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5/25/10

MEMORANDUM

TO: Environmental Concerns Committee

THROUGH: Carl Goldsmith, Director of Public Works *CG*

FROM: David Gorman, Assistant Director of Public Works *DG*

SUBJECT: Possible Reel Mower Incentive Program

DATE: May 18, 2010

Per request of the Committee Chair, staff is placing the issue of a possible reel push mower incentive program on the agenda for May 25th. Attached is a proposal provided by the Chair.

Staff offers the following history regarding our efforts in 2007 to incentivize battery-powered mowers. We did a bit of research on electric mowers in 2007. At that time, we spoke the Neuton Company in California (<http://www.myneuton.com/>) regarding their mower exchange program with local governments. However, it was not a true “exchange” program since the cost to the resident was still substantial. We did hand out their coupon at the 2007 Recycling Extravaganza offering their 14” battery-powered mower for \$299, including shipping. This was a discount of \$79 from their regular price of \$378, which hasn’t changed. We are unable to find any other maker of a 14” battery-powered mower for comparison. Their 19” battery-powered mower is \$479, which is \$84 more than Black & Decker’s 19” mower, including shipping. Old mowers can be taken as scrap metal as long as the fluids have been removed.

Also related to this topic was the one-time gas can exchange at the 2007 Recycling Extravaganza. Clean Air Counts provided a grant for the costs but their funding has since been discontinued for that program.

CG/DG:dg H:\PW\Asst Director\Correspondence\Memos\ECC Push Mowers.doc
attachment: Reel Push Mower Grant Proposal dated May 2010

Proposal: Reel Push Mower Grant
Environmental Concerns Committee
May 2010

Background

When a gasoline-powered mower rumbles along a lawn, the tiny puff of carbon monoxide it coughs up is barely noticeable. But multiply that puff by 44 million — the number of gasoline-powered push mowers the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimates are in use in the USA — and it's an air quality issue, especially in areas facing the likelihood of violating clean air standards that will take effect Aug. 31.

Here are a few interesting U.S. Environmental Agency (EPA) statistics about power lawn mowers:

- Gas mowers represent 5 percent of all U.S. air pollution.
- A traditional gas powered lawn mower produces as much air pollution as 43 new cars each being driven 12,000 miles.
- Some 17 million gallons of fuel, mostly gasoline, are spilled each year while refueling lawn equipment. That's much more than all the oil spilled by the Exxon Valdez in the Gulf of Alaska!
- One gas mower spews 87 pounds of the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide and 54 pounds of other pollutants into the air every year.
- Since power lawn equipment is used mostly during the hot summer months, when ground level ozone is the highest, the additional pollutants spewed near the ground by mowers creates serious problems for asthmatics and aggravates other respiratory conditions.

The greenest and least expensive choice for lawn mowing is the old-fashioned, non-motorized "reel" push mower, which usually costs between \$75 and \$190. Reel mowers are also the safest and easiest to maintain.

About Reel Push Mowers

"They're light. They're maneuverable. They're better for the lawn. They're economical. They're environmentally responsible. They're quiet. They're practically maintenance-free. You can fuel it for the price of a banana and a glass of milk. Rotary mowers tear at the grass, leaving them open to disease. Reel mowers snip the grass, cutting each blade like a pair of scissors." And, they are a great form of exercise.

Some reel mower devotees report that the new models are quite easy to push, as long as the grass is not allowed to get too high.

Admittedly, there are some "cons" and they are not right for everyone. They don't work very well on the steep, uneven lawns, and if you try to cut high grass and weeds with a reel mower, your lawn "will look like it was mowed by goats.". Also, a push mower will be cumbersome for those with large lawns

Grant Proposal

Encourage residents to purchase reel push mowers by offering a reimbursement of \$50 - \$75 dollars in the form of a "reel push mower" grant program.

Other considerations

Consider partnering with Healthy Lombard given the health benefits
And/or consider the mower exchange program (details of other programs on page 2)
Need YTD info on rain barrel and composting grant requests

Mower exchange programs going on this spring include:

Please note, content of this document was taken from other public documents and the EPA website and repurposed for the purposes of this proposal.

•Denver: In a city where testing shows lawn equipment contributes up to 10% of the emissions in the area, there will be at least 500 environmentally friendly mowers available on May 1 in an exchange program, says Sarah Anderson of the Regional Air Quality Council. People who exchange a gas-powered mower will get a discount toward the purchase of a battery powered or non-motorized mower, which will be immediately available at the site.

•Boise: On May 1, the city will offer 150 electric mowers at a \$110 discount for people who trade in their gas mowers. Also, a drawing will be held, and 50 people will get an additional \$125 discount, and one mower will be given away, says Aimee Hughes, environmental specialist for the city's public works department.

•Sacramento: Residents last month sent nearly 1,300 gas-powered lawn mowers for recycling and received discounts on the purchase of electric or non-motorized push mowers, says Carol Novak of the Sacramento Municipal Utility District. The discounts reflected a savings of more than over \$220 off the regular retail price, she says.

That agency has teamed up with the Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality District on this program since 1997. On-site exchange events also are being held in South Carolina, Texas, Vermont and Washington, according to Allison Cranmer, sales manager for Neuton, a battery-powered mower manufacturer offering discounts ranging from \$10 to \$200 on its electric and non-motorized reel mowers.

The company also is offering "virtual" exchanges, in which participants recycle their gas mower locally, then call to order an electric mower at a discount for delivery, she says. That's available in California, Florida, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Maryland, Massachusetts, Missouri, New Jersey, North Carolina, Ohio, South Carolina, Texas and Washington, she says