



Legislation Text

File #: Res. 2016-079, **Version:** 1

City Council Meeting Date: August 2, 2016

To: Mayor and City Council
City Administrator

From: Jasper Kruggel, Streets and Parks Manager
David Bennett, Public Works Director/City Engineer

Consideration to Authorize the Native Plant Rebate Program.

Action Requested:

Staff recommends that the Northfield City Council approve the attached Resolution authorizing a Native Plant Rebate Program funded in conjunction with the Rain Garden/Rain Barrel Rebate Program at a maximum annual contribution of \$20,000.

Summary Report:

Staff has worked on parameters associated with a Native Plant Rebate Program starting in the summer of 2015. Evan Walser-Kuntz, a student from Haverford College with family ties to Carleton College worked as an unpaid intern over the summer of 2015, aiding in the development of a program that will help increase native, pollinator friendly plants within the City of Northfield. At the August 13, 2015 Environmental Quality Commission (EQC) meeting, a motion was passed supporting the implementation of the Native Plant Rebate Program in 2016.

At the May 17, 2016 City Council Meeting, City Council passed Resolution 2016-052, designating the City of Northfield a Pollinator Friendly Community. It was also mentioned that a program such as the Native Plant Rebate Program being proposed would be a great asset to assist with that designation.

The Native Plant Rebate Program is designed to enhance the growth of native plant communities in Northfield. The EQC has recommended that the program would offer a 33% rebate up to \$75 per household on native plant purchases and the rebate would then be applied to the resident's utility bill. The rebate would be in the amount of \$25, \$50, or \$75 for administration purposes on the utility bill reimbursement. Brochures have been developed to market the program and those will be available in various City of Northfield facilities along with local nurseries and native seed suppliers. If a citizen of Northfield would like to participate in the program, an application would need to be filled out and submitted to the EQC for review before the utility bill credit would be applied. This process mirrors the way rain garden and rain barrel rebates are currently handled.

The Environmental Quality Commission staff liaison will work with local plant suppliers to educate them about the program so those business owners can market and make potential native plant buyers aware of this rebate.

Also, an acceptable native plant list will be available at City Hall, the Street Maintenance Facility, at the various local plant suppliers, and on the City website. If there are questions about various plant species and if

they are acceptable, those questions will be directed to the Streets and Parks Department.

Financial Impacts:

Staff is recommending that this program is funded in conjunction with the Rain Garden/Rain Barrel Rebate program, capped at \$20,000 annually.

In the life of the Rain Garden Rebate Program, there have been six successful applications totaling \$1,283.94. The capacity of the annual \$20,000 allotment for rain gardens will be able to support the Native Plant Rebate Program. The Environmental Quality Commission will track the annual budget balance to ensure that the annual fund level of \$20,000 is monitored.

Brochure and plant list printing costs are proposed to be funded through the Stormwater fund, and will not exceed \$250 annually.

Tentative Timelines:

If approved by City Council, staff will work with local plant providers to ensure that the plants being sold by their business are neonicotinoid free. Also, an overview of the program will be provided to the business owner to help market the program in external locations.