

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

Finance Committee

Mon, Feb 10, 2025 5:30PM

Aldersperson Brad Firkus (District 3) 01:10

We'll move right into our action items, starting with 25-0020, request to approve the following budget amendment, which is to move the EECGB grant award dollars into the CEA capital project vehicles budget line. That's \$134,180

Aldersperson Denise Fenton (District 6) 01:27

Move to approve.

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 01:28

Second.

Aldersperson Brad Firkus (District 3) 01:29

All right, we have a motion and a second. Just to kind of—just to start out, Alder Doran, who had referred this back to committee, could not be here tonight. He did send me—forward on—an email with questions and answers he received from Director Gazza. So, I just want to get those into the record in case any of these questions and answers either answer or raise further questions for anyone here tonight.

Aldersperson Brad Firkus (District 3) 01:50

So, first question is, "What is the city's current plan for electric vehicles?" The answer is, "The city realizes there are opportunities to use electric vehicles in some cases, but not all. The current opportunity would be to try one for routine trips where distances are not significant factor. Quite frankly, we do not a lot—know a lot [but of but] them and are excited to try one so we can learn how they might be effective. In addition, anytime we can utilize one, we also are adding to a reduction of CO2 which helps with our sustainability initiatives." Are there any further comments or questions on that one? Alder Hartzheim.

Aldersperson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 01:50

I am a bit concerned about this because we are going to use—whether it's grant money or taxpayer money from the city of Appleton taxpayers, this is money—this is over \$100,000 that we're going to use to just try it out. That that's a little disconcerting to me. And also, what do we know about how this will work during the cold weather season, which is basically half of the year here?

Aldersperson Brad Firkus (District 3) 02:55

I can—Director Gazza, I saw your hand and then Alder van Zeeland. So, a microphone. Which one do you have? District Four? Alright, go ahead, sir.

Director Dean Gazza (Parks, Recreation, and Facilities) 03:04

Thank you. I wouldn't think of it as just trying it out. I think what it does do is provide us an opportunity to gain experience with the EV vehicle that we don't have now, gain experience with money that isn't coming directly from our taxpayer—the taxpayers. The move to EV, you know, it's anybody's guess how that will transition over the years, but EV is one way of reducing CO2 through emissions of the vehicles. And so, we do know we have a need for a lot of routine trips in our city, and when we're using normal internal combustion vehicle, we are

emitting a lot of CO2 and exhaust and so forth. this gives us the ability not only to eliminate that but at least try vehicle. CEA Bruce Brazee would then also gain some experience with them. We'd be able to answer more questions about, you know, what is the maintenance like on these? What is that before we would expand the fleet into them. So, I think starting with one vehicle like this would be responsible to try to get and gain experience of our own, not just listen to and read articles and things like that about them. We would gain our own on-site experience.

Alderman Brad Firkus (District 3) 04:33

Thank you. Alder van Zeeland.

Alderman Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 04:35

Thank you, Chair. I just wanted to clarify the information that we have here is that we're just accepting this grant. Wouldn't anything regarding the purchase of an electric vehicle be another action at the CEA committee?

Director Dean Gazza (Parks, Recreation, and Facilities) 04:48

The actual purchase ends up being action at the committee, but the grant is only for a electric vehicle. We tried to, looked into solar and different things like that, but there are complications with the amount of money and the requirements that they have. So, the easiest, cleanest thing is to that they've been approving our electric vehicles. So.

Alderman Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 05:11

But we still would have—

Director Dean Gazza (Parks, Recreation, and Facilities) 05:12

Yeah.

Alderman Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 05:13

—the ability to take action in committee should—

Director Dean Gazza (Parks, Recreation, and Facilities) 05:17

Yeah, when the money is expended, yeah, that type of money has to be approved at that time, but it couldn't be used for anything other than a vehicle and a charger because that's what was approved.

Alderman Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 05:26

I understand. Thank you.

Alderman Brad Firkus (District 3) 05:29

Anyone else on this one? Otherwise, Alder Doran does have a total of 10 questions, and I do want to give them the time to just get these out here, not that we have to discuss every single one of them, just since he couldn't be here, but he did do the work to get the questions that he wanted to follow up when he did have the referral—the refer the refer back in mind. So, if there's no other questions or discussion on that one, I'll move on to the next.

Alderman Brad Firkus (District 3) 05:54

The next one is, "It seemed unclear to me, at least—" this is Alder Doran's question, of course—"that the grant covers all the costs to purchase the EV and the charging station, including any ancillary costs, including installation. Can you confirm if it does or not, and if not, what the city would be putting toward that?" The answer was "Yes. The grant does cover the cost of the vehicle and the chargers." Alder Hartzheim.

Aldersperson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 06:18

In the previous meeting for municipal services, a \$8,500 add on to consultancy regarding the electrical equipment in the yellow ramp was approved, and at that meeting it was not asked or confirmed whether that will come out of this grant pot or if that comes from taxpayer money. So, if Director Jungwirth could just clarify that, please.

Aldersperson Brad Firkus (District 3) 06:45

Sure. Microphone?

Director Dean Gazza (Parks, Recreation, and Facilities) 06:46

It would be coming out of the grant money.

Aldersperson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 06:48

Excellent. Director Gazza, thank you.

Aldersperson Brad Firkus (District 3) 06:53

Anyone else? All right, next question is "In the finance meeting you mentioned that there are several vehicles due for replacement, but this EV would allow the CEA to save the money on those vehicles. I'm confused how one vehicle can replace several others." The answer to that question was, "CEA replaces numerous vehicles, but this would replace one vehicle that is up for replacement in 2025. I believe the unspent money in CEA stays in the budget as it is a pool of money, but overall, it offsets the expenditure that is already allocated." So, any? Okay, no follow up to that.

Aldersperson Brad Firkus (District 3) 07:31

Next question was "You mentioned other satellite locations for EV chargers and vehicles going in if this one is successful. This is this in part, goes back to question one, but the other side of this question is, what are the metrics by which we are deeming a trial like this is a success?" The answer to that question was "Numerous factors, but costs would be a driver. We are being told that maintenance is less than a traditional vehicle as there is no oil or other fluid changes and etcetera. Success will be reliability, maintenance, and overall cost. We realize these can only be used for routine trips, and feel it will be successful if used for this purpose. Hauling equipment, plowing, long trips, etc. are not expectations." All right, see no follow up questions there.

Aldersperson Brad Firkus (District 3) 08:16

"What do we know about the life expectancy of these EVs and chargers?" The answer to that question was, "We are being told 10 years for the batteries and vehicles, and the chargers last as long, if not longer." Any questions? I guess I'll just throw in some of the older batteries especially are understood to be prone to the ten-year limit. I'm driving a 2013 Chevy Volt right now and the battery is still kicking pretty good. So, I would say it's at least not unheard of and not impossible for those batteries to maintain a near full charge beyond that 10-year mark. So, I don't think we're necessarily guaranteed to be blocked in with a 10-year lifespan on a veh—on electric vehicle if we go this route.

Aldersperson Brad Firkus (District 3) 09:05

All right. Next question, "What is the plan for an employee who needs to change—charge a vehicle away from the city own station? How will that work, and how will we justify the cost?" Answer is "The plan would be to use the vehicle for routine trips in the immediate area. Thus, the vehicle would be returned each evening for charging. In a rare instance, an employee needed a charge away from his home base charger, then they would need to locate a charger to do so."

Alderson Brad Firkus (District 3) 09:32

All right, next question is, "We have invest—have we investigated the pros and cons of hybrid vehicles versus all EVs? I believe we have several hybrids in the fleet now and would be curious if we've done long term comparisons for those versus, what a normal combustion vehicle is." The answer that question was, "We could—we could not do this, as we have no experience with electric vehicles. This opportunity gives us the ability to educate and experience one for ourselves. We believe we can read about other experiences, but we really won't know until we can experiment for ourselves. Once we have more data, CEA can make more informed decisions about the pros and cons of them compared to hybrid and others."

Alderson Brad Firkus (District 3) 10:15

Next question, "If we can't afford the double charger, does it make sense to put in a single just because the grant covers that?" The answer that was "Faith Technologies recommended a double to save future cost of wiring them. This gives flexibility. It is a recommendation and not a necessity. I plan on seeing the action—I plan on seeing the actual cost. One idea was to put a single charger in two locations so that it can be used by more people, to get more opinions on the actual pros and cons." Alder Hartzheim.

Alderson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 10:46

Director Gazza, could you confirm what the actual plan really is now? Is this going to be a double charge? Is that what's really in the works when we're talking about this? Or are we still too far—that's too far down the road?

Director Dean Gazza (Parks, Recreation, and Facilities) 10:59

Yeah, when, I talked to Faith Technologies, they recommended there's economies of scale, and it's better to put in a double charger. If you're putting in one, you might as well just put in a one unit that charges two vehicles. It's not two separate units. Like I indicated, I want to see the up charge of that. So, we don't know. We do have the \$134,000. So, if we can get that additional—if we can do double charger, then we would do it. If the budget doesn't allow for it, then it makes sense to just go stay with the single charger. But if there's enough money, we can take that recommendation and take advantage of that, we may as well.

Alderson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 11:37

So, whatever is decided is going to be below this total grant.

Director Dean Gazza (Parks, Recreation, and Facilities) 11:42

Absolutely, absolutely.

Alderson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 11:44

Okay. Thank you.

Alderson Brad Firkus (District 3) 11:47

All right. Next question, "When this EV or charger needs maintenance or repair, what is the plan for that?" Answer to that is, "The chargers keep changing with the technology. So, my understanding is that in 10 years or so, when with car needs replacement, there will be different charger technology, and it would be upgraded to match the new vehicle. This seems the way the technology has been moving, but possibly it has stabilized, and the charger can be used on replacement vehicles also."

Alderson Brad Firkus (District 3) 12:13

Follow up with that then last question was, "Will city mechanics need specialized training to do maintenance repairs on the EV or the charger?" Answer to that was "Speaking to Bruce, he did not feel that would be the

case. He has indicated that this—his research on maintenance as well—or sorry. He has indicated that his research on maintenance as they have very little and of those that do need maintenance, they can do, such as tires, windshield wipers, lights, etc." So, any follow up questions on that? Director Gazza, do you have any follow up statements or observations you want to share?

Director Dean Gazza (Parks, Recreation, and Facilities) 12:51

No, just, just like I said before, it's an opportunity that that, rather than going out and budgeting and put in the capital—or I mean putting it in the CEA budget fully supported by taxpayer money, this gives us the opportunity to move forward and get our own experience to determine how it benefits the City of Appleton, and if we have bad experience then, then we wouldn't move in that direction. Or if we see that hybrid or other vehicles are better, then we stay with that. But if this is proves good, then we move forward with it in other opportunities that it might be successful. We realize, yeah, we're not going to put them in plows and or, you know, busses at this time, you know, and things like that, but routine trips around town, it makes sense, saves money on fuel and CO2.

Aldersperson Brad Firkus (District 3) 13:54

Alright, thank you. Alder Hartzheim.

Aldersperson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 13:56

Thank you. I'm going to continue to vote in favor of this, even though I still have those reservations that I discussed earlier. I wonder what else could be done with these funds, but I don't want us to be chasing our tails forever to try to figure out what to do with some grant money. Thank you.

Aldersperson Brad Firkus (District 3) 14:14

Anyone else? Alder Croatt, and then.

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 14:17

Oh, no, I was just pinning.

Aldersperson Brad Firkus (District 3) 14:18

Oh, okay. Alder Croatt.

Aldersperson Chris Croatt (District 14) 14:20

Thankyou. Chair. My question is for Director Gazza, if I may. Director Gazza, is the plan then with this vehicle to keep it long term, or will it be on a replacement schedule?

Director Dean Gazza (Parks, Recreation, and Facilities) 14:35

I would have to talk to Finance and CEA, but eventually, almost anything, piece of equipment that's over \$10,000 goes on a replacement schedule. The question would be is with some vehicles there is—and this is part of the learning opportunity we have. You know, Bruce knows the replacement schedule traditionally for our normal vehicles, but does that change for an electric vehicle? Does that increase for an electric vehicle? And so that'd be another learning experience. Maybe that's 10 or 12 years.

Aldersperson Brad Firkus (District 3) 15:13

Thanks. Go ahead, Director Jungwirth.

Director Laura Jungwirth (Public Works) 15:18

Thank you. I just wanted to also add to that, we've had a lot of conversations with CEA on this. We've met on it multiple times, doing a ton of research just to try and wrap our heads around it. What is this going to look like in our future? We would intend for it to be on a replacement cycle. It's going to need to be replaced at some point in time, whether that be hybrid, standard EV, to be determined. We'll know in the future. And you know, once we do take a look at this and itemize those replacement costs and consider the life term of this, we do have to, at this point, make assumptions, because we don't know what it's going to look like. So, there will be some assumptions tied to it, but obviously we're going to monitor and make those considerations towards the end, whether or not we expand, continue the use of EV, to be determined. But this, we thought would be a really good springboard for us.

Director Laura Jungwirth (Public Works) 16:13

The other piece to it, I have, personally, and I know some of my staff has, have also received inquiries for EV charging stations for the public. Something we've started talking about, and our hope, hoping to kind of wrap actually, into our parking utility RFP that we're going to be putting out soon. So that's a consideration we're going to be looking at. And so, assessing our infrastructure needs for electric is going to feed into that as well. But a lot of people have been asking, visitors to Appleton, there's really no public charging availability. So that's another thing, again, as we see how it does for us internally, can really help us in the future to go public, potentially, if it makes sense to do so and we have the capabilities to do so. So, we're just really excited for the opportunity to be able to see what it can do for us.

Aldersperson Brad Firkus (District 3) 17:09

Are there any other questions? Alder van Zeeland.

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 17:12

I just wanted to make a statement that as someone who's been a part of this CEA committee for a while, I feel that our staff has been very good about being cautious with new technology and being really prudent about diving into new technology. So, I'm, I feel confident in their direction here. Thank you.

Aldersperson Brad Firkus (District 3) 17:32

Thank you. One last check. And I'll just say, yeah, I do support this. I do think this is the responsible way to go into this. Not to make my anecdotal experiences, try and make them sound like they're gospel, but yeah, there is a learning curve. It's different. It's a different type of maintenance. It's a different type of experience using it and keeping it up. But what my findings have been personally is that it is cheaper to run, and if that ends up being something that the city finds that it's cheaper to run, we have the potential to save tax dollars on providing transportation for city employees. So, I think this is worth taking a shot with these funds. With that let's go ahead and vote. All those in favor? Aye. Opposed? Abstentions? That passes five to zero.