



City of Sunnyvale

Agenda Item

15-0931

Agenda Date: 1/29/2016

2016 COUNCIL STUDY ISSUE

NUMBER

ESD 16-01

TITLE Considering the Environment in All City Council Actions

BACKGROUND

Lead Department: Environmental Services Department

Support Department(s): Office of the City Manager, Office of the City Attorney

Sponsor(s):

Board/Commission: Sustainability Commission

History:

1 year ago: N/A

2 years ago: N/A

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

What are the key elements of the study?

As proposed by the Sustainability Commission, this study issue would evaluate how the City could include an assessment of the environmental and sustainability impacts of actions being considered by the City Council. This study issue would result in a new policy that would require that all staff produced Reports to Council (RTC) include at least a rough idea of the regional environmental and sustainability impact of an action, or statement of no impact, making consideration of the environment and sustainability an explicit part of both Council deliberations and the information provided to the community. If an Environmental Impact Report is available, those conclusions would be included in the staff report; otherwise, staff should use its best judgment. This study would identify what type of assessment and what impacts could be reported on in a feasible, technical, and cost-effective manner. The scope of the assessment could be different for different types of RTCs or different types of City Council actions.

What precipitated this study?

Sunnyvale's first community-wide Climate Action Plan was adopted in mid-2014. The Sustainability Commission recognizes that it usually takes time for a new policy to work its way into the DNA of an organization and a community. However, the Commission believes that this is a unique time in history and that the natural environment is rapidly deteriorating worldwide; as evidenced in California by a prolonged drought, a year of devastating wildfires, and strings of September heat advisories and Spare-the-Air days. The Commission believes that environmental sustainability needs to quickly permeate the thinking and decision-making process of our community and every part of city government in order to act with the urgency required. The Commission believes it is time to make it easier to be true to Sunnyvale's Vision Statement which says that "[w]e take environmental

preservation and protection seriously and consider how each action will affect Sunnyvale for future generations.”

Planned Completion Year: 2016

FISCAL IMPACT

Cost to Conduct Study

Level of staff effort required (opportunity cost): Moderate

Amount of funding above current budget required: \$0

Funding Source: N/A

Explanation of Cost:

There would be no additional costs incurred to conduct this study. However, completing this study in a thorough, professional manner would impact staff workload in the Environmental Services Department, Office of the City Manager, and Office of the City Attorney, and possibly other departments that routinely prepare RTCs. It is estimated that the level of effort required to conduct this study is at least 150-200 hours of staff time from the identified departments.

Cost to Implement Study Results

Unknown. Study would include assessment of potential costs.

Explanation of Cost: Costs of implementing study results would include additional staff time required to complete the environmental and sustainability assessment for the identified actions and resources needed to train City staff who prepare RTCs.

EXPECTED PARTICIPATION IN THE PROCESS

Council-approved work plan: No

Council Study Session: No

Reviewed by Boards/Commissions: Sustainability Commission, Planning Commission

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Position: Drop

Explanation:

In conformance with the California Environmental Quality Act, the City includes an “Environmental Review” section in all RTCs. The City must complete a CEQA review for all CEQA defined “projects.” A project is an activity undertaken by a public agency or private activity which must receive some discretionary approval from a government agency which may cause either a direct physical change in the environment or a reasonably foreseeable indirect change in the environment. Many of the City’s routine and operational activities are exempt from CEQA. This study will need to evaluate not only the costs, scope, and feasibility of conducting the environmental and sustainability assessment but also any legal implications of requiring such as assessment for CEQA exempt projects.

While staff recognize and support the Commission’s intention behind the proposed study, staff is

developing the CAP monitoring and tracking tool and the first CAP progress report. The first CAP Biennial Report is scheduled to be completed by April 2016 and will report on greenhouse gas reduction measure implementation and overall progress towards achieving the City's greenhouse gas reduction targets. Limited staffing resources should be focused on implementing and reporting on the CAP, which is designed meet the State target of reducing community-wide greenhouse gas emissions by 15% by 2020.

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Reviewed by: Kent Steffens, Assistant City Manager

Approved By: Deanna J. Santana, City Manager