



Item No. 2 Town of Atherton

CITY COUNCIL STAFF REPORT – STUDY SESSION

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: LISA COSTA SANDERS, TOWN PLANNER

DATE: MARCH 2, 2016

SUBJECT: AUTHORIZE A MOVIE AND COMMUNITY SURVEY FOR EARTH DAY EVENT

RECOMMENDATION

Authorize an environmental movie and a community survey for the 2016 Earth Day event.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS

The City Council, at its February 17, 2016 allocated \$5,000 and authorized staff and the Environmental Program Committee (EPC) plan an Earth Day event. In its proposed work plan, the EPC recommended hosting an environmentally-based movie and mailing out a pre-event survey to residents. City Council authorization on the movie and survey are required prior to distribution.

Valerie Gardner, EPC Chair has recommended showing one of the movies listed below. A summary of each movie is included as Attachment 1.

- Pandora's Promise
- Merchants of Doubt
- Racing Extinction
- This Changes Everything
- Tapped
- Bidder 70
- Cowspiracy

Chair Gardner has also drafted the attached Community Survey. The EPC recommends distributing the survey Town-wide to "...*gauge community interest on environmental issues so as to tailor the educational sponsors and activities of the Earth Day event accordingly.*" The survey is included as Attachment 2.

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POLICY FOCUS

The Earth Day activities are Town-sponsored and funded. Discussion surrounding climate change is often hotly debated and can be politically-charged. The survey and movie screening could be seen as advocacy in a particular direction with respect to the issues. The Town's Resolution Governing Committees provides that "...Committees may provide approved educational materials to the public regarding functions and actions of the committee, but shall not engage in advocating to the public any particular position which is contrary to City Council policy. Any educational materials sent to the public shall be approved by the City Manager...It shall be the City Manager's discretion on whether or not the educational materials need Council approval beforehand."

It would be appropriate for the City Council to provide authorization with respect to the movie selections and provide review and authorization with respect to the attached survey.

The EPC has asked that the survey be distributed to gauge community interest on environmental issues in order to tailor the sponsors and activities of the Earth Day event. Questions 1-6, & 9 are broad environmental interest questions and questions 10-12 are demographic questions. However, questions 7 & 8, while relating to environmental concerns, contain policy issues for the City Council within the suggested responses. These questions should either be edited or removed to ensure that they comport with the City Council's policy direction.

FISCAL IMPACT

The City Council allocated \$5,000 for the Earth Day event. Mailing a two-sided survey to all properties in Town will cost approximately \$1,200. The survey can also be posted on the Town's website for download (PDF) and distributed the same via Peak Democracy, Twitter, Facebook, and NextDoor. These outlets do not represent any additional cost to the Town.

The survey could also be distributed via an online survey tool such as SurveyMonkey. A free SurveyMonkey account would be insufficient as it only provides for 10 questions and 100 responses (no reporting or statistics). The "Select" account provides 10 questions and 1,000 responses with reporting - \$26/month billed month-to-month. The "Gold" account provides unlimited questions and responses - \$25/month or \$300 for the year. There are other survey vendors with similar limitations and pricing models.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notification was achieved by posting the agenda, with this agenda item being listed, at least 72 hours prior to the meeting in print and electronically. Information about the project is also disseminated via the Town's electronic News Flash and Atherton Online. There are approximately 1,200 subscribers to the Town's electronic News Flash publications. Subscribers include residents as well as stakeholders – to include, but be not limited to, media outlets, school districts, Menlo Park Fire District, service providers (water, power, and sewer), and regional elected officials.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Summary of Recommended Movies for Earth Day Event

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2. Draft Community Survey

RECOMMENDED FILMS FOR EARTH DAY EVENT

A. Pandora's Promise: by Robert Stone. Top choice because I can get one the creators to host a discussion.

Impact Partners, in association with Vulcan Productions and CNN Films, present PANDORA'S PROMISE, the groundbreaking film by Academy-Award®-nominated director Robert Stone. The atomic bomb and meltdowns like Fukushima have made nuclear power synonymous with global disaster. But what if we've got nuclear power wrong? An audience favorite at the Sundance Film Festival, PANDORA'S PROMISE asks whether the one technology we fear most could save our planet from a climate catastrophe, while providing the energy needed to lift billions of people in the developing world out of poverty. In his controversial new film, Stone tells the intensely personal stories of environmentalists and energy experts who have undergone a radical conversion from being fiercely anti to strongly pro-nuclear energy, risking their careers and reputations in the process. Stone exposes this controversy within the environmental movement head-on with stories of defection by heavy weights including Stewart Brand, Richard Rhodes, Gwyneth Cravens, Mark Lynas and Michael Shellenberger. Undaunted and fearlessly independent, PANDORA'S PROMISE is a landmark work that is forever changing the conversation about the myths and science behind this deeply emotional and polarizing issue.

B. Merchants of Doubt: by Robert Kenner based the book by Naomi Oreskes and Erik Conwell

Synopsis: In the 1950s, when scientists first linked cigarettes to cancer, the public relations firm of Hill & Knowlton created what turned out to be a winning strategy: augmenting the direct lies of tobacco industry executives and spokespeople with "third party" testimonies by people who seemed to have no dog in the hunt but were really wearing an invisible corporate leash. Scientists and pseudo-scientists hired by big tobacco were ushered into the public eye to sow doubt about the science, and plead for more studies, or more time to study the data before concluding that cigarettes were harmful. The movie covers over familiar examples of corporate treachery, leading up to the present day, which finds oil and gas companies sowing doubt about climate change through front groups, hired gun scientists and other shills. Oreskes, co-author of the film's source book, appears on camera to tell how she fact-checked the widely repeated assertion that there was no consensus on climate change, and discovered that of 989 scientists who'd seriously studied the topic, not one thought there was serious doubt that human industry and pollution contributed to a rise in average global temperatures.

C. Racing Extinction: by Louis Psihoyos

Synopsis: Whether you believe the Earth has been around for 4.5 billion years, or just 6,000; whether you consider global warming a dire warning or an elaborate hoax; and whether you're just embarking on life's journey or already making your burial arrangements, "Racing Extinction" delivers a message of universal significance — namely, that mankind is directly responsible for endangering, if not outright eradicating, countless species around the world. Psihoyos intends for that fact to come as a wake-up call to those who consider extinction a distant phenomenon, the sort of thing that happened to dinosaurs and the dodo but not to animals

living in our more eco-enlightened times. “Racing Extinction” plays like a sizzle reel for everything Psihoyos and his crew have been doing since, from busting the Los Angeles-based restaurant Hump for serving whale meat to infiltrating a massive Chinese seafood wholesaler where the roofs are packed with sun-drying shark fins. At great personal risk, they rig buttonhole cameras and assume false identities, taking meetings with those who illegally harvest and sell shark oil and other endangered-species byproducts.

D. This Changes Everything: Avi Lewis and Naomi Klein.

Synopsis: A purposefully unsettling but ultimately encouraging global overview of efforts by activists to push back against corporate polluters and ameliorate climate change, “This Changes Everything” from the book of the same title by journalist [Naomi Klein](#), zigzags around the world, starting with Fort McMurray in Alberta, where migrant workers are enjoying inflated salaries too much to dwell on the possible environmental threat posed by oil sands mining, and continuing on an itinerary that includes the Halkidiki region of Greece, where locals are revolting against government officials who are using the country’s economic crisis as an excuse to greenlight a gold-processing complex, and Andhra Pradesh, India, where activists struggle to preserve wetlands that may be despoiled by a proposed coal-fired power plant. “This Changes Everything” is genuinely stirring as it details improbable victories and green-economy opportunities. Production values are sufficiently impressive to guarantee that even viewers normally as bored as Klein by global warming warnings will be attentive, if not enthralled.

E. Tapped:

Is access to clean drinking water a basic human right, or a commodity that should be bought and sold like any other article of commerce? Stephanie Soechtig's debut feature is an unflinching examination of the big business of bottled water. From the producers of *Who Killed the Electric Car* and *I.O.U.S.A.*, this timely documentary is a behind-the-scenes look into the unregulated and unseen world of an industry that aims to privatize and sell back the one resource that ought never to become a commodity: our water. From the plastic production to the ocean in which so many of these bottles end up, this inspiring documentary trails the path of the bottled water industry and the communities which were the unwitting chips on the table. A powerful portrait of the lives affected by the bottled water industry, this revelatory film features those caught at the intersection of big business and the public's right to water. *Documentary now available on digital and DVD

F. Bidder 70: Beth and George Gage

In 2008, as George W. Bush tried to gift the energy and mining industries thousands of acres of pristine Utah wilderness via a widely disputed federal auction, college student Tim DeChristopher monkey-wrenched the process. Bidding \$1.7 million, he won 22,000 acres with no intention to drill. For this astonishing (and successful) act of civil disobedience he was sentenced to two years in federal prison. *Bidder 70* tells the story of this peaceful warrior whose willingness to sacrifice has ignited the climate justice movement. The married team of Beth Gage and George Gage followed Mr. DeChristopher through a federal indictment, nine trial postponements and the maturation of his climate warrior identity. And if their resulting

documentary, "[Bidder 70](#)," is less than lush — the photography is as prosaic as the average television news segment — it is blessed with a subject whose sincerity papers over a lot of cracks. Wisely deciding to refrain from rapping our knuckles with greenhouse gas statistics and Al Gore-style pie charts, the filmmakers fashion a portrait of a conscience spurred to action by an unexpected opportunity.

G. Cowspiracy:

Cowspiracy- the Sustainability Secret, a documentary exploring the effects of livestock on the environment, seeks to break the silence of environmental organizations on these issues. While the film's prime objective to reveal an unspoken masking of information about "animal agriculture" by well-known environmental NGO's is laudable, it tries to build a case for vegan absolutism and the abandonment of focus on the "cowspiracy."

The film's absolutist position runs roughshod over nuance, presenting an exclusionary world-view as the only viable option. I believe that absolutism is almost always detrimental to public discourse. Over the years, I have made a conscious effort to temper my positions- not to meet in the middle- but to work with people who may not see eye to eye, but do share common cause.

That *Cowspiracy* would sink to absolutism, to the point where an interviewee, Mr. Howard Lyman, could state without a hint of objection: **"You can't be an environmentalist and eat animal products [...] don't call yourself an environmentalist [-Howard Lyman 1:16:42 Emphasis added]"** hammered the final nail in the coffin of objectivity. This statement, taken in tandem with Mr. Andersen's closing remark, are the essence of barefaced absolutism.

Environmental Survey

Email: _____ **(Optional)**

This survey is intended to assess our community’s interest in and awareness of environmental issues, as well as needs for education. (This is a Word version but most likely, this would be sent out via Survey Monkey, for easier results tabulations and analyses).

Please answer by checking as many boxes as appropriate for you.

I. Environmental Characteristics

1. Level of Overall Environmental Concern: None Slight Moderate Very concerned

2. Environmental groups I am a member of, supporter of, or get news from, include (but not limited to):
 - POST Sierra Club Natural Resources Defense Council Acterra 350.org
 - Environmental Defense Fund Environment California Conservation Voters
 - Environmental Working Group Save the Bay Other: _____

3. My level of knowledge of climate change and the risks we face from it is:
 - None Somewhat familiar Moderate sense Very familiar with these issues I’m an expert in the area

4. The **scientific** underpinning for our understandings regarding climate change are at a level of:
 - High Consensus Moderate Consensus Little Consensus Active Scientific Dispute

5. Environmental issues that I am concerned about in general include (check all that apply):
 - Carbon Emissions Climate Change Air Pollution Energy Policies
 - Drought-Response Rainwater Runoff Waste/Recycling Pest Control
 - Sea Level Rise Ocean Acidification Disease Spread Flood Control
 - Toxic Materials Pesticides in Food Species Loss Other: _____

6. Environmental issues that I think could be helpful for the town to educate residents about include:
 - Using clean energy Reducing wasted energy Solar Panels Solar Water Heating
 - Home insulation Passive energy design Zero Net Energy Electric Heaters
 - Water conservation Native garden design Transportation alternatives None
 - Other 1: _____ 2: _____ 3: _____

7. Atherton will be required to reduce the town’s total carbon emissions by as much as 80% over time. Which of the following actions do you think we should focus on now and in the next few years (check all that apply):
 - a. Educate residents on how they can reduce their amount of wasted energy _____
 - b. Require newly constructed homes to reduce energy, even if they are bigger _____
 - c. Educate homeowners about how to convert natural gas appliances to electric _____
 - d. Help homeowners with older homes implement energy efficiency upgrades _____
 - e. Alert homeowners to programs, products and services that help reduce CO² _____
 - f. Design and implement environmental programs that engage students _____
 - g. Build Atherton’s new Civic Center to be a model of Zero Net Energy technology _____
 - h. Source 100% clean electricity, so we don’t have to reduce electricity usage _____
 - i. Improve bike and pedestrian safety, so more people will walk or bike locally _____

- j. Bring back regular weekly train service through Caltrain _____
- k. Implement other local transportation options that connect to mass transit _____
- l. Other ideas: _____

8. Drought is likely to become an increasing problem in California. Which of the following actions do you think we should focus on now and in the next few years:
- a. Educate residents about ways to reduce their home water usage _____
 - b. Help residents implement grey water systems for acceptable home water reuse _____
 - c. Develop residential well water usage and rainwater capture ordinances to improve rain water absorption, reduce flooding and increase aquifer recharging rates to prevent both dry wells and land subsidence _____
 - d. Invest in improvements to the town's overall drainage by restoring more natural riparian areas near parks and along roads and improving absorption along the Drainage Channel to prevent flooding but improving aquifer recharging _____
 - e. Fund improvements to Bear Gulch for greater capacity in the event of emergency _____
 - f. Other ideas: _____

9. Optional: Feel free to write any comment or thoughts on this topic or about this survey:

Atherton Demographic Characteristics

10. Please help us understand your perspective: Answers are requested but optional.

- Age Group: Student (<25) Early Career (25-50) Mid Career (51-70) Late (70s+)
- Sex Identification: Male Gender Neutral Female
- Race: White Black Asian Latino Sephardic Mix Other
- Education Level: High School College Graduate Doctoral
- Professional Level: Trade Staff Professional Senior Mgmt Owner-Founder
- Science Background: Anti-Science Accept Science Love Science Am a Scientist
- Technology Stance: Don't Like It Tolerate It Love It Am an Expert
- Political Orientation: Progressive all the way Moderate Democrat Independent (Swing Voter) Moderate (Old-Style) Republican Tea Party Conservative
- Voting Record: Never Occasionally Usually Always
- Income Range: Get Support Modest Income Moderate-Good High

11. Your Industry/Professional Area: *(Write in)* _____

12. Please check the items that pertain to you:

- Neighborhood: Lindenwood East of El Camino West of El Camino West of Alameda
- Home Size: < 2500 sq.ft 2500-4000 sq.ft. 4000-6500 > 6500 sq.ft
- Resident of Atherton: 0-5 Years 6-16 Years 17-30 Years 31 or more Years
- Type of Resident/Owner: Year Round 2nd Home Rental/Income Builder/Building

Thank YOU very much for your time! The confidentiality of your responses will be protected. To learn more about this survey and to see aggregated results, please email: