

ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes
July 23, 2024, 7:00 p.m.

Village Hall, Room 101

Commission Members Present: Liz Lukehart (Chair), Darryl Baker, Cassandra West, Ramona Blaber

Commission Members Absent: Lisa Boone, Tejas Shah

Citizen Involvement Commission Liaison Present: Sheila Wesonga

Staff Present: Abby Zielinski, Civil Engineer; Erica Helms, Environmental Services Member; Jonathan Burch, Neighborhood Services Director / Assistant Village Manager

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Lukehart at 7:01 p.m.

1. **Approval of Agenda:** A Motion was made to approve the agenda, and it was unanimously approved with no revisions.
2. **Approval of Minutes:** A Motion was made to approve the previous meeting minutes, and they were unanimously approved with no revisions.
3. **Public Comment:** There were no public comments.
4. **CDBG Energy Efficiency Grant Program:**
Neighborhood Services Director and Assistant Village Manager, Jonathan Burch, presented the proposed CDBG Energy Efficiency Grant Program. The Village receives \$1.5 million in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds each year from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development to be used for a variety of projects. Director Burch explained that the proposed CDBG energy efficiency program will replace the current energy efficiency grant program because the funds will run out soon. The program will service households at or below 80% of the area median income. The proposed program was also presented to the Housing Programs Advisory Committee. After gathering feedback from the groups, the program will be presented to the Board for approval, and once approved, the program can open for applicants in October. Questions & Answers and comments from the EEC during discussion are listed below:

Q&A:

- Is there a list of prequalified contractors?
 - o Yes, there is a contractor list, but homeowners can also use other contractors.
- Why are the grants limited to \$5,000 each?

- There is an opportunity to spread the funds to a larger number of applicants if the maximum amount is set at \$5,000, rather than \$10,000.
- Can residents complete the energy efficiency project work themselves instead of hiring a contractor?
 - Follow up response: Yes
- Did the Village review past grants to assess the energy saving impacts?
 - Follow up response: No
- What types of projects were most common under the previous energy efficiency program?
 - Follow up response: They improvement types from most to least common were HVAC, solar, insulation, water heaters, air sealing, lighting, appliance.
- Will there be a program for multifamily units larger than 4 units?
 - It would need to be a separate program, and it can be considered for future years.
- Can residents participate in other energy efficiency programs too?
 - Yes, applicants will be encouraged to participate in other energy efficiency programs that they are eligible for. If a resident participates in the Village's rehabilitation program, they will need to wait a year between participating in the proposed energy efficiency program.
- Do you have to be the homeowner to participate in the program?
 - Homeowners and property owners can participate in the program, but renters cannot.
- Are the applications first come, first serve?
 - Yes, and the program will be available until the funds are exhausted.
- Was educational material provided to help applicants identify their project types under the previous program?
 - The previous energy efficiency grant program required that participants first complete a free energy assessment through ComEd.

EEC feedback for program design:

- We should prioritize the list of improvements, making them into a table that helps applicants understand the range of what such improvements cost as well as industry standard efficiency returns from the investment.
- We should include the need for program participants to work with the Village for a couple years out to review impacts of the program.
- We should more clearly highlight the need to do a ComEd free energy assessment before receiving program funds.

5. **Community Waste Reduction:**

Chair Lukehart led a discussion for the EEC to share progress and identify next steps for the community waste reduction project. The discussion included:

- Chair Lukehart will submit a FOIA from Highland Park for their waste contract.

- Liaison Helms explained that there are Environmental Services funds available as a result of the transition to a leaf bagging program. This topic was discussed at the July 9, 2024 Board meeting, and the Board voted against giving a rebate to refuse program customers. Liaison Helms recommended that the available funds could be used for a pilot program to expand the number of compost drop-off sites, which would also support the EEC's goals. If interested, the EEC could help support a recommendation to the Board for the drop-off sites. The EEC expressed interest in this idea, and planned to research and recommend new drop-off sites ahead of the next meeting. Chair Lukehart will draft a memo with the recommendation.
- Additional ideas to improve the compost drop-off program were discussed:
 - The community could help paint the bins, possibly during Oaktober Fest.
 - Add signage to direct people to the drop-off locations, particularly at Holley Court Garage.
 - Place QR codes at grocery stores to inform people about compost options.
 - Advertise that residents can share compost bins between neighbors.
- The EEC will continue with the other recommendations for the compost program related to a rate study and universal composting after the memo for the drop-off program is completed.

6. **Electric Shuttle:**

Chair Lukehart led a discussion on the electric shuttle project.

- Chair Lukehart and Liaison Zielinski shared that Village staff received a presentation from the company Via to learn about their microtransit service. The proposed microtransit service would use electric vehicles and provide on-demand ride share service to Oak Park residents. EEC members expressed interest in a study that examines the feasibility of an electric shuttle broadly, instead of focusing specifically on the microtransit solution. They would like the feasibility study to also examine a shuttle with a fixed-route.
- EEC members reviewed a draft of community survey questions and recommended revisions.
- The survey will be posted on engageoakpark.com. Paper copies can be placed at the libraries and township buildings, and they can be handed out at the Farmers' Market.

7. **Adjourn:** At 8:37 p.m. a motion was made, seconded and unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT (CDBG)
ENERGY EFFICIENCY GRANT
PROGRAM GUIDELINES

I. WHAT IS IT?

The Village of Oak Park Energy Efficiency Grant Program ("Program") was established to provide financial assistance to Owner(s)/Applicant(s) who desire to reduce their home's consumption of energy. The Village of Oak Park intends to use Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds to administer this grant program for low-to moderate- income households. The program intends to offset a portion of the expense that a homeowner will incur to complete home improvements that will increase energy efficiency. Energy efficiency upgrades lead to savings on utility bills, improved indoor air quality, improved home comfort, and reduced greenhouse gas emissions. Eligible homeowners may qualify for the program by providing proof of permanent ownership of the property, income eligibility, and energy upgrades completed. The program was established to provide financial assistance to homeowners who may qualify for a Grant of the cost of energy efficiency improvements, up to a maximum of \$5,000.00 per application.

II. HOW DOES THE PROGRAM WORK?

The Village will reimburse Owner(s)/Applicant(s) for items related to the conservation of energy, such as by upgrading a dwelling unit's insulation, water-saving fixtures, and furnaces. An Owner(s)/Applicant(s) may apply for reimbursement up to \$5,000 of the total cost of the installations under the Program for purposes of increasing building energy efficiency. Each of the approaches has different costs, degrees of disruption, and levels of efficiencies. Note that the State of Illinois adopted the 2021 IECC International Energy Conservation Code, and the 2021 international building code ("IBC"), as published by the International Code Council and the 2021 international existing building code ("IEBC") will be the guideline to reference for your contractor(s).

III. WHAT WORK IS COVERED UNDER THIS GRANT PROGRAM?

This Program covers energy efficiency installation measures. The following are Eligible costs that may be covered as part of this program.

- a. Installation of insulation
- b. Weather stripping
- c. Conservation costs for water and energy efficiency
- d. Installation of energy-efficient lighting, including automatic light sensors or timed light sensors
- e. High efficiency faucets
- f. Energy efficient windows
- g. Installation or upgrade of electric heating, venting, and air conditioning (HVAC), such as heat pump installation and thermostat upgrades
- h. Upgraded electric water heater
- i. Air sealing

The following are Non-Eligible costs that will not be covered by this program.

- a. Use of materials not meeting the requirements of the Village's Specifications or Codes

IV. WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

The Program is intended to benefit low- to moderate-income households. Such households are defined as households with an income below 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI) for the Chicago Metropolitan Statistical Area including Cook County, as defined by U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Owner(s)/Applicant(s) will self-certify that their household income meets these requirements, which the Village reserves the right to verify in its discretion. Owner(s)/Applicant(s) of two to four unit buildings will self-certify that the household income of 51% of their tenant units meets these requirements, which the Village reserves the right to verify in its discretion.

An Owner(s)/Applicant(s) will be considered ineligible for the Program if:

- a. An Owner(s)/Applicant(s) owe any unpaid taxes or water bills or other debt to the Village;
- b. The Owner(s)/Applicant(s) has any unpaid final judgments of liability from the office of Adjudication which are due and owing;
- c. There are any unpaid Village liens on any property owned by the Owner(s)/Applicant(s);
- d. The Owner(s)/Applicant(s) is not current on any other Village obligations, or otherwise is not in compliance with requirements of the Village Code, including but not limited to multi-family licensing, alarm permit, or vacant building registration requirements; or
- e. The applicable property for which an Owner(s)/Applicant(s) seeks a grant has previously been the subject of a grant under the Program.

Clear Title

The Owner(s)/Applicant(s) must have clear title to the owner-occupied dwelling unit, without any cloud on the title, not including any prior recorded consensual liens. The Owner(s)/Applicant(s) must be the sole title holder of the dwelling unit which will undergo project rehabilitation, unless an acceptable release is obtained from any person on the title agreeing to an additional encumbrance.

Eligibility of Village Employees

Eligible Owner(s)/Applicant(s) who are also Village Employees are eligible for the Program in accordance with the Village's Conflict of Interest and Ethics Ordinance.

Eligibility for Other Village Housing Programs

Participants in the Program may be eligible for multiple grants and loans that are available through the Village of Oak Park. Other programs include:

- a. Single Family Rehabilitation
- b. Sewer Backup Protection Grant
- c. Lead Water Service Replacement

- d. RainReady Program
- e. Small Rental Property Rehabilitation Loan

Participants of the Single-Family Rehabilitation or the Small Rental Property Rehabilitation loan must wait one (1) calendar year from completion of a project before being eligible for an energy efficiency grant.

Eligibility for Other Energy Efficiency Programs

Participants may be eligible for other energy efficiency assistance programs, including free programs. Participants will be asked to document their efforts to access these free programs prior to the provision of Village assistance. Staff will connect applicants with these programs if needed. Below are such free programs.

- Elevated Multi-family energy savings offering
- ComEd energy efficiency programs

Limitations of Funding

Participants in this program can only apply once a year for an energy grant and can only be a recipient of funds a maximum of two times for a property.

III. WHAT PROPERTY TYPES ARE ELIGIBLE?

Eligible properties are owner-occupied single-family dwellings containing one to four units. For condominium units, improvements can only be made to those areas within a unit which the Owner(s)/Applicant(s) of the unit has authority to change, alter or improve, as defined by the condominium declarations, by-laws, and/or other rules and regulations as issued and adopted by the applicable condominium association or board. Improvements to common elements and limited common elements, including window or door repairs and replacements, are not eligible for the Program. A condominium unit is defined as a single-family dwelling.

IV. HOW DO I APPLY?

A. Steps

The following are the steps to take to participate in the Program.

- (1) An Owner(s)/Applicant(s) must complete an application and submit it to the Neighborhood Services Department;
- (2) An Owner(s)/Applicant(s) must apply for any necessary building permits. An applicable general contractor and all subcontractors must be properly registered in the Village of Oak Park and must submit evidence of insurances and licenses; and
- (3) An Owner(s)/Applicant(s) is responsible for selecting an applicable contractor. The Owner(s)/Applicant(s) is required to obtain at least three (3) bids for the work. The

applicant may select a contractor from any of the bids so long as the differential between the bids is not greater than 50%.

B. Priority

Applications will be processed on a first come, first served basis. The Program will expire when all grant funds are expended.

V. PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

A. Application and Eligibility Review

The Village will review a completed application for an initial determination of eligibility.

B. Ineligibility

If the Owner(s)/Applicant(s) is ineligible, the Village will notify the Owner(s)/Applicant(s) of the reason for ineligibility. If the reason for ineligibility is due to an outstanding debt, judgment or code compliance issue, the Owner(s)/Applicant(s) may re-apply after such matters have been satisfied. For purposes of determining priority, the Owner(s)/Applicant(s)'s place in line will be based upon the date of reapplication if initially determined to be ineligible.

C. Agreement

Upon approval of an application, the Owner(s)/Applicant(s) will be required to sign a Grant Agreement.

D. Building Permits

The Owner(s)/Applicant(s) must obtain permits from the Village before a contractor may begin any work. All work must be properly permitted and inspected by the Village.

E. Payment of Requests for Reimbursement

Upon completion of any applicable work, the Owner(s)/Applicant(s) must submit a Request for Reimbursement Form. The form must be accompanied by the following:

- (1) Contractor's mechanics lien waiver;
- (2) A copy of the Owner(s)/Applicant(s)'s proof of payment to the contractor;
- (3) A certification from the contractor that the Owner(s)/Applicant(s) paid for the work; and
- (4) A final certificate of completion.

In those cases where the Owner(s)/Applicant(s) requests that payment be made directly to a contractor, the Owner(s)/Applicant(s) must sign a payment authorization form and provide applicable mechanics' lien waivers. The Village will agree to pay a contractor directly upon proof that the Village's payment is the only outstanding payment to be made to the contractor.

If a Request for Reimbursement is completed in conformance with the Program requirements, payment will be made by the Village within thirty (30) days of approval of an invoice.

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