



Council Communication

Office of the City Manager

Date

August 20, 2007

Agenda Item No. 70

Roll Call No. 07-

Communication No. 07-525

Submitted by: Richard A. Clark, City Manager

AGENDA HEADING:

Approving recommended Energy Conservation and Environmental Enhancement Policy from the Mayor's Task Force on Energy and The Environment, with additional points.

SYNOPSIS:

Recommend approval of the proposed policy and administrative procedure for review and implementation of the City's Energy Conservation and Environmental Enhancement Policy.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Amount: Various amounts

Funding Source: Potentially all funds of the City would experience costs and savings as the policy is implemented. Any specific action related to the implementation of this policy will be accompanied by rigorous cost estimates before implementation.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Overall

The proposed policy outlines a number of principles regarding the City's stewardship of resources and the environment. This policy fits well with the established Council goal of "Sustainable Green Community – Des Moines will be a leader in setting policies and practicing service delivery innovations that promote environmental sustainability. Des Moines will offer safe, reliable, and convenient transportation alternatives that reduce reliance on automobiles and parking facilities."

The work to establish specific goals, objectives, and actions to implement Council's goals is in process. Part of that effort will include the development of specific actions to implement this policy in the context of Council's Sustainable Green Community goal.

Many areas of the City government already use an environmental approach to decision making. For example, the Parks Department has been a leader in moving municipal buildings to more energy efficient lighting and constructing the first City owned LEED certified building; the Public Works Department has begun to introduce hybrid technology, bio-diesel and other alternative fuels into the fleet. Efforts like these will continue as we find opportunities to use fewer natural resources, lower greenhouse gas emissions, and improve the quality of the environment.

A Caveat

Implementation will not be without debate. For example, the proposed policy calls for greater development densities. This will clash with the model of neighborhood development currently in place. At least some of the specific ideas related to energy efficiency and environmental enhancement engender significant policy level debate, locally, nationally, and globally.

Additional Guiding Principles Needed

The following three principles are recommended to be added to the Guiding Principles that were proposed in the draft policy.

Cost Benefit Analysis:

A cost/benefit analysis shall accompany all implementation actions. A good cost/benefit analysis should include not only the financial estimates, but also the reduction in greenhouse gases, reduction in consumption of fuel, energy, and other natural resources, among other possible factors to consider. For example, unlike replacing a standard light bulb with a compact fluorescent bulb there may not be a financial return on green fleet initiatives, but rather a reduction in greenhouse gases and fossil fuel consumption. That is, the investment in a green fleet may not return a dollar savings, but will lead to an improved environment. This will be analyzed in a measurable way before decisions are made to implement any specific idea.

Another measure of cost/benefit has been described as the “triple bottom line”. The fundamental idea of the triple bottom line is that when making decisions, the social, environmental and economic impacts are measured. If any of these three areas is compromised beyond an acceptable level in an attempt to benefit another, the idea is rejected or modified. Thus, an idea that would improve the environment but harm the economy would be rejected. Likewise an idea that improved the economy of Des Moines but harmed the environment would be rejected.

Low Cost Strategies First:

Low-cost strategies will be implemented first. These may have varying impacts, but they also have the advantage that, given the structural deficit of local governments in Iowa, may be able to be implemented where higher cost ideas would not.

Measure Results:

Results must be measured and reported. Only by proving the impacts of these decisions will we learn what works, what doesn't, and how best to proceed in the best interest of everyone in the community.

Next Steps and Specific Actions to Implement this Policy

A Sustainability Team made up of appropriate staff members with some expertise in this field has been appointed. Their task will be to guide implementation steps as we move forward. They will analyze and recommend specific projects to the senior management team in order to implement the Council's Sustainability Goal.

All efforts in this regard will be communicated to Council on a regular basis, or put forward for Council action as specifics require. In this way the City will hold itself accountable for the implementation of the intent of the proposed policy. For example, future changes in City ordinances would be brought to Council, as would any changes in the mission of established Boards and Commissions (such as the Urban Design Review Board, or the Historic Preservation Commission, or the Planning and Zoning Commission), as well as any project with costs of more than \$25,000.

Focus of Implementation Actions for the Next 12 Months

The following concepts will be explored, analyzed, and implemented (if appropriate) over the next 12 months:

- Assist the staff team exploring the Council's Sustainable Green Community goal.
- Utilize ICLEI (Local Governments for Sustainability) software to measure greenhouse gas emissions. Benchmark (or create a baseline) of the organization's current energy usage and carbon footprint. A baseline of water quality will also be explored.
- A review of the Capital Improvement projects currently in the CIP to seek opportunities to increase energy efficiency and/or lessen environmental impacts. An example would be the exploration of "cool roof" techniques in the "Municipal Building Re-roofing" project.
- Adopting environmentally preferable purchasing policies such as the use of 30% post consumer waste paper for printing needs.
- Explore the use of tax abatement or other incentives to encourage private development to LEED standards or other green development protocols.
- Explore retro-commissioning buildings to increase energy efficiency.
- Explore alternatives to current yard waste disposal to reduce green house gases.
- Explore the increased use of renewable fuel and other fleet management innovations (E85, 20% biodiesel, hybrid engines, etc.).
- Implement a high-profile website to communicate the work of the City in this area and also what residents can do to reduce their consumption of natural resources and their contribution to global warming.
- Test the use of low or non-toxic paint (low or no VOC paint (Volatile Organic Compound)).
- Implement an employee education campaign with such techniques as turning off lights when not needed and printing on both sides of paper.
- Review building code and other ordinances to minimize code obstacles to green construction projects.

Many other potential actions aimed at reducing our environmental impact will also be explored as we move into the future. Each will have a cost/benefit analysis. Ideas that possess significant impacts with no or low cost will be implemented first.

A Definition of Sustainability

Sustainability is defined as balancing the fulfillment of human needs with the protection of the natural environment so that these needs can be met not only in the present, but in the indefinite future. The term was used by the United Nations' World Commission on Environment and Development which coined what has become the most often-quoted definition of sustainable development as development that "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTION(S):

Date: March 26, 2007

Roll Call Number: [07-604](#)

Action: Receipt of recommended Energy Conservation and Environmental Enhancement Policy from the Mayor's Task Force on Energy and the Environment. Moved by Kiernan to adopt. Motion Carried 7-0.

Date: August 21, 2006

Roll Call Number: [06-1709](#)

Action: Establishing The Mission of the Mayor's Task Force on Energy and the Environment. Moved by Vlassis to adopt and refer to the City Manager to send a copy of the Mission Statement to our Partner Agencies. Motion Carried 5-1.

Date: December 19, 2005

Roll Call Number: [05-3054](#)

Action: Creation of a Mayor's Task Force on Energy Conservation and Environmental Preservation. Moved by Coleman to approve and to establish the Council representatives as Council Members Vlassis and Kiernan and Mayor Cownie. Motion Carried 7-0.

BOARD/COMMISSION ACTION(S): NONE

ANTICIPATED ACTIONS AND FUTURE COMMITMENTS:

Various Council actions related to implementation of specific policies and programs associated with energy conservation and environmental enhancement.