

Senate Names a Select Committee on Home Ownership Affordability and Availability

The Minnesota Senate named legislators to a new select housing committee and set a first meeting date. The select committee, authorized by a Senate resolution at the end of the 2019 session, will focus on owner-occupied housing units.

Members named to the Senate Select Committee are Senator Rich Draheim (Chair, Madison Lake), Senator Kari Dziedzic (Minneapolis), Senator Mark Koran (North Branch), Senator Dan Sparks (Austin) and Senator Karin Housley (St. Mary's Point).

The first hearing, scheduled for August 13th, will include presentations on housing affordability and availability by representatives from builders' associations, as well as information on the state's demographics.

A different Legislative Commission on Housing Affordability, that was statutorily established by the 2019 Legislature, is a bi-cameral commission that will be made up of eight House and Senate members and focus on rental and owner-occupied housing, as well as other factors impacting housing affordability and homeownership. House members have been appointed to that committee. Senate members have not yet been appointed.

Metro Cities will participate and provide information on local roles in housing and will monitor the select committee's discussions as well as the Housing Affordability Commission, and will provide updates via the newsletter.

Contact Charlie Vander Aarde at 651-215-4001 or charlie@metrocitiesmn.org with any questions.

Water Efficiency Grant Program Update

The Metropolitan Council has released information on the recently approved Water Efficiency Grant Program. Interested cities are encouraged to apply. Click [here](#) for Metro Cities' last newsletter with additional information.

The Metropolitan Council is offering grants of up to \$50,000 to municipal water suppliers to help increase water efficiency in your communities. You may use grant funds for rebates to residents who replace inefficient water-using devices with approved devices that use substantially less water, or for irrigation system audits. \$750,000 is available for spending through June 2022. The 2019 Minnesota Legislature designated the monies from the Clean Water Fund.

The grants will range from \$2,000 to \$50,000 to municipalities and are intended to lower the cost for residents to purchase and install products that reduce water use, such as toilets, washing machines, irrigation sprinklers, and irrigation controllers. Products must be labelled by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's WaterSense program or, in the case of washing machines, by the U.S. Department of Energy's Energy Star program. Funds may be used only for appliance replacement, not for first-time purchases for new developments.

Council grant funds will cover 75% of program costs, with a required 25% local match. Residents must pay a portion of the cost of any appliance or water use audit they purchase.

Applications will be accepted through September 30, 2019. Required application information includes:

- Rebate or grant program design and work plan
- Proposed examples of communications to property owners
- Requested total grant amount
- Estimated annual amount of water saved by the applying municipality

[Details about the program and the grant application.](#)

The Council administered a water efficiency grant program during the 2015-17 biennium using \$500,000 from the Clean Water Fund. That program yielded an estimated total savings of 52 million gallons of water per year.

Metro Cities' Policy Committees

Metro Cities' four policy committees convened for the first of three meetings last week. Staff provided legislative recaps and policy committee members reviewed existing policies and provided initial suggestions for discussion and language for consideration at the next round of meetings. Policy committees will convene again the week of August 5th. Topics to be discussed include local comprehensive plans, transportation funding, local option sales taxes and state housing programs, in the committees having specific jurisdiction. Stay tuned for additional information on scheduled speakers and agendas. It's not too late to sign up and participate! If you would like to join a committee, you can do so online at <https://www.MetroCitiesMN.org/Policy-Committees>.

Metro Cities News is emailed periodically to all Metro Cities member mayors, councilmembers, city managers and administrators to keep officials abreast of important metro city issues. This information is also intended to be shared with city staff.

If you'd like to sign up to receive Metro Cities News, please email newsletter@metrocitiesmn.org and provide the following: Name, Title, Employer and Email address. Thank you.

Metro Cities 145 University Ave W., St. Paul, MN 55103-2044 Phone 651-215-4000 Fax 651-281-1299
www.MetroCitiesMN.org