



Council Agenda Report

Item 5d

Department: Community Development
Cost Center: 4006
For Agenda of: 7/5/2022
Placement: Consent
Estimated Time: N/A

FROM: Michael Codron, Community Development Director
Prepared By: Michael Loew, Deputy Building Official

SUBJECT: AUTHORIZATION TO SUBMIT AN APPLICATION FOR THE CALIFORNIA AUTOMATED PERMIT PROCESSING PROGRAM GRANT

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a Resolution entitled, "A Resolution of the City Council of the City of San Luis Obispo, California, authorizing an application for the California Automated Permit Processing Program Grant released by the California Energy Commission."

Policy Context

This grant funding opportunity supports the purpose and intent of Municipal Code 15.14, to provide an expedited, streamlined solar permitting process that complies with the Solar Rights Act and AB 2188 (Chapter 521, Statutes 2014, California Government Code Section 65850.5).

This grant funding opportunity also supports the Climate Action, Open Space, and Sustainable Transportation Major City Goals in the 2021-23 Financial Plan, which focuses on proactively addressing the climate crisis by engaging in projects and integrating best practices that reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

DISCUSSION

Background

On June 1, 2022, the California Energy Commission (CEC) released a Grant Funding Opportunity, GFO-21-402, to provide funding for cities and counties to establish online, automated solar permitting. Senate Bill 129 (Skinner, Budget Act of 2021) appropriates \$20 million to the CEC to support a funding program, pursuant to this purpose, and administered through the CalAPP Program.

Specifically, the application and solicitation manual (Attachment B) references SolarAPP+ when describing the kind of automated solar permitting platform this funding program is intended to support. SolarAPP+ is a web-based portal, developed by the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, that automates plan reviews for residential solar energy system installations.

Since March 2022, the Building and Safety Division has been meeting with SolarAPP+ representatives to discuss and plan the implementation of this process. SolarAPP+ integrates with Energov, the current permitting software used by the Community Development Department, and with the recent May 2022 Energov upgrade, the City of San Luis Obispo (City) now has the capability to automate the issuance of qualified solar permits.

The City currently charges \$179 for a solar permit. In order to meet the standards of Municipal Code 15.14 and the California Solar Rights Act, the Building and Safety Division outsources the review of all solar permit applications at a rate of \$117 per review. The implementation of SolarAPP+ would alleviate the \$117 burden paid by the City per application. Prior to submitting an application to the City, applicants will have the option to pay SolarAPP+ a fee of \$25 for a review that qualifies for an automated permit. This \$25 fee is paid directly to SolarAPP+ and will be in addition to the \$179 permit fee paid to the City.

Since the city has not yet completed the process of adopting an automated, online solar permitting platform, the City is eligible to apply for funding to be utilized for any ongoing allowable costs to complete full program implementation. This includes any time that staff devotes to the application development, internal staff training, and public training for future applicants.

Public Engagement

This is an administrative item, so no outside public engagement was completed. Public comment can be provided to the City Council through written correspondence prior to the meeting and through public testimony at the meeting.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The California Environmental Quality Act does not apply to the recommended action in this report, because the action does not constitute a "Project" under CEQA Guidelines Sec. 15378.

FISCAL IMPACT

Budgeted: Yes
Funding Identified: Yes

Budget Year: 2022-23

Fiscal Analysis:

Funding Sources	Total Budget Available	Current Funding Request	Remaining Balance	Annual Ongoing Cost
General Fund	\$	\$0	\$0	\$0
State	--	--	--	--
Federal	--	--	--	--
Fees	--	--	--	--
Other:	--	--	--	--
Total	\$	\$0	\$0	\$0

There will be no negative fiscal impact to the City. The City is eligible, based on having a population less than 50,000, to receive up to \$40,000 through this Grant Funding Opportunity. Specific costs that qualify for reimbursement by this grant include:

1. In-house staff time
2. Third party consultation services
3. Training
4. Essential hardware and equipment necessary to support adoption

The grant requires the City to submit an invoice for reimbursement after full implementation of the automated, online permitting platform.

Funding for the implementation of an automated, online permitting platform was going to come from the Community Development Department operating budget, however, this grant opportunity will reduce the burden on the General Fund and not create additional workload for staff.

ALTERNATIVES

Continue the recommendation to a later meeting. The alternative is not recommended as the funding will be available on a first come first serve basis and the City does not qualify for expense reimbursement until after a grant agreement has been finalized.

ATTACHMENTS

- A - Draft Resolution authorizing CalAPP Program Grant Application
- B - Solicitation Manual