

memo



To: Billings City Council Members

CC: Mayor Bill Cole
Chris Kukulski, City Administrator
Kevin Iffland, Assistant City Administrator

Date: January 7, 2019

Re: Commission on Energy and Conservation

Comments: In 2017, Yellowstone Valley Citizens Council joined the League of Women Voters and Angela's Piazza to form a Coalition on Energy and Conservation. Councilmember Penny Ronning first brought forward our Energy Cost-Savings Plan at the Council's strategic planning session in January 2018, where it was ranked a medium-to-high priority item.

Since then, Coalition members have held numerous meetings with City staff, administrators, elected officials and other stakeholders to gather feedback on a Resolution to re-establish a Commission on Energy and Conservation. Nearly 120 community members have signed on to a letter in support of the idea, along with 18 organizations and businesses.

The ultimate goal of the Commission would be three-fold:

1. Conduct a baseline inventory of energy consumption by City of Billings
2. Create a comprehensive plan for reducing energy use and related costs
3. Make recommendations to City Council on implementation of the plan

To accomplish this, the Commission would initially be authorized for a term of four years, reporting to Council on a semi-annual basis.

If approved, Billings would join four other cities in Montana that have formed Commissions to implement an Energy Conservation Plan. Red Lodge, Helena, Bozeman and Whitefish are currently leading the way. All of these cities have conducted baseline inventories and have hired (or are in the process of hiring) Coordinators to oversee the process.

Here in Billings, a project to retrofit parking garages with motion-sensor LED lighting has reportedly saved \$200,000. Re-establishing the Commission on Energy and Conservation would build on this and other impressive work being done by the City, such as methane capture at the landfill and the efforts by the previous Commission to institute Energy Performance Contracting, along with construction of MET Transit's award-winning Downtown Transfer Center.

In Red Lodge, a \$26,000 grant from Northwestern Energy to install a solar array at the City Library is expected to cut the annual electricity costs for that building in half. Overall, the Energy Conservation Plan by the Red Lodge Commission is expected to save at least \$200,000 a year.¹

Similarly, the City of Bozeman expects to drastically cut down its annual electricity budget of \$550,000. Among the changes adopted in Bozeman are a lighting retrofit that has saved the City nearly \$17,000 per year and an anti-idling policy that has cut annual costs by more than \$3,000. Low-flow toilets and other water efficiency upgrades have cut the water consumption at City Hall by almost 10%.²

On the statewide level, investments in energy conservation from 2009-2017 netted an estimated \$2.1 million in annual cost savings for electricity and natural gas in state-owned buildings alone.³

Energy efficiency not only saves taxpayer dollars; it makes local communities more attractive places to live, work, stay and play. For this reason, the City of Billings Strategic Plan prioritizes "comprehensive, cost effective and orderly growth." Likewise, the City of Billings Growth policy places an emphasis on essential investments like securing future utility costs and improving environmental quality, along with an eye towards prosperity in the way of strategically-placed industrial parks designed to manage effluents and emissions.

With all of this in mind, we ask the Council to pass a Resolution to create a Commission on Energy and Conservation. We are available to answer any questions at your convenience. Please contact organizers Kari Boiter or Caroline Canarios at (406) 248-1154 for more information.

¹ Helena Independent Record article "Red Lodge Sets Its Sights On Sustainability"
https://helenair.com/news/state-and-regional/montana/red-lodge-sets-its-sights-on-sustainability-with-new-conservation/article_4b67b702-8004-5220-8caf-44cf418abf51.html

² City of Bozeman Climate Action Report (2011-2012)
<https://www.bozeman.net/home/showdocument?id=4857>

³ 2016 Annual Report from the Montana Energy Office at the Department of Environmental Quality
https://deq.mt.gov/Portals/112/Energy/Documents/2016_Annual-Energy-Report_FINAL.pdf