Community Working Group – 7/31/25 (Meeting #1)

Initial Presentation

Tracy Introduction – Group to address Public Benefit funds (large reserve) options.

Introduction

Mayor Patricia Lock Dawson Introduction – This group was put together to learn about all the opportunities there are so we can put them out to the community. We don't talk about all the great things we do in the city. Today and going forward we will talk about our unspent EE funds totaling over $34M.

The notebook provided includes today's presentation and information on all the programs we currently provide. Also includes our most recent 1037 report, information on the rules of these funds including how we must spend them, and Board staff report on evaluation of these programs. **The notebook material will be posted on the website**.

Objective of the group:

- Idea factory, where do we have gaps
- This working group is advisory, final decisions will be made by the Board and City Council.

Overview of related work and anticipated timelines: Working Group, Consulting Work, and A Way Forward. Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) Consultant work overview – examine cost effectiveness of current programs, industry knowledge, and post-work outreach

Background on Public Benefit funds (AB 1890): goals, how it is collected, and changes over time.

The best way to keep electricity prices low is to minimize the need for upgrades. The goal was to help with this and to spur economic development (new jobs in EE).

Over time, additional requirements for low-income assistance, reporting, and target setting. The State also looks to EE for its GHG reductions.

Review limits on Public Benefits spending and RPU historical spending.

Historically, the amount of Public Benefits funds RPU brought in and spent closely tracked each other. Until COVID, the amount collected exceeded the amount spent and the balance began to grow. Spending of Public Benefits has started to get back on track, RPU still collects the funds, and we need to spend both what RPU collects and the reserve.

Goal – not only to spend the reserve but also to ensure that the current programs are as complete and effective as possible.

Open Discussion, Questions

Question/Idea	Comments
What are we going to do for the folks who need upgrades to participate in these programs?	Total project costs can consider other home upgrades necessary (such as panel upgrades, wiring) that can be rolled into the incentive.
Green Energy (GE) Fund, has RPU investigated these loans for customers – where customers borrow against the funds and then pay it back so the fund always stays about the same?	The Economic Development team has applied for a GE Fund to fund micro-technologies. The Office of Sustainability has applied for and received a grant with GRID Alternatives and USGBC that would work on starting up a GE Fund. We also have a Low-Income Housing fund.
How do we educate the community?	We go out to community events regularly, almost every weekend, and in the evenings. There is also back of bill education. We could also expand into this space. There are partnership opportunities with the university and their extension groups.
What do you need to be comfortable with living space, balance of bill impact. How to lower the barriers for the audience for these improvements?	Affording comfort and improving health for the public.
Can we grow offerings (direct installation for residential and commercial)?	RPU will investigate providing additional offerings and how to increase participation.
Can we use funds towards measuring energy efficiency?	We can't use it towards meters, but we can use it for building energy audits. We currently only use this for our largest customers due to the large cost.

	Member comment: That is a one-time audit, having real time ongoing data would be helpful.
How do the batteries fall within these categories? It uses energy most effectively. Smart panels aren't EE but do allow for continued energy use without needing to upgrade a panel or requiring other work of the utility.	Battery offerings reduce demand, decreasing the needs for system upgrades.

General notes:

Historical Fund Expenditures – Overview and Deep Dive into specific programs (EE, SHARE, RD&D, & Education).

RPU tries to offer programs that are not offered anywhere else.

Bottom-Line About Public Benefit Funds & Limitations. No programs that RPU offer is limited by lack of funding.

Energy Program Development

Closing Thoughts and Next Steps

OPEN DISCUSSION

Questions/Ideas	Comments
We should ask customers: What do you need to be comfortable with and form programs around them (do you need every light on, are you comfortable with your bill) and educate them based on that.	Examples: Heat pumps help to maintain comfortable temperatures better than less efficient furnaces. Some customers who replace old units with more efficient units are now able to run their units at a level where they are now comfortable instead of lowering their bill.
Are any programs limited by a lack of funding that we currently offer? Are there any programs that could increase benefit by increasing funding?	Not right now. RPU is about to go into a new budget cycle, we will make sure all current programs are fully funded. Possibly, **Direct Install Programs.**
When will we do the community survey?	We were thinking of having it towards the end. If preferred, we could do it sooner so you can have the results to help inform your discussion.

Batteries have been offered for power outages, does RPU offer similar?	RPU does not institute Public Safety Power Shutoffs (PSPS) where we shut off power like other utilities do. The city does not have as many high-fire threat areas. Since it is more limited, we can monitor those better. If we do have prolonged outages, we sometimes bring in power on trucks. We currently do not have **batteries** for shutoffs, but that is a good program proposition, for outages.
Community access center – we have a recycling program for wheelchair bound individuals, we purchase ramps and if they pass away or move, we install it somewhere else. Could be applicable to other types of equipment, where you put it out and then can move it to another question if no longer used.	Something else that can be shared or reused, there may be Cities that provide temporary gas water heaters, so if yours fails and you want electric, but you need electrical upgrades, you put in a temporary City unit while upgrades are done. This came up during AQMD rulemaking. Most people wait until units fail, but then you have a period with no unit. AQMD wanted to make sure that manufacturers had something like this that they were able to do this but need to make sure this is happening. It can also provide new technologies like induction cookware. Co-benefit of additional education on new technologies to make it less scary for the customer.
How is success measured in education right now?	Number of students. Can you measure if teaching children leads to decrease in energy usage (incentivized)? Could make it a voluntary, opt-in program. There would be difficulty reporting what those EE savings are. Not only reporting to the State, but also to our customers stating why funds were spent without associated savings. With smart meters, we determine usage at specific times, but there are too many variables to say that a reduction in usage is due to behavior education. The cost of admin time would then offset any savings. Sometimes students after classes will do a home energy audit. Tracking behavioral changes – can't report to state because it is not a permanent change. We did a partnership with O Power, compared to your neighbors you're using X amount. Customer feedback was not positive. They did not want utility tracking or to shame them into using less.

Do we have data to show what the largest energy consumers are?	A/C load. We know it is because of the summer load shift. We do have some energy usage analysis done through our IRP. You can see some things such as lighting because we can identify those changes in the load. There are some loads we can identify. There are also some general SoCal studies we pull in to provide information.
General education about EV charging	EVs – Increase load significantly. Having EVs in homes does increase load across the grid and cause us to do upgrades. At home, chargers are at night, but not necessarily when we are generating it. Lots of factors to consider. Do we want to disperse charging throughout homes. You don't always have to upgrade your panel; you may upsell you. An EV charger at home is like an AC unit. When you charge overnight when you don't have other things running, you are basically evening out your load. If you have solar you can charge in the middle of the day. It is much cheaper to charge at home.
What should the ideal customer be doing in the middle of the night?	How do we get rebates from a coupon to where they use it? If they are too comfortable, they won't do it.
General energy education	Very few things consume most of our energy. The main ones are heating and cooling. While small changes can make a difference, the biggest impacts come from heating, air conditioning, and cars. Many people tend to focus on lighting, but our priority should be the major energy users.
How do you penetrate and affect change?	That is what this group of people can do. There can be multiple benefits that will align with different people's values. Whether it is less air pollution or lower costs. It's a good idea to think about flipping our campaigns.

<u>Next Steps</u>

Next meeting aiming for mid-September. When is the best time to meet? Aiming for before UCR starts. Another: With enough notice, anytime is fine.

Will pull out some topics from today to discuss.

Will do research on any necessary items.

Want to focus on survey questions as well (will bring a draft) and get input on questions and dispersal.

Will send link with PPT, website link, notes.

Future discussion topics:

Low-Income