

MEMORANDUM

To: Yakima City Council
From: Communications & Public Affairs Director Randy Beehler
Subject: Spark Northwest Partnership
Date: Thursday, June 13th, 2019

Council members,

At the Council's December 4th, 2018 regular meeting, the Council unanimously directed City staff to pursue having the City partner with Spark Northwest, a non-profit organization that supports local efforts to simplify the process for residents of Washington State and Oregon communities to invest in solar energy.

Founded in 2001, Spark Northwest, formerly known as Northwest Sustainable Energy for Economic Development, works with a local project manager, typically from a local organization, utility, or governmental entity, to provide training, technical assistance, and workshop presentations to facilitate a group purchase program called *Solarize Northwest*. Through the *Solarize Northwest* program, local residents are able to join forces to collectively select a solar contractor and, through a group purchase, significantly reduce the high upfront cost of installing residential solar systems.

Included in the June 18th Council regular meeting agenda packet is a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the City and Spark Northwest regarding a campaign entitled ***Solarize Yakima***. As demonstrated in the MOU, the City will incur little if any out-of-pocket expenses for the ***Solarize Yakima*** campaign. A moderate amount of City staff time will likely need to be invested in order to coordinate committee recruitment, campaign promotion, and the reservation of meeting space.

The City's role in the ***Solarize Yakima*** campaign would primarily consist of serving as the "face" of the campaign by helping to recruit volunteers to serve on a campaign committee and by promoting the campaign through the City's various communications platforms. The City may also be asked to provide meeting space for campaign workshops.

The cost of the ***Solarize Yakima*** campaign is estimated to be about \$25,000 to \$30,000, all of which will be paid for by a grant from the U.S. Department of Energy and distributed by the Washington State Department of Commerce. Spark Northwest staff will serve in the role of campaign manager.

Solarize Northwest campaigns typically last about nine months. A campaign begins with the recruitment and training of committee volunteers. A solar installer is then selected by the committee. Workshops are conducted to educate community members about the process of solar conversion. Installations then occur during a period of time with a specific end date.

Please let me know if you have questions or need additional information about this issue prior to the Council's June 18th regular meeting.

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