

Item 23-0446: Request to approve Grant Allocation for Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) Program of \$134,180

Common Council

Wed, May 03, 2023, 7:00PM

Mayor Jake Woodford 09:30

Okay. Anybody else? All right, hearing none, we'll get started then with Finance Committee. First is item 23-0446 request to approve grant allocation for energy efficiency and conservation Block Grant. We have a motion. Is there a second?

Mayor Jake Woodford 10:13

Anybody like to second? Okay. Alder Fenton seconds. Thank you. Okay. Or Alder Van Zeeland. Okay, yeah, there's something—so just so folks know what's going on. There's there—it seems that not everybody's showing up in the Granicus system, so that's why we're having trouble with the motion and speak buttons. So not sure what that is about. But I'll do my best to sort of manage in a in a hybrid format. So if I'm missing you, please don't hesitate to raise a point of order. Just shout out so that you have the opportunity to speak, move, second cetera.

Mayor Jake Woodford 10:58

All right, so we do have a motion and a second. Open the floor for discussion. Alder Hartzheim.

Aldersperson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 11:04

Thank you, chair. After further review of this after the Finance Committee meeting, I would like to offer an amendment to the request for approval. I would like to amend it to say that this would be approved by the Council provided it is allowed or used for only existing proposed energy efficiency projects on the library.

Mayor Jake Woodford 11:33

We have a motion to amend. Is there a second? We have a second from Alder Doran. Okay, so we'll open the floor for discussion on the amendment. Alder van Zeeland.

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 11:54

Thank you, Chair. I do appreciate the amendment, but I'm not going to vote for it at this time, just because without seeing the bids and knowing how that would enter into the equation for library—for the library. I think it's something that we could look at reallocating later down the line. Thank you.

Mayor Jake Woodford 12:15

Alder Hartzheim.

Aldersperson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 12:17

Thank you Chair. I think everybody can appreciate just as Alder van Zeeland does, that this amendment is offered in good faith, I would love for us to use this for all the existing proposals in the library project, and this can definitely save some of our problems that we've had in the past with the library being overpriced. Thank you.

Mayor Jake Woodford 12:40

Alder Doran.

Aldersperson Chad Doran (District 15) 12:42

Thank you. I would just encourage our colleagues to support this. It fits to a tee what the purpose of the grant is, and you know, anything that we can do to offset the cost of the library project, through less borrowing, is an incredibly important step for us to be taking. This helps us, you know, meet some of the sustainability goals that have been set for the library project, and then assist us in helping find a way to pay for them. So I see no downside in this whatsoever, and I encourage my colleagues to support it.

Mayor Jake Woodford 13:19

Alder Alfheim.

Aldersperson Kristin Alfheim (District 11) 13:20

Thank you, Chair. If I could ask a question. Do we have existing projects on the docket that we know these dollars would go towards? I'm again, not against this concept, but was there already a list in motion that these dollars will be used for? Or do we get to pick and choose how they're applied when the time comes?

Mayor Jake Woodford 13:40

Director Gazza, could you speak to the program provisions? And which mic is that, please? Okay, go ahead.

Director Dean Gazza (Parks, Recreation, and Facilities) 13:49

Thank you chair. Rather than a grant that we would have to have had to apply for, this was an interesting grant allocation, where cities, counties and tribes or cities particular were over 50,000—I don't know how the counties in how the tribes were, the criteria for that. But an allocation was given to us. So basically, it was given to us where we didn't even have to apply to it. We're basically accepting it.

Director Dean Gazza (Parks, Recreation, and Facilities) 14:16

Now that we're accepting it, yeah, allocating it towards one of the categories like renewables or sustainable energy and things like that would be that. We're always in the midst of doing multiple sustainable projects, but for example, like the library, we know the geothermal is going to be an expensive investment and so would be a, you know, a strong candidate for the use of this money. Not knowing where you know, where the bids are going to come in, but we do know that the geothermal is going to cost us about 1.6 million of that library bid costs. So yeah, offsetting it with this, it would give it some off-set.

Aldersperson Kristin Alfheim (District 11) 15:02

If I may follow?

Mayor Jake Woodford 15:03

Please.

Aldersperson Kristin Alfheim (District 11) 15:04

Just to follow up, if I understand the amendment, they're not saying replacing this 134 into the budget. They're saying just put the 134 towards it. Just for clarification. So you're not asking us to minimize in any way. We are saying when the dollars come in, put it towards the project, of which the budget we've already agreed upon. So this would be additional funds, so I'm clarifying on the amendment.

Mayor Jake Woodford 15:25

Okay. So we'll just note that in the course of discussion, a question has been put, and if the mover would like to speak to that, they may along the course of discussion.

Aldersperson Kristin Alfheim (District 11) 15:38

Appreciate it. Thank you.

Mayor Jake Woodford 15:39

Yep. All right, Alder Wolff.

Aldersperson Nate Wolff (District 12) 15:45

Thank you chair. I had the same question. So.

Mayor Jake Woodford 15:49

See. Alder Hartzheim would like to speak. Go ahead.

Aldersperson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 15:52

Thank you, chair. The intent was for this to be a substitution rather than an addition to the budget for the library.

Mayor Jake Woodford 16:02

Alder Fenton.

Aldersperson Denise Fenton (District 6) 16:04

thank you, Chair. I do not plan to vote for this amendment. While I believe that the intent is worthy. Because this grant, as I understand it, is unique in that it is incredibly flexible, and we can use it for projects that will get the most ROI on those funds. And at this point, with a lot of projects there, I would, I would be against removing the flexibility to—while there are many worthy projects in the library, there may be other projects, where \$134,000 is just a drop in the bucket for the geothermal for the library. But \$134,000 may go a very long way to another sustainability project in the city. And I'd like our staff to have the flexibility to use those dollars in the way that they would do the most good. Thank you.

Mayor Jake Woodford 17:02

Alder Alfheim.

Aldersperson Kristin Alfheim (District 11) 17:04

Thank you chair. Two things. One, I love that there's a lot of us talking about the support for the library. And two, we're talking about putting it towards energy efficient use. Yay, on both accounts. I actually would support this. The reason I say that is we do know it's a \$1.1 million budget. this is 10% of that total value. It's unlikely that we could find another project where the 134 would not come with additional spending to do that project. So in the situation we're in where we are counting our nickels everywhere we have them, I actually think this is a good compromise. We're putting it towards a valuable project that we need, the dollars are there to offset our escalating costs, and we're getting something that community needs and wants. So I support the amendment.

Mayor Jake Woodford 17:57

Alder Meltzer.

Aldersperson Vered Meltzer (District 2) 17:59

Thank you. I am not comfortable with this amendment. While I definitely appreciate the intention, and I appreciate the discussion that we're having about it, I do feel that the—with the action before us being to approve receiving this grant, I would rather have the expertise of staff to have the time to process and figure out

where this money is best spent rather than us sit here while at the same time as we're approving our reception of it, already deciding where we're going to spend it. I think that that's not giving staff the ability to fully analyze and compare different projects. I'd like to—if we're going to choose what to spend it on today, I'd like to have a list of what we're then choosing not to spend it on. Since that's not possible, I can't support this. Thank you.

Mayor Jake Woodford 18:49

Alder Wolff.

Alderman Nate Wolff (District 12) 18:51

Thank you, chair. I would like to refer to Alderman Meltzer's comments. I think that if we, you know, use this for that project now, it—I like this amendment. But I also think that it doesn't need to happen just yet. I do think we can make that decision later on down the road. And in case that there is something that comes up where we might need this to be allocated towards something, like something you can't think of happens, I would like that to be available rather than rediscussing it later. So I think we should defeat this amendment.

Mayor Jake Woodford 19:35

And I do just want to be clear, since we do have a new colleague with us, I just want to be clear that accepting this money does not just mean then that the administration could go spend it in any way we like. It will still have to come through an approval process to allocate those funds ultimately. So just want to clarify that point. Make sure everybody's clear on that point. So regardless of where you go with this amendment, there will be an additional approval steps in the process. Alder Doran.

Alderman Chad Doran (District 15) 20:09

Thank you. Fiscal oversight is absolutely our number one responsibility in this job, guys. We have the opportunity here to accept this money and offset some of our borrowing. \$134,000 is never ever a drop in the bucket for anything we do ever. \$134,000 is a lot of money. And while this—you may say this may not make a huge impact in the borrowing of our project, again, our job is to find savings wherever we can find them. This money directly goes to a project that we are already intending on doing and can now find some savings on. This—I think the idea that we could just turn around and say, "Well, we could use this for another project that we now can maybe slot in that we weren't going to do," is just looking at this as free money for something else when our responsibility is to be judicious with our dollars and allocate them as wisely as possible. There there's no downside in this. And by, in fact, allocating it in this way or passing this amendment, we're directing staff where to put these dollars without then staff having to spend the time to come up with another project or way to use them. And in fact, if the staff decided down the road, they wanted to use it for that project anyway, we've now saved them the step of having to do that work by doing it ourselves because this is what our primary responsibility is. So I encourage you to support it.

Mayor Jake Woodford 21:53

Alder Alfheim.

Alderman Kristin Alfheim (District 11) 21:54

Thank you, chair. A very good discussion. I think there's a lot of valid points on it. And to Alder Meltzer's point where, and the mayor's, where there is future opportunity to make decisions, I understand that. And if we are to put down this amendment, that's okay. But I think that it's a valid conversation to be had in terms of applying the dollars to the library. I think it does let everybody know that we love the library, we love energy efficiency, and we support that project getting done. I will support the amendment, but if it does fail, I think that we will be having further conversations, to Alder Doran's point, about what to do and why and if we agree this is a good

project. I'm not sure why we'd be disagreeing to this one. So I will be supporting it or at least the conversation about putting it towards it in the future.

Mayor Jake Woodford 22:49

Alder Jones.

Aldersperson Vaya Jones (District 10) 22:52

Thank you, chair. I love the idea of putting this money towards the library. I love the geothermal. I think it's great that we're having that, and putting the money towards it is important. However, I am very concerned about us going ahead and making this amendment without the appropriate research of other projects and other opportunities. With the opportunity to go back to this project later on and having that I feel confident in not supporting this amendment.

Mayor Jake Woodford 23:28

Alder Meltzer.

Aldersperson Vered Meltzer (District 2) 23:30

Thank you. I think part of fiscal responsibility really includes not tying our hands. And I want to remind all my colleagues that given what Dean Gazza, Director Gazza has already said, if we vote no on this amendment, it's very likely that this money still will be spent on the library project. So voting no on this amendment isn't in any way saying that we don't want this money to support the library or that we wouldn't be seeing that as one of the most likely places to spend it already. However, there are, you know, severe weather events, there are projects that we're very proud of that could perhaps experience compromise or setback, and being able to really have a full analysis of what we're choosing not to spend this money on when we choose where we do spend it on, I think, is a really important part of fiscal responsibility. I can't just vote without that list of alternatives. Thank you.

Mayor Jake Woodford 24:26

Alder van Zeeland.

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 24:28

Thank you chair. If the amendment said something to the effect of "giving preference to an existing project," that would be something that I would vote for. I just can't vote for putting it directly towards a project that we really don't know a lot about at this point. Thank you.

Mayor Jake Woodford 24:46

Alder Hartzheim.

Aldersperson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 24:47

Thank you chair. To directly address Alder van Zeeland's question I did state that this should be for existing proposed library energy efficiency projects. Also, voting on this today tells our constituents today now that it is important for us to take these funds and assign them to this project that we already know is in the works and is going to need these funds. 10% of what the estimated cost is going to be for just geothermal in this library. And we have even more energy-efficient plans for the library as well. So I see no downside in this either, and I really encourage my colleagues to vote for it. Thank you.

Mayor Jake Woodford 25:31

Nobody else in the queue. Does anybody else wish to speak? Alder Del Toro.

Aldersperson Israel Del Toro (District 4) 25:40

Thank you, Mr. Mayor. My primary concern of not supporting this amendment is centered around the idea that when bids do come in, they might be artificially inflated regarding their overall bid just because they know they have this money in there then to buffer their particular bids. So I'm just concerned that this is going to artificially inflate any energy efficiency projects associated with the library.

Mayor Jake Woodford 26:08

Alder van Zeeland.

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 26:09

Thank you, Chair. Could I just clarify the wording of the amendment? Is it existing projects or existing library projects?

Mayor Jake Woodford 26:18

Was existing library projects specifically. Alder Hartzheim, go ahead.

Aldersperson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 26:23

Thank you chair. "Existing proposed energy efficient projects in the library."

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 26:29

Okay. Thank you.

Mayor Jake Woodford 26:31

That's the motion that was made and seconded, and that's what we've been discussing. That would be a motion to amend. All right, any further discussion? All right, given the issues with the system, would you please call the roll for this vote? Just want to make sure we get it right here. Oh, I'm sorry. Go ahead.

Clerk Kami Lynch 26:56

Aldersperson Siebers.

Aldersperson William Siebers (District 1) 26:57

Aye

Clerk Kami Lynch 26:57

Aldersperson Meltzer.

Aldersperson Vered Meltzer (District 2) 26:58

Nay.

Clerk Kami Lynch 26:59

Aldersperson Firkus.

Aldersperson Brad Firkus (District 3) 27:01

Nay.

Clerk Kami Lynch 27:04

Aldersperson Del Toro.

Alderson Israel Del Toro (District 4) 27:06
Nay.

Clerk Kami Lynch 27:08
Alderson van Zeeland.

Alderson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 27:13
Nay.

Clerk Kami Lynch 27:15
Alderson Fenton.

Alderson Denise Fenton (District 6) 27:16
Nay.

Clerk Kami Lynch 27:20
Alderson Hayden.

Alderson Patrick Hayden (District 7) 27:21
Nay.

Clerk Kami Lynch 27:23
Alderson Thyssen.

Alderson Joss Thyssen (District 8) 27:24
Nay.

Clerk Kami Lynch 27:25
Alderson Schultz.

Alderson Alex Schultz (District 9) 27:27
Nay.

Clerk Kami Lynch 27:28
Alderson Jones.

Alderson Vaya Jones (District 10) 27:31
Nay.

Clerk Kami Lynch 27:31
Alderson Alfheim.

Alderson Kristin Alfheim (District 11) 27:34
Aye.

Clerk Kami Lynch 27:34
Alderson Wolff.

Alderson Nate Wolff (District 12) 27:39
Nay.

Clerk Kami Lynch 27:39
Alderson Hartzheim.

Alderson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 27:40
Aye.

Clerk Kami Lynch 27:41
Alderson Croatt.

Alderson Chris Croatt (District 14) 27:44
Aye.

Clerk Kami Lynch 27:44
Alderson Doran.

Alderson Chad Doran (District 15) 27:45
Aye.

Mayor Jake Woodford 27:58
The motion to amend fails five to 10.

Mayor Jake Woodford 28:03
All right. So we're back to the item now. Again, this is item 23-0446 request to approve grant allocation for Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant. We do have a motion and a second on the item. And we'll continue discussion. Is there any further discussion?

Mayor Jake Woodford 28:27
All right, hearing no further discussion we'll vote. Just for the sake of efficiency. Is there anyone who wishes to vote no? Just a show of hands. Okay, nobody wishes to vote no. So the item has been approved unanimously.