

ENERGY & SUSTAINABILITY: Impact and implications of Portland's newest administrative regulation



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Earlier this month, the City of Portland joined a group of municipalities from across the country that will require property owners to report their energy usage. The Portland City Council approved the Energy & Sustainability Committee's proposal to require large commercial and residential buildings, along with a host of municipal buildings, to report their water and energy consumption annually to the City.

The purpose of this ordinance is to bring water and energy use awareness to property owners, in hopes that more energy efficient practices will be adopted. While many members of the community are praising the City's efforts to support energy efficiency, business leaders and property owners are apprehensive about the impact and implications of this new requirement.

Many property owners in Portland are concerned that the new reporting requirement will cause an unnecessary administrative burden. In response to this concern, the Committee amended its original proposal to allow the City time to work with the utility companies on making the required information more readily available. Energy & Sustainability Committee member Troy Moon stated that they are working with the various utility companies to ensure the reporting process is as simple as possible. Several utilities do not currently offer access to the required information in a usable format for reporting. Once the information is available, the City will offer workshops to familiarize property owners with the reporting software, Energy Star's Portfolio Manager. Moon also reiterated that the purpose of the new regulation is to make property owners aware of their water and energy consumption so they can look for cost saving ways to improve their buildings' efficiencies.

Another concern property owners have is that there is no immediate plan for the reported information other than of making it available on the City's website. Companies like Rapport, a Maine Based sustainability software company, understand this concern and explain what they perceive to be a benefit to building owners.. "It starts with knowing," John Rooks, President and CEO said. He went on to explain that these numbers will just be numbers if this data isn't used to influence change in consumer behavior. Rapport offers software that streamlines utility reporting, along with many other sustainability reporting services, and provides recommendations to business and property owners on how

The Facts

Exactly what buildings will be impacted by the new regulations?



Buildings greater than 20,000 SF in gross floor area



Apartment buildings with 50 or more residential units



Municipal buildings greater than 5,000 SF gross floor area

to turn this knowledge into cost savings. Rooks hopes the transparency of water and energy usage will encourage property owners to adopt energy and cost saving policies that will make doing business in Portland more economical.

Rooks described a recent example of one of their client’s success with the program, saying “one company on the (Rapport) platform who had a very water intensive manufacturing process saw a reduction in water usage and cost by 25% after tracking usage data and implementing new processes,” Rooks shared. “The visibility of the data (water usage and and cost over time) gave them the data required to make investment decisions and calculate payback for purchase of new processing equipment. With a 25% reduction in monthly costs, they calculated a three-year payback on their investment.”



High energy costs have often been blamed as a key factor in businesses choosing not to relocate or expand in the State of Maine. If implemented properly, this information could be used as a recruitment tool to encourage companies not currently located in Maine to consider moving their businesses to Portland.

At this time, the City will not be rolling out incentives, rewards or awards to property owners for embracing the mission of making Portland a more energy efficient and sustainable place to do business. Ultimately, it will be up to the property owners to determine how to turn this ordinance into positive action. Owners should take advantage of these tools and resources for analyzing the reported data to discover more energy and cost efficient solutions for their properties.

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