



Office of the City Manager

06

CONSENT CALENDAR  
November 10, 2020

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council  
From: Dee Williams-Ridley, City Manager  
Submitted by: Jordan Klein, Interim Director, Planning and Development  
Subject: Acceptance of \$20,000 Grant for utility bill management software analysis

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a Resolution authorizing the City Manager to accept a \$20,000 grant award from the Energy Council through East Bay Energy Watch Partnership, to support staff analysis of online utility bill database management services.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION

This grant will support a comparative analysis of utility bill and data management services by the Planning Department's Office of Energy and Sustainable Development, using existing staff resources. No other costs are associated with acceptance of this grant. Upon completion of this analysis, staff may request additional funds to support future procurement of a utility bill and data management service. Funds will be deposited and expensed from the One-Time Grant: No Capital Expenditures Fund. This grant will be included as part of the Second Amendment to the FY 2021 Annual Appropriations Ordinance

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

The goal of this project is to analyze solutions to improve access to the City's energy and water usage data, and streamline the accounts payable process for Pacific Gas & Electric and East Bay Municipal Utility District bills. City staff have been using a proprietary database, Utility Manager, since 1998 to track the City's water and energy use and costs. The Utility Manager database calculates usage and costs by municipal facility by taking individual meter data and mapping it to buildings, allowing trends to be monitored over time. This information is used to minimize waste and cost by identifying opportunities for energy and water efficiency and building electrification. Municipal water and energy use and progress towards meeting greenhouse gas reduction goals are reported to City Council as part of the annual Climate Action Report.

The current system for paying utility bills and managing water and energy data is inefficient, outdated and requires manual data entry into multiple systems, including the Utility Manager system and the City's financial management system, ERMA. Bills are currently sent as hard copies through the mail to different City departments and

converted by staff into PDFs, which must be processed for payment by distinct accounts. Staff collect, process and store more than 6,000 paper utility bills annually.

This grant will support staff analysis of options to modernize the process for managing bill data for water and energy use, as well as facilitate a process for electronic utility bill payment. The final task for this grant is to document findings, including a description of prospective database options as well as an analysis of costs and benefits, to be shared with departments throughout the City and with the partner cities in the East Bay Energy Watch Partnership.

#### BACKGROUND

Utility Manager, a proprietary database, has been used by staff to track energy and water costs and usage, in order to identify trends and opportunities for energy efficiency and electrification. This version of Utility Manager is licensed by the City and is an Access database, which is no longer supported by Microsoft. Furthermore, the system has reached limitations for the amount of data it can store and is becoming unstable. Since the utility data set goes back to the year 2000, the baseline for the City's Climate Action Plan, there is a risk of losing data critical to tracking progress on meeting our GHG emissions reduction goals.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

The analysis will assist the City in improving utility bill data management, to minimize waste and greenhouse gas emissions from the water, natural gas, and electricity usage. It will also facilitate the ability of staff to report on progress on meeting the municipal emissions reduction goals of Berkeley's Climate Action Plan.

#### RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

Accepting this grant will support staff in analyzing options to modernize currently outdated processes and software technology, while not creating any commitment to implement recommendations.

#### ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS CONSIDERED

The grant could be forfeited, and the existing process could be continued until such time as the Access database no longer functions.

#### CONTACT PERSON

Billi Romain, Manager, Office of Energy and Sustainable Development, Planning and Development Department, 510-981-7432

Attachments:  
Resolution

RESOLUTION NO. ##,###-N.S.

EAST BAY ENERGY WATCH \$20,000 GRANT ACCEPTANCE

WHEREAS, on June 2, 2009, the Berkeley City Council adopted the Berkeley Climate Action Plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 80% of Berkeley's 2000 emissions level; and

WHEREAS, on June 12, 2018 the Berkeley City Council declared a Climate Emergency and resolved to become a "Fossil Fuel-Free City"; and

WHEREAS, Berkeley was awarded a \$20,000 grant from East Bay Energy Watch Council on April 15, 2020 to support staff research to analyze options and costs online utility bill database management services; and

WHEREAS, tracking municipal energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions is required as part of the Climate Action Plan; and

WHEREAS, the City of Berkeley has been a leader in the East Bay Energy Watch Partnership since its formation in 2000; and

WHEREAS, the East Bay Energy Watch Partnership is funded through ratepayer funds for the purpose of supporting local governments to advance energy efficiency through programs and education; and

WHEREAS, the City of Berkeley has maintained a database of municipal utility bill use and cost data for energy and water consumption since the year 2000 which now needs to be modernized to maintain data integrity; and

WHEREAS, the grant funds will support existing staff resources conduct an analysis of options for procurement of an energy data management and electronic bill payment system or service to measure, analyze, and manage municipal energy data use; and

WHEREAS, an analysis of prospective utility management services will provide valuable information that could increase water and energy efficiency and reduce the transaction costs of paying utility bills; and

WHEREAS, an electronic method of collecting utility bill data could reduce the environmental impact of collecting, processing and storing more than 6,000 paper utility bills annually, and provide faster access to historic records.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the City of Berkeley that the City Manager is authorized to accept a \$20,000 grant award from the Energy Council through East Bay Energy Watch Partnership to support research on online utility bill database management services.

