



## Environmental Quality & Public Works Committee

May 23, 2023

### Summary and Motions

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Chair Sheehan called the meeting to order at 1:01 p.m. Committee Members LeGris, Wu, Fogle, Lynch, Gray, F. Brown, and Sevigny were present. Committee Members Monarrez and Worley were absent. Council Member Reynolds was present as a non-voting member.

#### I. Approval of April 18, 2023 Committee Summary

Motion by Gray to approve the April 18, 2023 Environmental Quality & Public Works Committee Summary. Seconded by Wu. Motion passed without dissent.

#### II. Home Compost Program Update

Angela Poe, Public Information and Engagement Manager for Environmental Services, presented an update on the home composting program which provides an organic material disposal option for households in the Urban Services Tax District and encourages at-home food composting. Three workshops were held at McConnell Springs in February and March and were facilitated by Seedleaf. There is a maximum of 100 households that can participate which breaks down to 30-35 per workshop. She noted those who participate receive a \$60 credit toward a composter. There were a total of 95 households that participated and 32% of those who signed up were already composting at home. She reviewed successes and said Seedleaf and McConnell were easy to work with. There is significant demand for this program indicated by workshops that filled up before the promotion cycle was complete. 95 households are better equipped to compost at home for a total cost of around \$12,000. Some of the challenges to doing this were that workshops filled up quickly and local partnerships for composters didn't work as expected. Poe mentioned the process was very time consuming and logistics were complicated. Moving forward, she said they are exploring other options with nurseries and there is interest in community for expanding the program. They aim for 100 households to participate again and they will continue to partner with McConnell Springs and Seedleaf. They have draft signage for installation at McConnell Springs and they will explore partnerships who will sell direct to participants using our vouchers.

Committee discussion centered on community outreach and expanding the program. Addressing the challenge of workshops filling up and how they will fix this, Poe said they will continue to operate as usual. She has a list from a zip code standpoint and there was wide distribution of this program. When asked how they communicate to those who don't know about the program, Poe referenced the outreach efforts and asked for contact information so material can be provided to anyone interested. They are looking to hire a community outreach specialist to focus on areas where people are not engaged. Poe added information is sent to council members to distribute as well. Speaking about businesses interested in the compost program, Poe said it would vary based on the type of business. There are requirements such as tax districts who receive city services, but they can work on this more. When asked if we have looked at doing this on a larger scale to speed up the compost process, Poe mentioned the city is looking at other compost options such as curbside composting, but she noted contamination can impact this. Albright added they are looking at the feasibility for having a system modeled after Sevierville (using waste digesters). No action was taken on this item.

### III. Explore Lexington's Sustainability Options

Jada Griggs, Sustainability Section Manager, spoke about Lexington's sustainability options and mentioned the plan for a resilient community. The focus is on energy efficiency in 5 areas: Residential, Commercial, Land Use, Transportation, and Waste. The plan was flexible and voluntary with a goal to reduce energy use by at least 1% per year. There were 3 years of efforts with over 50 members and the plan aligns with Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) for cities. She reviewed the 6 sectors of the plan which include natural systems and ecology; transportation and land use; water efficiency; energy and greenhouse gas emissions; materials & resources; and quality of life. She spoke about reactivating greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions inventory and tracking community-wide and LFUCG GHG emissions. Moving forward, we need to set GHG emissions reduction targets and recalculate GHG emissions every two years. The program provides peer-to-peer networking opportunities, technical assistance, and access to educational resources; and covers fees for United States Green Building Council (USGBC) membership registration and certification review. She reviewed the *Solarize Lexington* program which kicked off March 13. Since the program launch, there have been 400 interest forms submitted with 51 that are grant-eligible. Council approved \$1M from FY22 fund balance to offer grants to low-moderate income homeowners. They have about 30 grant-approved contracts so far with 9 installations complete.

When asked what can be done prior to solar if there is an energy audit, Griggs said energy efficiency is important. They reached out to Community Action Council (CAC) and they sent 50 interest cards to them. She said there is a grant and part of the funding would be for energy audits, but currently there is no program for that. To address home owners versus renters, Griggs explained the solarize program is for home owners. Speaking about *Solarize Lexington* and addressing whether the basic cost for technology is expected to decrease, Griggs said it has decreased some and they expect that pattern to continue. She added there is a 40% tax incentive to offset the cost and it pays for itself over time. Addressing *Solarize Lexington* contracts for residents, Griggs explained the city has no liability since the contract is between the solar company and the resident. She said the residents have to qualify for the grant and they are taken to an online form which is paid 100% from the grant. When asked about accountability and follow-up, Griggs said there is nothing in the contract about that. The person only has to qualify. Speaking about funding, Griggs said it is not budgeted but they intend to ask for additional funding since there will be homeowners waiting to sign up. When asked about solarizing government properties and if that goes through *Solarize Lexington*, Griggs said that would be under Energy Improvement Fund. No action was taken on this item.

### IV. Kentucky Utilities: Process and Considerations for Burying Electrical Lines

Chris Mayes, Lexington Operations Manager for Kentucky Utilities (KU), presented a follow-up to the March 2023 wind storm. As a comparison, he reviewed the 2009 ice storm which was the highest outage and said that restoration took 9 days. The March 2023 wind storm was wide spread with 75mph winds (hurricane level), but power was restored in 5 days pointing out they had 1,000 extra line workers to assist. By putting the lines underground, power outages can be mitigated some. There will still be outages and maintenance/repairs can be challenging. He spoke about how disruptive the process can be and some equipment will still be above ground. He said undergrounding doesn't typically last as long and he displayed photos to illustrate what this looks like. If facilities are buried, there would still be above ground transmission boxes. He mentioned that the cost for burying lines would be approximately \$10-15M per mile and that cost does not include cable, internet, or phone lines. If someone is interested, they could reach out to KU customer service for estimates and he noted that payment is expected up front. He mentioned the vast majority of new development goes underground with 1/3 currently underground. He

spoke about pros and cons for undergrounding and he mentioned that undergrounding is rarely the best tool of all options available.

Speaking about how the fee structure is determined, Mayes said it is up to the HOA. He clarified that the HOA would pay using one check. Not considering weather, Mayes said the best option is overhead utilities because over time, moisture can impact underground utilities and overhead installation is more resilient. When asked what it would cost to replace rather than install new underground, Mayes said normally there is no charge to install in a new development. To replace, there would be an added cost to KU which is passed on to customer. Mayes noted there are more distribution lines than transmission lines. Addressing the idea of adopting an underground-only approach and exploring incentives or government funding, Mayes said most developers are already doing this because it is unlikely a developer wants overhead lines. Mayes mentioned how costly it is to replace overhead with underground. David Barberie, Attorney in the Law Department, confirmed we could have an ordinance that directs new lines to be underground

#### **V. Items Referred to Committee**

Motion by Wu to remove *Kentucky Utilities Process for Burying Electrical Lines* from the list of committee referral items. Seconded by LeGris. Motion passed without dissent.

Motion by Wu to adjourn at 2:11 p.m. Seconded by Sevigny. Motion passed without dissent.