



Date: March 12, 2024

Honorable Mayor and Council Members:

Author and title: Jen Callaway, Town Manager

Title: **Dark Skies Spring Awareness Campaign and Lighting Rebate Program**

Jen Callaway, Town Manager

Recommended Action: Staff recommends that the Town Council:

- A. Approve the Dark Skies Lighting Rebate Program Outline.
- B. Authorize the Town Manager to Execute a contract amendment with Sierra Business Council to fund Phase II Dark Sky Rebate Pilot Program Implementation, including program software, for an amount not to exceed \$91,720.
- C. Authorize the Town Manager to execute a contract amendment with East River PR to fund the Spring Dark Sky Awareness Campaign in the amount of \$25,000.
- D. Authorize a budget adjustment of \$91,720 from the Sustainability Designation to CIP 2414 Dark Skies and a budget adjustment of \$25,000 from general fund surplus to CIP 2414 Dark Skies for a total adjustment of \$116,720.

Discussion:

In Fall 2023 the Town partnered with East River PR, Court Leve Productions and Tahoe Adventure Company to launch a fall Night Sky Awareness Campaign entitled "Don't Be Afraid of the Dark." 16 people participated in our sponsored full moon hikes and over 150 magnets and 200 stickers (both in English and Spanish) were distributed to community partners to help raise awareness of the benefits of the night sky. This is in alignment with the Truckee 2040 General Plan Community Character Element Goal CC-2: Night Sky.

Lighting Rebate Program

In December 2023 the Town Council authorized staff to establish a new Capital Improvement Project, CIP 2414, for Dark Skies to fund an agreement with Sierra Business Council (SBC) to provide a dark sky compliant and energy efficient exterior lighting pilot rebate/grant program. The purpose of this program is twofold; 1. To reduce light pollution; and 2. conserve energy for the Truckee community.

For Phase 1 of this project, SBC staff completed the following:

CC-2.1

Night Sky Preservation

Preserve views of the night sky as an important natural and scenic resource in Truckee.



Views of the night sky at Donner Lake.

Source: Grant Kaey.

- Determined fixture eligibility based on dark sky criteria and energy efficiency thresholds.
- Researched the Town's baseline need for community level lighting retrofits.
- Researched other dark sky rebate programs.
- Developed program guidelines and payment approach.

With this data, SBC formulated a Phase II of the project, including launch of the rebate program, processing the rebate applications, working in partnership with East River PR on community outreach, and analysis of program results. SBC will calculate the energy saved and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduced, as well as track the number lights retrofitted, to showcase the program's performance and aid in decision making about continuation or expansion of the program. Staff's intention has been, and continues to be, to fund the program for rebates within the Town of Truckee, however, share the program outline with members of the Climate Transformation Alliance to allow for expansion of the program with other partner agencies should they have funding available or desire to share the educational materials.

This effort was added to the workplan during the November 28 Council discussion and is considered in alignment with two strategic focus areas, Community Cohesion as well as Climate and Greenhouse Gas Reduction. In addition, coupling a spring awareness campaign launch with the lighting rebate program, Truckee 2040 Community Character action item CC-2.A Lighting Inventory and Compliance Program action item is advanced in the sense that polluting light may be reduced.

CC-2.A

Lighting Inventory and Compliance Program

Conduct an inventory to identify the most serious instances of light pollution in Truckee. Implement a program to work with relevant public and private property owners to retrofit, remove, or replace polluting fixtures. Coordinate with electricity providers to provide rebates and incentives for lighting retrofits.

Responsibility: Community Development Department

Time Frame: Long term

SBC has completed work associated with Phase I of this project and has worked with Town staff to develop a proposed Phase II, which covers final design, launch, and the implementation of the rebate program parameters.

Based on SBC's research and with interest in keeping the program as simply and easy as possible from both an applicant's perspective and implementation perspective, staff recommended program parameters for the lighting rebate program are as follows:

Parameters	Town of Truckee staff	Recommendations
Sectors	Residential & Commercial	
Type	Rebate	
Efficiency Measure	Night sky outdoor light fixtures that are Dark Sky, ENERGY STAR & ToT compliant.	
Rebate Amount	Residential \$75/fixture, max 4 fixtures Commercial \$50/fixture, max 50 fixtures <i>Funding for equipment only, does not include labor.</i>	
Max Rebate/Customer	Residential = \$300 max Commercial = \$2,500 max <i>Applications = per home/building, not per owner</i>	
Application Period	Ongoing, rolling submissions/first-come, first-served until program funds run out. Pilot program is anticipated to run through the end of December 2024.	

Guidelines/ Application Criteria		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Resident of ToT - Dark Sky, ENERGY STAR & ToT compliant lighting - Application with receipts submitted within 30 days of purchase - Proof includes date of purchase, price paid, model information to verify eligibility, shipping information & contractor installation invoice, if applicable. - Used equipment is ineligible for a rebate - Max 4 fixtures for residential (\$300) & 50 fixtures for commercial (\$2,500)
Metrics		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Track kWh savings and GHG emissions reductions - Track number and amount (\$) of rebates
Application		Resolv Online Software Platform
Total Rebate	Budget	\$50,000

To highlight, the program would only fund reimbursement of outdoor residential and commercial lighting within the Town of Truckee, that is Dark Sky, Energy Star and Town of Truckee compliant. The proposed rebate amounts of \$75 per fixture for residential and \$50 per fixture for commercial were shared with the Contractor's Association and they agree that these are reasonable rebate amounts.

Staff recommends that the pilot program be funded with \$50,000 for rebates, exclusive of the administration and implementation of the program, through December 31, 2024. Upon conclusion of the pilot phase, staff will work with SBC to evaluate the success of the program and need to continue the program, add budget capacity, etc.

SBC's proposal for Phase II, program development and implementation (Attachment I) includes five tasks as outlined below:

1. Program Administration & Meeting Convening
2. Community Engagement: Coordinating with East River PR to promote available lighting rebates
3. Rebate Processing
4. Energy Savings & GHG Reduction Calculations
5. Program Closeout Analysis

The rebate program is anticipated to launch on April 1, 2024 and run through December 31, 2024. The total cost for Phase II program implementation and administration, and acquisition of application software to support the program totals \$41,720. Therefore, staff recommends a total contract and budget for SBC program support and implementation to total an amount not to exceed \$91,720 for program administration, implementation, and rebates.

Communication and Outreach

A key component to the Spring awareness campaign launch is elevating the importance of dark skies through community education and engagement. Given limited capacity, staff recommends continuing to work in partnership with East River PR for communications regarding night sky importance as well as promotion of the lighting rebate program. As highlighted earlier, the fall awareness campaign included a hosted moonlight hike, with the goal being to encourage interaction with the night sky as an opportunity to reinforce the aesthetic beauty of the night sky as well as the benefits to our human health, wildlife, and environment. Similarly, an engagement component is planned for the spring launch, with a dark sky photo competition. While still being developed, the photo competition is envisioned to have three categories, professional, amateur and youth, and could include a dark sky photography workshop and an exhibit display of the top photos. There is interest from Nevada City, Grass Valley and Nevada County to participate in countywide photo competition as part of this launch and staff is continuing the conversation to arrange for this. The photo competition is intended to be another avenue that encourages our community members to experience the night sky and raise

awareness of the value of the night sky, as well as provide an opportunity for an interactive event that could foster further community cohesion. East River PR is instrumental in programming the competition as the goal is to launch the competition in early April, in coordination with International Dark Sky's week. The competition is currently envisioned to run into June/July to allow time to photograph the night sky during the various moon cycles.

To support communication efforts, including advertisement of the Lighting Rebate Program, educational awareness, and the photo competition programming, staff is recommending a budget adjustment of \$25,000 to the Communications contract currently in place with East River PR. As a reminder, the Town contracted with East River PR in Spring 2023 to help backfill communications needs on a temporary basis. The total contract amount for communications support totaled \$84,500. With the additional budget amendment to support the spring dark skies campaign, the total contract amount would total a not to exceed amount of \$109,500 and extend through September 30, 2024.

Priority:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Enhanced Communication	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Climate and Greenhouse Gas Reduction	<input type="checkbox"/>	Housing
<input type="checkbox"/>	Infrastructure Investment	<input type="checkbox"/>	Emergency and Wildfire Preparedness	<input type="checkbox"/>	Core Service

Fiscal Impact: \$116,720 funded in Capital Improvement Project 2414 Dark Skies, \$91,720 from the Sustainability Designation and \$25,000 from FY 2022/23 General Fund operating revenues over expenditures.

Public Communication: Publication of this staff report

Attachments:

1. Phase II Dark Sky Lighting Rebate Pilot Program Proposed Scope of Work for Sierra Business Council