)'s rebate, for residential customers

and \$1 per square foot for commercial and HOAs. The program has been immensely popular – the initial allocation of \$500,000 to the program has been claimed, and the City Council recently authorized \$1,500,000 in new allocations for the program. Early application reviews indicate that HOAs have been taking advantage of this program. [Recently](#), the city of Palm Desert allocated \$750,000 for a 100% match (\$3 per square foot) for residential properties and \$250,000 for a 100% match for commercial properties, a total of \$1 million invested. The [City of Indian Wells](#) allocated \$500,000, split \$300,000 for residential projects and \$200,000 for HOAs, to a 100% match at the beginning of October.



Staff Memo to the Sustainability Commission

Date: 11 July 2023

Subject: Proposed Shredding Event Plan for 2023-2024

From: Office of Sustainability

Summary

The Office of Sustainability traditionally hosts three shredding and e-waste collection events per year – one in the fall, one in the winter, and one in the spring. The SSCOWR Subcommittee wanted to consider changes to the event strategy; however, due to the low number of service providers in the Valley, we will need to plan this month for the year's events.

Recommendation

Provide direction on the current and future plans for shredding and e-waste events.

Background

The Office of Sustainability hosted three e-waste collection events and four shredding events during Fiscal Year 2023 (Fall 2022-Summer 2023). These events are staffed by Office staff, Commission members, and City employee volunteers or assigned staff (when available). This year, they were scheduled individually, which led to variations in the companies used due to availability for scheduled dates. Other cities in the Valley host free shredding events and e-waste drop-offs, as do various civic organizations or business groups.

The shredding events are one of the Office's most popular offerings, routinely drawing between 100 and 600 residents. Roughly 50% of attendees come for shredding only, whereas an estimate of 30% come for shredding and e-waste and 20% come for e-waste only. Staff spreads the word about the events via the City calendar, ONE PS, and the City's social media accounts. Staff receives between 5 and 10 inquiries weekly during the high season about the events, escalating to 50+ inquiries weekly when events are approaching or have recently passed. The events cost between \$8,000 and \$15,000 annually to host, based on a review of data from the last three years.

Staff Analysis

Staff have identified two key constraints that proved challenging for this year's events.

- Staff capacity: the events are time-intensive to operate and plan, especially with limited and/or inexperienced staff. The logistics of the event, from traffic flow to attendee management, can be very challenging.
- Support provider relationships: since the events were scheduled individually, it proved challenging to secure a vendor on several dates, leading to schedule changes and a last-minute cancellation. Contract negotiations with providers also posed a few hurdles.

The Standing Subcommittee on Waste and Recycling (SSCOWR) recommended that the Commission brainstorm ideas to partner with other organizations or otherwise reduce the burden of the events and improve their functionality; however, many vendors' fall schedules are already filling, leaving limited time to significantly change the event while still providing thrice yearly service.

To reduce the challenges associated with the second bullet, staff is proposing contracting with a single vendor or pair of vendors for the entire year via RFP process. Staff hopes to identify partners that provide benefits, such as local vendors or those that provide pathways for job training, to support the Office and the City's multiple goals.

Discussion and Conclusions

Staff seeks the Commission's input primarily on the plan to contract a single set of vendors for the entire year, but also welcomes feedback on:

- Other partners that can support the events
- Ways to improve the event's functionality
- Other ways to bolster the events going forward