



Paul Smith  
Public Services Director

## Public Services Department

### Memorandum

**Date:** February 1, 2022  
**To:** Ron Harring, Finance Director  
**Through:** Paul Smith, Public Services Director  
**From:** Robin Rives, Sustainability Coordinator  
**Subject:** Recommendations for ARPA Projects from the Sustainability Committee.

#### **Recommendation**

Consider granting ARPA funds for the implementation of sustainability projects recommended by the Sustainability Committee at their recent meeting on January 21, 2022.

#### **Background**

The Sustainability Committee is formed by community volunteers with a passion for improving the City of Tarpon Springs' sustainability practices. The Committee continues to lead the city's sustainability efforts in coordination with City staff. The City Manager welcomed city board and committees to submit project ideas for potential funding through the ARPA grant source. At the recent Sustainability Committee meeting on January 21, 2022, the Sustainability Committee made a formal list of recommendations for sustainability projects they believe will be beneficial for the city for the City Manager's consideration, compatible with ARPA funding criteria. See below these projects with brief descriptions and rough estimations of project funding requirements. More information can be provided as requested to explain project goals and requested funding.

Proposed project ideas include:

#### **1. Building a Community Hub**

Building a community hub as a place for agencies which provide services to the residents of Tarpon Springs to have local outpost and for the community to enjoy. This space would include areas for county services to establish locations so that representation can be in the Tarpon area, minimizing the need for Tarpon Springs residents to have to travel to other cities. An area for the public to enjoy including a park can be included. The Committee requests that this development occur as a redevelopment, rather than on previously undeveloped land. The Committee also requests that this building be constructed with green practices and "LEED Conscious", though not necessarily a LEED certified structure. A similar community hub was developed by Charlotte County, Florida. ARPA project funds include those which support public health response and

address negative economic impacts, which this Community Hub would support. Robin Saenger of the Sustainability Committee has discussed with the City Manager the idea of using the Comps & Kids Community Service building for this project.

**Cost estimate: Unknown**

## **2. Construction of Solar Panels on the RO Facility**

Placing a solar array on the City's RO facility would complement the ARPA directive for Water and Sewer Infrastructure investments as it would lower the facility's energy demand and respective carbon emissions. While there are already funds of approximately \$600,000 through Public Services designated for the construction of a solar array on the RO facility, this amount does not fulfill the cost for the complete solar site construction, and thus the City would have to complete a phased approach. It is the recommendation of the Committee to utilize ARPA funds for this project to maximize the potential size and capacity of the array. The low range of the cost estimate below is based on the engineer's estimate of \$713,856 for Phase 1 of the project (i.e. not the complete array). The higher range of the cost estimate was calculated using the PVWatts Solar calculator and would allow for the construction of the full solar array, which is slightly higher than the engineer's estimate of \$1,257,869, provided by Public Utilities.

**Cost estimate: \$715,000- \$1.3 million**

## **3. Creating a Green Infrastructure Plan**

A Green Infrastructure plan would complement the development of the City's sustainability plan, as well as the City's Comprehensive and Strategic Plans. This would entail assessing and mapping the City's ecological and cultural assets, considering community values, then assessing risk to these assets and developing objectives, goals, and recommended actions to help prevent further damage to those ecological and cultural assets. Benefits from a Green Infrastructure plan include better stormwater management practices, while achieving environmental, social, and economic benefits. Therefore, this plan would complement the ARPA directive for Water and Sewer Infrastructure investments. Adopting this plan would create a framework to guide sustainable development for the City. This would require hiring a consultant to complete the Green Infrastructure plan.

**Cost estimate: \$100,000**

## **4. Urban Tree Inventory**

An Urban Tree Inventory would allow for the completion of a citywide tree inventory and analysis. This would help to quantify the City's true urban tree canopy, allow for strategic tree planting and maintenance, inform accurate calculations of carbon emission sequestration and ecosystem services provided by the City's trees, and will provide the basis for the development of an Urban Forest/Municipal Forest Master Plan. This would require hiring a consultant or interns to complete the tree inventory and the cost estimate below is for this purpose. The City Tree Bank has earmarked funds for the completion of a Municipal Forest Master Plan, which has been indicated by the Tree Ordinance as an appropriate use of funds. Funds are being requested for Step 1 of the two-step process which involves first cataloging the City's tree canopy, then creating a Master Plan which would coincide with the City's Comprehensive, Strategic, and comprehensive Sustainability plans to ensure that the City maintains and grows its urban canopy. The City arborist is working with consultants and meeting with universities to cost compare

and evaluate the cost, feasibility, and practicality of using student interns to conduct the tree mapping versus hiring a consultant.

**Cost estimate: \$200,000**

**5. Septic to Sewer Conversion for the Remainder of Bayshore Drive**

The City continues to prioritize the elimination of septic tanks through the expansion of City sewer infrastructure, particularly in areas of the most beneficial impact. Areas with relatively high housing density, with soils that are less suitable for septic tanks, and that are located adjacent to water bodies are priority candidate areas. Bayshore Drive was identified in a technical evaluation completed in 2000 to be a priority area. A portion of Bayshore Drive in the vicinity of DeSoto Drive has recently been connected to sewer subsequent to the construction of a lift station in the area associated with the development of Bayshore Heights. The remaining areas to the northwest and south are proposed for this project. The City, through its design consultant, will evaluate various alternatives to provide sanitary sewer service. A preliminary cost estimate for constructing the sewer extension to the remaining portions of Bayshore drive is listed below, with the price varying depending on the chosen alternative and design. This plan would complement the ARPA directive for Water and Sewer Infrastructure investments.

**Cost estimate: \$750,000- \$1.5 million**

**6. Retrofit existing City buildings with EV chargers and bike racks**

The City can make existing buildings greener through the addition of EV chargers and bike racks to encourage the use of electric vehicles and bicycling, thus helping to lower carbon emissions. In the future, the City can explore incentive programs to encourage the use of EV and bicycles/carpooling and other alternative means of transportation for City employees' commutes to work. The cost estimate below is a rough estimate for the installation of 10 additional EV chargers at a maximum rate of \$2,600 per each EV charger and installation cost and 5 bike racks at \$1,000 each. The Planning Department noted that this is a simple capital investment with low liability and associated maintenance and suggested investing in functional sheltered bike parking at the Depot and potentially the Docks or Marina. Covered bike racks have the potential to include solar lighting and there could potentially be a hub with electrical charging stations. It is unclear which ARPA category this project would align with.

**Cost estimate: \$31,000**

**7. Adopting a City bike share program**

Adopting a City bike share program is effectively developing a city transit service. As such, this would be a high up-front cost but it is important to consider that yearly maintenance costs will apply for the remainder of the life of the bike share program. At as much as \$5,000 per bike plus operating expenses of \$100- \$200 per bike per year, an initial upfront cost for one year with the addition of 20 bikes of \$100,000 would apply with an annual reoccurring cost of approximately \$4,000 per year continuing into the future. There have been concerns expressed by the Planning Department about feasibility, accessibility, true cost, liability, administration and scope of adopting a City bike share program. It is unclear which ARPA category this project would align with.

**Cost estimate: \$104,000**

## **8. Conversions of existing impervious surfaces to cool pavement**

The use of “cool pavements” are highly reflective or permeable so that the urban heat island and microclimate are not greatly increased from the introduction of more impervious surfaces. The EPA designates cool pavements as having the greatest overall value when coupled with multiple benefits including improved stormwater management and water quality. The Committee recommended replacing existing pavement where appropriate with permeable or cool pavement to reduce the urban heat island. As cool pavements have demonstrated improvements for stormwater management, this plan would complement the ARPA directive for Water and Sewer Infrastructure investments. Appropriate areas in the city for new upcoming pavement or conversions of existing pavement would have to be identified and assessed for an accurate cost estimate. Public Works suggested as a cost-effective, more feasible alternative to use highly reflective coatings where appropriate on existing pavements to help to reduce the urban heat island effect and explore permeable pavements for new pavements rather than existing.

**Cost estimate: Unknown**

These recommendations were provided by the Sustainability Committee for potential uses of ARPA funding in keeping with the Support Public Health Response, Address Negative Economic Impacts, and Water Sewer and Infrastructure categories, with some project suggestions needing further insight of relevant ARPA categories. City staff including those in Public Works, Public Utilities, Public Services, Planning, and the City Arborist were consulted to provide their feedback where appropriate.