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CITY GOALS:



Strong Foundation



Reliable Service



Livable City



Better Together

Edina Chamber Launching Innovation Hub

\$100K in ARPA Funding Will Help Establish Program to Assist Businesses

BY DEBBIE TOWNSEND

2022 is the Edina Chamber of Commerce's 50th anniversary, and it was supposed to be a year of celebrations: the biggest gala yet, special events and cheering a new accelerator program aimed to help emerging businesses.

COVID-19 changed all that. When the pandemic shut everything down in 2020, the Chamber lost more than 50 of its 410 members as businesses scrambled to cut costs to survive. All the fundraisers and special events were either canceled or went virtual. President Lori Syverson said the Chamber's revenue plummeted about 73 percent.

"Here we are, the Chamber of Commerce that people turn to in times of crisis, yet we were one of those businesses," Syverson said.

The Chamber's leadership got to work, reaching out to businesses to find out what they needed most. Stopgap measures like the federal Paycheck Protection Program or CARES Act funding kept many businesses afloat, but they needed help adapting to new business models that emerged from the pandemic.

"They were telling us, 'We survived the last two years, but we don't think we can survive the next two,'" Syverson said.

"They are being forced to change how they do things, and they are not sure how they do that."

So the Chamber shifted its business accelerator into the Edina Innovation Hub, using the \$100,000 in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding from the City of Edina to launch it later this year.

In explaining the hub, Syverson and Chamber Board of Directors Chairman Steve Blexrud cited the parable about "give a man a fish and you feed him for



President Lori Syverson and Board Chairman Steve Blexrud are optimistic the Edina Chamber of Commerce's new Edina Innovation Hub will give local businesses the skills to thrive.

(Photo by Dan Reisig)

a day. Teach him to catch a fish and you feed him for a lifetime."

"I can be the best cupcake baker in the world, but if I don't know how to market cupcakes in today's environment, my business won't succeed," Blexrud said as a made-up example.

Businesses, whether they are new or have been around for 20 years, will come to the hub with a problem, or problems. The hub will have them working one-on-one with experts to learn skills – from accounting to marketing to online sales – so they can succeed on their own. While the Chamber is already doing some of this work, the hub will have a physical space for learning. In addition to core business functions, topical training will be offered, like dealing with staffing during the "Great Resignation."

The Chamber is already seeing an influx of new members eager to participate in the hub. Bill Neuendorf, the City's Economic Development Manager, hailed the hub as an excellent idea to help businesses.

Gone are the days when Chambers of Commerce could rely on a few events where business cards were exchanged and call it a success. The Edina Chamber is starting off its 50th anniversary becoming the Chamber of the future, working hand in hand to ensure businesses succeed and to draw new businesses to the area. Celebrations can wait.

"I'm very excited and as proud as I've ever been to be a Chamber member right now," Blexrud said.

Learn more about the Edina Chamber of Commerce at EdinaChamber.com.



Summer Jobs Offer Fun, Learning in Edina's Favorite Places

Teens, College Students, Retirees Help Community Celebrate the Season

BY DEBBIE TOWNSEND

A summer job means earning extra money, meeting new people, maybe even spending more time outdoors.

A summer job in Edina often means a lot more.

"It's a chance to be a part of the community and serve the community by working at a place you've spent time at," said Dawn Beitel, Assistant Manager of the Edina Aquatic Center.

The teens and 20-somethings who apply there often spent summers splashing down the water slides or riding the zip line.

"They often tell us, 'This was my favorite place to be when I was a kid. I want to work there,'" Beitel said.

"It's fun to be outside all these beautiful summer days," said Centennial Lakes Park General Manager Tiffany Bushland.

Every summer, younger workers are joined by active retirees to provide a safe,

fun place for the community to play, attend a concert or special event.

"Centennial Lakes Park always has something fun going on – concerts for kids, evening concerts, putting, paddle boats – all kind of activities that will keep our employees entertained and busy all summer long," Bushland said.

Jobs like guest services cross-train teens and young adults for multiple tasks, from greeting to point of sale, food preparation to event setup. Playground leaders learn organization and leadership while playing with kids at local parks.

"You learn valuable lifelong skills: How to work with other people, and how to communicate with people," Beitel said. "When you get to be my age, you look back and think that was the best job. That prepared me for life."

Edina Parks & Recreation has summer jobs indoors or out across the city with flexible hours to fit most schedules. Some positions include signing bonuses or extra cash for applicants who also refer a friend.

Check out all the current jobs and apply at bit.ly/EdinaSeasonalJobs.



BY THE NUMBERS

Planning Division

The Planning Division is part of the Community Development Department and is responsible for maintaining and updating the City's Comprehensive Plan and zoning map, issuing sign permits, and overseeing the U.S. Census data, among other tasks key to Edina's vibrant community.



1 In 1929, Edina was the first village in the state to appoint a Planning Commission. In 1957, the City hired the first full-time Planning Director in the state.

98 The percentage of land fully developed in Edina.



11 The number of volunteers appointed by the City Council to the Planning Commission.



20+ On average, the Planning Division reviews and submits to the City Council between 20 and 30 requests each year from developers for subdivision, rezoning, site plan, Comprehensive Plan amendments, and conditional-use permit approval.

- COMPILED BY RICARDO ACOSTA

All-Electric Squad Car To Join Police Fleet Later This Year

Council Authorizes Purchase of Ford Mustang Mach-E



BY DAN REISIG

Edina's men and women in blue will soon be going green.

At its March 1 meeting, the Edina City Council approved the purchase of an all-electric 2022 Ford Mustang Mach-E. It marks the Police Department's first foray into fully alternate-fuel vehicles.

"I'm excited vehicle manufacturers are finally coming out with options for all-electric police vehicles," said Deputy Chief Jeff Elasky. "The technology keeps improving, and working with the City's Sustainability Division, we're more than willing to do our part and help out where we can."

With a projected purchase price of \$51,583, the Mach-E comes at a premium of nearly \$15,000 compared to a standard gas-burning squad vehicle. Money from the City's Conservation and Sustainability (CAS) Fund is covering the difference in cost between the budgeted replacement value of the vehicle and the electric version.

The CAS Fund is supported by utility franchise fees paid by Xcel and CenterPoint Energy customers. It receives roughly \$1 million every year, and half of that is dedicated to City operations via the Council-approved fund policy.

"It makes a lot of sense for the City to invest in electric vehicles for its police fleet," said Sustainability Manager Grace

Hancock. "This is an area of innovation where Edina can lead the way among cities looking to make a positive change in the environment."

Elasky anticipates the Mach-E's arrival in mid-2022, though global automotive supply chain issues could force delays. It will then be outfitted with the necessary auxiliary equipment to join Edina's patrol fleet. The police garage underneath 4801 W. 50th St. will also be upgraded, with two electric charging stations slated for installation to support the new technology.

"This is a pilot program for us, so we are going to evaluate all of the factors needed in a squad to determine if it is viable moving forward," Elasky explained. If successful, he would look to add more electric vehicle purchases among the 12 vehicles due for replacement in 2022 and 2023.

The day-to-day uses of a squad vehicle include room for emergency equipment as well as detainees in the rear seat partitioned by plexiglass from the officers up front. The vehicle will also have to stand up to cold and snowy Minnesota winters and constant run time during each officer's 12-hour shift.

Edina Police has already started purchasing more fuel-efficient vehicles, in line with the City's Green Fleet Policy. Out of 36 vehicles under the department's control, 17 are hybrids that blend traditional gas engines with a battery motor.

Last month, the City Council also authorized the purchase of two new Toyota hybrid vehicles.

Switching even one vehicle off gasoline is significant from a sustainability perspective. An average squad vehicle is driven up to 40,000 miles per year, using thousands of gallons of fuel and emitting roughly 70 metric tons of greenhouse gases during its life. Police operations make up about 30 percent of the City's total emissions, despite a vehicle fleet that is just 15 percent of the City's total inventory.

Beyond the environmental impact, the financial savings also quickly add up. The fuel cost for electric charging is roughly one-third of filling up at the pump, along with significant maintenance cost reductions compared to traditional combustion engines.

"Electrifying the Police fleet will positively impact City operations by reducing our effect on climate change and saving money," Hancock said. "This is an important reason why Sustainability is contributing funds; we know the return on investment here is large and will be recovered quickly."

To learn more about the City's Sustainability efforts, visit EdinaMN.gov/Sustainability or contact Hancock at 952-826-1621 or ghancock@EdinaMN.gov.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Sunday, April 3, 6 p.m.

Dirty Shorts Brass Band,
Edinborough Park Amphitheater

Tuesday, April 5, 7 p.m.

City Council meeting, Edina City Hall

Thursday, April 7, 7:30 a.m.

Housing & Redevelopment
Authority meeting, Edina City Hall

Thursday, April 7, 11:30 a.m.

Puppets, Critters and Activities from
Westwood Hills Nature Center,
Edinborough Park Amphitheater

Friday, April 8, 5:30 p.m.

Family Movie Night, "Encanto,"
Edinborough Park Amphitheater

Sunday, April 10, 6 p.m.

Gnu Woodwind Quintet,
Edinborough Park Amphitheater

Tuesday, April 19, 7 p.m.

City Council meeting, Edina City Hall

Thursday, April 21, 11:30 a.m.

The Bazillions,
Edinborough Park Amphitheater

Saturday, April 23, 10 a.m.

Community Clothing Exchange,
Braemar Arena Backyard Rink

Sunday, April 24, 6 p.m.

First John Philip Sousa Memorial
Band, Edinborough Park Amphitheater

Tuesday, April 26, noon

ARPA community meeting, virtual

Wednesday, April 27, 4:30 p.m.

ARPA community meeting,
Centennial Lakes Park

Thursday, April 28, 7:30 a.m.

Housing & Redevelopment
Authority meeting, Edina City Hall

Thursday, April 28, 7 p.m.

ARPA community meeting, virtual

For a complete listing of meetings and events, visit EdinaMN.gov.

Watch City Council, Housing & Redevelopment Authority and Planning Commission meetings live:

- Edina TV (Comcast Channels 813 or 16)
- Facebook.com/EdinaMN
- "Watch a Meeting" web page at EdinaMN.gov/LiveMeetings

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Help Edina Decide How to Spend Additional ARPA Money

Attend an Upcoming Meeting or Share Your Ideas Online

BY BRITTANY BADER

"How would you spend the \$2.4 million?"

That is the question the community is being asked to answer regarding the second half of the City's federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars — money aimed at providing pandemic relief and boosting the local economy. Whether you live or work in the city, everyone is invited to provide input on how they would like to see the money used.

"It has been about a year since we checked in with the community about this funding. We understand that a lot has happened since," said City Manager Scott Neal. "We want this to be a blank slate, and we welcome any and all ideas to be brought to the table."

Neal will lead three community meetings on the topic:

- Noon-1 p.m. Tuesday, April 26 (virtual)
- 4:30-5:30 p.m. Wednesday, April 27 (Hughes Pavilion, Centennial Lakes Park)
- 7-8 p.m. Thursday, April 28 (virtual)

Community Engagement Manager MJ Lamon, Race & Equity Manager Heidi Lee and Annie Coyle, a consultant working

with the City to help implement ARPA programs, will also be present.

If you can't attend a meeting, you can submit your ideas online at BetterTogetherEdina.org through April 30. All ideas will be given equal consideration, whether submitted during a meeting or online.

After the submission period, City staff will prepare an initial recommendation. The current goal is to bring it forward for discussion at the May 17 City Council meeting.

The City of Edina wants all residents to be comfortable being part of the public process. If you need assistance in the way of hearing amplification, an interpreter, large-print documents or something else, please call 952-927-8861 72 hours in advance of the meeting.

To register for a community meeting or submit an idea for official consideration, visit BetterTogetherEdina.org/larpa. Additional information, including guidelines from the U.S. Department of the Treasury on approved uses for the funding and details from the Round 1 Spending Plan, is also available on the website. 