

## Item 25-0020: Request to approve the following 2025 Budget amendment: CEA Capital Projects Federal Grants +\$134,180 Vehicles +\$134,180

Common Council

Wed, Feb 19, 2025 7:00PM

### Mayor Jake Woodford 54:30

All right. Moving along. Finance Committee. This is item 25-0020, request to approve the following 2025 budget amendment. This is related to CEA capital projects and recording the EECGB grant award and associated expenses for a vehicle. Need a motion. Yes. This is interesting. So, we've got a second. Okay, don't move. Now, someone second. Good, okay, we're good. It was much more exciting watching on the screen than maybe it seemed. All right, we're good now. So, we have a motion and a second to approve open the floor for discussion. Alder Doran.

### Aldersperson Chad Doran (District 15) 55:31

Thank you. I appreciate my colleagues indulging my request last time to refer this back. I had planned to be at the Finance Committee meeting to discuss. Unfortunately, work took me out of town unexpectedly that day. And I also appreciate Director Gazza answering the numerous questions that I asked him regarding this grant. I still—I guess where I come down on this is, I think that it's two things, really. One, I'm uncomfortable with the fact that this grant originally came to us for something related to the library that we could not use it for, and instead of returning it, which I think would be the right thing for us to do, we, as the sort of staff tried to find another alternative use for that. And in the end, what it feels like to me is we tried to sort of pigeonhole something that we don't really have a plan for. Based on my conversations, I understand there's some sort of risk aspect here to just say, "Well, we've got this money available. We should try it and see what it gets us." But I'm really uncomfortable with that. I think that's not the right path for a municipality to take. These are still tax dollars, some of ours, some of other places, and our job is to wisely use the money that's given to us, and I think testing it on something like this that is for a very, in my view, volatile industry that is changing very rapidly both with the technology for the vehicles and the chargers. I believe at one point, Director Gazza even mentioned that by the time the first vehicle that we might purchase is no longer useful to us, we may have to replace the charging technology already. I think there's just too much unknown here, and this is an investment, I think, without a plan, and I don't believe that's the right way for us to operate, so I won't be voting to support it.

### Mayor Jake Woodford 57:49

Alder van Zeeland.

### Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 57:51

Thank you, Chair. I just wanted to correct Alder Doran. The—he had stated that this was meant for the library. This grant was actually received before we put in the resolution to direct it to be used for the library, if possible. It wasn't actually received for the library itself. And I'm going to vote in favor of this, because I actually believe, based on the discussions and the questions that were submitted by Alder Doran, that the CEA and our staff are being very careful about moving forward. They have been very careful, and they're being very diligent, and I would encourage my colleagues to vote in favor as well.

### Mayor Jake Woodford 58:42

Alder Croatt.

**Alderman Chris Croatt (District 14)** 58:44

Thank you, Mayor. I semi reluctantly supported this at committee, and still do, but I just was wondering if I could get some clarity as to what other options does the city have with this. It was my understanding for a while that we pretty much can only use it for this, and I'm wondering if there were other options considered, or what those are.

**Mayor Jake Woodford** 59:07

Director Gazza.

**Director Dean Gazza (Parks, Recreation, and Facilities)** 59:08

Yes, thank you for the question. The challenge was with the amount of money that we were giving. So, if, you know, some were saying, okay, we're gonna put solar on a building, we're gonna put geothermal at a building, and so forth. Almost in any case, the project size or magnitude or scope would exceed the amount of money that we've been given. So, if you're given the amount that we did, \$134,000, now it comes down to finding a project that you can pay for without having to come up with any other funding because—or have another project going simultaneously at the exact same time. So that limited us to, you know, to the vehicle, but the vehicle was something that we've been talking about for years, but cautiously have wanted to step into. And this gives us, you know, from my perspective, a great opportunity, because the money's coming for free. We're not asking the taxpayers to fund the experiment. It is tax dollars. I do realize that on—that gets handed down. But on the other hand, it's basically, we take this money, we can purchase a car that can offset purchase of another car that would be using tax dollars, or the money just goes back to the state.

**Mayor Jake Woodford** 1:00:24

Alder Croatt.

**Alderman Chris Croatt (District 14)** 1:00:26

Thank you, and thank you, Director Gaza, for that response. The part I struggle with, with giving it back is, yes, it's not free money, and it is it is ultimately tax dollars, but if we give it back, it's just going to go somewhere else and somebody else and somebody else is going to spend it on probably something similar. So that's the struggle that I have with giving it back. But thank you for the clarity on the options presented.

**Mayor Jake Woodford** 1:00:52

Alder Firkus.

**Alderman Brad Firkus (District 3)** 1:00:54

Thank you, Mayor. I'm going to ask my colleagues to support this. I think the upshot of dipping our toe into electrification of fleet vehicles is that lot of these electric vehicles have much less maintenance and upkeep costs than in the gasoline powered vehicles. There's fewer moving parts. There's fewer things to wear out. That can save the city money in the long term, both in parts as well as in maintenance hours spent on vehicles. The fact that we have a grant available for this means we can do this without having to pull extra funds from the CEA budget. I think staff has been very thoughtful and measured in coming up with this, and I think there's really good upsides to approving this. Thank you.

**Mayor Jake Woodford** 1:01:38

Alder Fenton.

**Alderson Denise Fenton (District 6) 1:01:39**

Thank you, Your Honor. Just a reminder—and this is verbiage from the from the Department of Energy— these grants, the purpose is "to help state, local and tribal governments implement strategies to reduce energy use, reduce fossil fuel emissions, and improve energy efficiency." So, and Alder van Zeeland sort of stole my memory thunder when she reminded us that we had applied for this grant and then we, the council, attempted to—we introduced a resolution to use it for the library, and it turned out that that wouldn't be available. So, I think that this is—in terms of that amount of money, as it's been said, I think this is a really, really good use for that grant, and I would hate for some other entity who might not use it as wisely to get it if we gave it back. So, I'm voting for this, and I would urge everybody else to as well.

**Mayor Jake Woodford 1:02:40**

Alder Schultz.

**Alderson Alex Schultz (District 9) 1:02:42**

Thank you, Chair. Not to belabor the point, but I just want to recognize Director Gazza's comments and echo the sentiment that this is something we've been chasing for many years, and there has been some hesitation, as has been stated about getting too far ahead of the technology. I think we're at a point now where we're not in that position, and having this opportunity to get the city started down this path, which is something it's been, you know, it's been part of the Climate Task Force recommendations, other recommendations, to electrify the city fleet. So, I would hope we just support this for the simple fact that it's something we've been waiting to do for many years, and now we have this opportunity to do it.

**Mayor Jake Woodford 1:03:23**

Alder Alfheim.

**Alderson Kristin Alfheim (District 11) 1:03:30**

Thank you, Mr. Mayor. Interesting input. I recently was given the opportunity. I have been curious about the electric vehicle thing in my real life, and just happened to stumble upon what was a really, really good deal. And I took advantage of that deal knowing that I might be better off waiting. I might wait for longer, better technology, for a longer distance, but it was a really, really good financial opportunity that I believed was worth a shot. Turns out, it works really well. Turns out it's something that I'm very glad that I did, that is both financially and comfort-wise really working well for me, and I think for the city's sake, it's the same type of opportunity. They may not have planned to go into it fully, but we've been waiting to dabble our toes into it, and this is a great opportunity. And again, we may find that this is great technology that we want to utilize more, and we're going to learn a lot from it. So, I say votes up.

**Mayor Jake Woodford 1:04:30**

Alder van Zeeland.

**Alderson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 1:04:32**

Thank you, Chair. Could Director Gazza talk a little bit about the charging portion of the purchase that we're looking at?

**Mayor Jake Woodford 1:04:41**

Director Gazza.

**Director Dean Gazza (Parks, Recreation, and Facilities) 1:04:42**

Yeah, unlike if we were putting a charger, I'll start with—anyway, I got some questions about the cost and things like that, about—because people are accustomed to buying a car and then putting a residential charger in their home. In this case, we were looking at putting it at the yellow ramp, and we're upgrading the yellow ramp electrical infrastructure at this time, and that will look at the ability to add electric chargers, but in particular, having a commercial charger there that will charge a vehicle within eight hours versus the 24-hour standpoint. One of the recommendations I've noticed that noted at committee, because I had gotten a question about, is it a single charge or double charger? Because I think I may have mentioned a double charger, is that it may make sense to, if you're buying a unit, just buy the unit that does two cars versus the unit that does one, and like I said at the committee, that's yet to be looked at what specifically charger, but we're going to look to our consultant to give us a recommendation on that based on what they're what they're seeing would fit our application the best in our environment.

**Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 1:05:58**

Thank you, Director Gazza. I think that's a really important part of this, looking forward to that investment for the parking utility. Thank you.

**Mayor Jake Woodford 1:06:03**

And just to be clear, what's being contemplated right now would still be in the secure City Garage portion of the yellow ramp. So, this this would not be a public charging station. There there's a whole other set of issues related to public charging equipment, and it's still really an emerging area from a regulatory perspective. So just to be abundantly clear, this would be in the secure portion of the yellow ramp.

**Mayor Jake Woodford 1:06:39**

Further discussion? Hearing none, we have a motion and a second to approve. Please cast your votes. Thank you, Alder Alfheim. Motion passes 14 to one. The item has been approved.