

Questions and Answers

Lauren Pederson: Thanks, Neelam. I received a lot of great questions. And the first question is for Shawn and Alex of Whatcom County.

What type of commercial buildings is a part of the program? Did your program include all types of businesses? Or just small businesses if you wouldn't mind discussing that a little bit.

Alex Ramel: Sure. This is Alex again. We designed this program with the intention of making it accessible to all different kinds of small businesses, so, specifically, crossing different energy types and crossing different industries and sectors.

So we work predominantly with businesses that have less than 100 employees. We have a few what I would say as mid-sized manufacturing facilities up to 200 or so employees. But most of the businesses we're working with are smaller than that and they – it includes everything from greenhouse operations to residential care facilities, retail, restaurants, grocery stores, et cetera.

And, consequently, we recommend a lot of very different kinds of energy efficiency improvements. In some cases, it's just lighting changes. And in some places – like, for example, we work with a crematorium, their specific improvement that they were able to make in their scheduling that conserved a lot of natural gas.

Lauren Pederson: Great. Thank you for that answer. And do you think this program would work in a county 10 percent the size of Whatcom?

Alex Ramel: I think that there is – I guess the question is specific to small business or whether it's – more generally the small business and residential components. I think that there is ample demand. If you're talking about a smaller community, what we're looking at doing right now is expanding our services into a couple of neighboring communities on a pilot basis.

And that might be a good way to approach it because I think you do need a certain density of expertise, contractor base and you need enough projects to keep people busy to justify the time and investment. The practical collaboration with a neighboring community or two would deal with that, to approach that.

Neelam Patel: And the next questions for you, Shawn and Alex, there are quite a few questions on funding. Where is the state funding coming from that was used in your project, was it state energy funding, utility funding, if you wouldn't mind discussing that for a couple of minutes.

Shawn Collins: Sure, so the initial large influx of funds that – well, we started out with some community funds to get the program off the ground and hire staff to actually prepare some of the grant applications.

The major first installment of funds came through the community energy efficiency pilot programs, grants through Washington State University's energy extension. That funded eight pilot projects throughout Washington State. We were able to receive about \$2.8 million for that. And then in addition to those funds we utilized Energy Efficiency Community Block Grants to fund the work that we've been completing the level that we've completed through the third quarter of this year.

Alex Ramel: There is also an EPA Climate Showcase Communities grant that we used for education and outreach for the community campaign. The utility funding that we utilized is predominant – most of the utility funding ends up going directly into projects in the form of rebates.

Neelam Patel: Great, thank you. And do you have advice on how our municipality could work with existing energy efficiency evaluation or retrofit businesses to encourage residents to pursue energy efficiency retrofit for upgrades?

Shawn Collins: One of the things that we're doing right now in the neighboring county is partnering with the county government to implement a pilot of 80 home energy assessments, and so, they're helping to coordinate that with local homeowners and has hired a couple of contractors to do that work, and so, the county has utilized some of their funds earmarked energy efficiency to accomplish them.

Our energy efficiency upgrades with government buildings and then also carve a chunk out to focus on the residential homeowner market. And so, that's one thing to do. They bit off a small chunk and that they're going to do 80 assessments over the course of one year, evaluate how effective it was and then decide the next steps from there. And so, that's one thing that's happening now and I think that's been (effective).

Alex Ramel: This kind of goes back to what I said about the energy, the biggest barrier, the most significant barrier being information. People who have energy efficient homes and businesses know it but they often don't know what to do about it. They've probably heard that they need new windows. In most cases that's probably inaccurate. That's not the best place to start. The best place to start is with insulation, the duct sealing.

So providing quality information is, I think, the single biggest service that you can do in your community. And if you're going to add a second service, I would say working with those existing contractors is a great way to do it. They can serve as marketing partners but, again, I would really strongly encourage you to make sure that you have criteria for making sure that the contractors that you are recommending to people are going to do top quality work.

Quality of workmanship in this industry is not uniformly good, unfortunately, and that's one of the reasons that I think it's really valuable to partner with the low income weatherization program. I can't speak for the entire country but in Washington State the standards that low income weatherization contractors are held to are higher than anybody else, and so, the contractors that have been working on the low income weatherization program, and the folks that

have been managing that program which are extended across the whole country, I think that's a fantastic resource to start with in terms of ensuring quality of workmanship.

Neelam Patel: Great, thank you so much for those answers. I'm going to move on to Rich for a couple of questions.

Rich, we had a question come in. Would you be willing to share any political realities or changes that may have affected or are affecting Arlington's Community Energy Plan?

Rich Dooley: Sure. Arlington, I think, is like a number of other communities where there is shifting areas of emphasis, things that are happening in the community realm that people are most concerned about and most interested in. And so, be it affordable housing, or a new streetcar coming in or whatever it might be, we simply have to be ready to be able to show the connection between those various realities and how the Community Energy Plan actually helps to improve conditions no matter what you're talking about, and affordable housing is a great example.

We talk about affordable housing but in actuality I think one of the things that we like to frame this as is more affordable living because it's not just about the cost of house, it's about people living inside the house and what their costs are after you get them into a house and that, be it transportation cost, the cost of utilities and so forth. And so, between the energy plan and reducing utility bills through more energy efficient buildings and so forth helped to increase the affordable living quotient and really help to support that on into the future.

So that's an example of the political realities. Other than that we are blessed here in Arlington on having a very stable county board, not a lot of turnover on the number of county board members. We have five county board members and it's fairly stable. And so, there are other jurisdictions that I know of that are called a whipsaw effect where during one term there will be an initiative, and then it get pulled out from under the staff's feet in another term of board or supervisor members. That's not the case in Arlington, and so, we are fairly fortunate from staff's point in that respect.

Neelam Patel: Great, thank you. And can you talk a little bit more about how you're able to implement and plan for district energy?

Rich Dooley: One of the challenges with Arlington is that we are a population of 210,000 people, 26 square miles and we're fairly built out already. And so, in putting in district energy which is essentially, would be a series of pipes, highly insulated, highly pressurized pipes that would carry water and those would go underground and in between buildings and buildings would share that resource to heat and cool those buildings.

And one of the challenges is and will continue to be putting in those pipes in areas where there's already piping and other infrastructure, utility infrastructure in place. And so, that's going to increase the cost and as we're pricing out our projects for implementing district energy we need to be wary of the potential pitfalls on digging up the ground and discovering that there is a lot of

things underneath our feet that we have to be wary of and cognizant of and be able to move around as we start putting those pipes in.

So as opposed to putting in a green field that's not currently developed our costs are going to be higher comparatively because we will have to be working around a fairly crowded infrastructure that's already in place in our built-out community.

Neelam Patel: Great, thank you and one last question for you, Rich. Who is paying for the operations of the streetcar that you mentioned in your plan?

Rich Dooley: I have to defer actually to our transportation folks, the county is to my knowledge going to be funding, you know, both the implementation of the streetcar, putting in the streetcar and there's already funds earmarked for that and that I believe that the, you know, funds for people riding the streetcar will go into the budget for the operations and maintenance of it so that is a county endeavor.

To my knowledge it is not privatized, and so, we're simply going to be using county funds in that regard. I'm speaking a little bit out of term because that's another department within the county in the transportation sector that can answer those questions. And if you go to the arlingtonva.us web site and type in streetcar you should be able to find out additional information about that.

Neelam Patel: Great, thank you. We are going to wrap up the Webcast today and I'd like to encourage everybody to register for Webcast two and three and I just pulled up the slide that has those registration links and pretty much we have it already.

Connecting our next Webcast to both Arlington and Whatcom counties presentations is a good way to introduce the topics and reinforce what you can get out of this next Webcast. Today from Rich in Arlington we heard that they received some funding – have received funding from both a private partner as well as the utility to do the study on district energy. And so, in addition to those types of seed funding we'll also hear about other innovative ways to collect money so that you can invest in prime mitigation and clean energy programs.

From Bellingham some of the seed money did come from grants but other money came from the energy saved through their programs. And the other interesting piece about Alex and Shawn's presentation was the financing program that they have developed for running energy efficiency programs out there, and how they partnered with a credit union and you will hear more about those types of presentations – excuse me, those types of financing programs on our third Webcast.

And so, I'd like to thank you for joining today and we look forward to having you join our future Webcast in these series.

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