



## OFFICIAL NOTICE AND AGENDA

Notice is hereby given that the Solar Array Task Force of the City of Wausau, Wisconsin will hold a regular or special meeting on the date, time and location shown below.

Meeting of the: **SOLAR ARRAY TASK FORCE**  
Date/Time: **Monday, September 11, 2023 at 5:00 p.m.**  
Location: **City Hall (407 Grant Street, Wausau WI 54403) - Board Room**  
Members: **Chad Henke, John Robinson, Jay Coldwell, Paul Svetlik, Susan Woods**

### AGENDA ITEMS

- 1 Approval of Minutes from July 20 and August 9 meetings.
- 2 Discussion and review of information from the communication plan for the public information meeting.
- 3 Discussion and possible action on solar survey questions for the public informational meeting.
- 4 Discussion and possible action on presentation for September public informational meeting.
- 5 Discussion and possible action on design options for the water plant solar array (number of options, sizes, locations)
- 6 Discussion and possible action on scheduling the next meeting in October
- 7 Adjourn

Signed by Chad Henke, Chairperson

This Notice was posted at City Hall, on the City of Wausau website, and sent to the Daily Herald newsroom on 09/06/23 @ 2:00PM. Questions regarding this agenda may be directed to the City Clerk.

*In accordance with the requirements of Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), the City of Wausau will not discriminate against qualified individuals with disabilities on the basis of disability in its services, programs or activities. If you need assistance or reasonable accommodations in participating in this meeting or event due to a disability as defined under the ADA, please call the ADA Coordinator at (715) 261-6622 or [ADAServices@ci.wausau.wi.us](mailto:ADAServices@ci.wausau.wi.us) to discuss your accessibility needs. We ask your request be provided a minimum of 72 hours before the scheduled event or meeting. If a request is made less than 72 hours before the event the City of Wausau will make a good faith effort to accommodate your request.*

## **SOLAR ARRAY TASK FORCE**

Date and Time: Thursday, July 20, 2023, at 5:00 pm, Council Chambers

Members Present: Chad Henke (c), John Robinson, Paul Svetlik, Jay Coldwell, Susan Woods

Others Present: Eric Lindman, Kaitlyn Bernarde, Gary Gisselman

In accordance with Chapter 19, Wisc. Statutes, notice of this meeting was posted and sent to the Daily Herald in the proper manner. With a quorum present, the meeting was called to order by Chad Henke at 5:00pm.

### **Approval of Minutes from June 21 Meeting**

Motion by Robinson. Second by Coldwell. Motion passes 5-0.

### **Discussion and possible action on the communication plan and timeline.**

Robinson stated the high-level plan was modeled after the remedial investigation feasibility study side of the superfund environmental cleanup program. They would start with collecting background information, then understand the current utility needs. Then present that information to the community and then develop conceptual options and then take it to the public for possible other things to consider. The third step would be to evaluate the options and then have a public meeting in early 2024 and then present recommendations to the water utility and the Common Council. The plan is site specific to the water plant but could be modified.

Coldwell asked where the debt belongs if it is the utility or the city. Lindman stated it could be either way, could run it through the PSC as a project to ensure uniformity or through the city. Both agreed it would be best if the power savings could offset the debt service. Svetlik questioned if it would be the Solar Array Task Force running the public input. Robinson said they would have to clarify if it would be a public listening session, and/or public hearing and/or a survey. He anticipated it would be led by the Task Force but could invite the utility and the Council. The neighborhood group will meet again the last Wednesday of September at that the Task Force would like to kick off public engagement.

### **Discussion and possible action considering solar array locations and size for a solar array new at 1801 Burek**

Lindman presented maps to show how an array, that would generate 1 megawatt of power, would need about 6 acres of space and how it would fit in different places of the property. He noted that the utility owns about 90 acres and everything north of the Water Treatment Facility is in the Village of Maine. The buildings in total have about 1.5 acres of roof space with about .4-.5 acres available for solar. Constructing a 1-megawatt array costs about \$2 million. If it is put elsewhere there would have to be access roads, further soil investigation and soil replacement which could cost \$300,000 - \$800,000. Lindman stated that there are about 6 test pits to the north showing this area would have to be over-excavated, there are also steep slopes and a stormwater pond to work around as well. Lindman stated we would have to go to the Village of Maine Zoning Board for approval and the Village of Maine has not been receptive to the City of Wausau for any requests.

Henke questioned the process with the Village. Lindman stated they would have to detach the property in order for it to be annexed. They would need to either allow conditional use or re-zone the property to use it for anything other than its current use. Henke asked if some of the trees were sick. Lindman stated the City Forester looked at the trees and did not see anything significant of immediate concern, or that the trees would need to be removed to get rid of the invasive species.

Coldwell questioned how many of the trees would be removed by the 6 acres. Lindman stated that it looked about 1/3-1/2 of the trees.

### **Discussion on capital costs and meeting the task force goals of return on investment and potential funding sources.**

Lindman stated Sunvest put information together for us on what a 1-megawatt solar array looks like throughout the year. The return on the investment is an average 8-15 years depending on if you are capitalizing the entire project. If we work in an area where the capital costs are higher, then the ROI goes up closer to the top end. The concepts would be laid out in aerial maps. Woods questioned if the ROI calculations includes potential infrastructure credits we could get. Lindman stated no. He said the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law grants would reduce the borrowing over years. The actual amount of grants and credits we would receive is unclear at this time. . Borrowing could be reduced up to 30% or it could be less. Robinson questioned if the rules had all been finalized. Woods stated there is some professional literature coming out with some expected rules and processes like similar funding.

Henke stated he still liked the 10-year ROI, but the Task Force could revisit each meeting. Woods stated that is a good in the middle goal, and with the tax credits, it could be better. Coldwell stated that 10-year ROI does not state anything about the size of the array and questioned if a water utility could be programmed to only run during the day if there was a power outage. Lindman stated a good discussion point would be do we want a size of an array that minimizes the amount of power that goes back to the grid or maximize the amount of power we can provide for the plant. Coldwell and Henke stated they support providing the most power. Robinson asked if we know what our peak demand is and how much power 6 acres of solar panels would produce. Lindman stated no, but we are tracking energy usage in 15-minute intervals. Coldwell stated he wanted to know more about how the water plant runs like a presentation or a tour.

Robinson asked Woods what her expectation for final rules for the Inflation Reduction Act are in terms of credits. Woods stated that she is unsure because over the last 5 years there have been large omnibus bills, and unsure about the timeline but the final rules will be soon. Robinson requested information on the steps in the timeline that decisions would have to be made. Lindman stated they could look into it to outline what we need to do.

#### **Discussion on the draft Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's).**

Lindman stated they are trying to compile what questions they have been asked, try to answer them and where the sources are from. He stated it is a living document that we can share with the public and keep updated. Robinson stated one thing that was missing was the steps/process of including public comment. Woods stated she would like to see where the other 26% of solar production is from and how we are investing in domestic production, and what do we predict coming down the line. Coldwell questioned the link in the Solar Panel source. He also stated the link for, "Are there tax incentives for solar energy?" link does not answer the question. Woods stated there is a piece coming from the IRS on it. Henke questioned how we plan to maintain the array. Lindman stated we planned to maintain them in house with our electricians. Woods requested having a question on having a tracking or a static array. Henke stated having a question on what type of landscaping can be under and around the array. Coldwell asked about if there is a flooding concern with the panels being so close to the river.

Robinson asked if there was a way the neighborhood could ask their questions. Svetlik stated they have a NextDoor post a week before their neighborhood meeting and could ask there or could put a link on the website for people to submit their questions.

#### **Public Comment on the Frequently Asked Questions.**

- Pete Roth asked if the document is online and if the link to the committee was updated. He strongly believed to explore, evaluate and investigate going to the north (costs, working with the Village of Maine).
- Pete Sells, Tierney Road, the area to the North, how deep do we need to go, could we build up on 4 to 8 feet? What do they weigh? How much foundation do they need? He stated we needed to reapproach the Village of Maine.
- Joe Hoppa, questioned where the Village of Maine property starts.
- Maryanne Sells, stated that when we have presentations and maps, that include the homes, and that the proposed site is in the middle of a neighborhood.

Robinson stated to capture the maps and include with the FAQs to provide as much information as possible.

#### **Discussion and possible action establishing agenda items for the next meeting.**

- Henke requested more information on funding and steps required to meet those funding dates.
- Information on current utility use (graph) and rough cost
- Tour of the drinking water plant and a walking tour of the other parcels

The tour will be Wednesday, August 9 @ 6:00pm. Robinson requested the tour be adgendized to have a discussion FAQ setting discussion after the tour. The next meeting will be Wednesday, September 13 at 6:00pm.

#### **Adjourn**

Motion by Robinson, second by Svetlik to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 6:11pm.

## **SOLAR ARRAY TASK FORCE**

Date and Time: Wednesday, August 9, 2023, at 6:00 pm, Drinking Water Treatment Plant

Members Present: Chad Henke (c), John Robinson, Paul Svetlik, Jay Coldwell, Susan Woods

Others Present: Mayor Katie Rosenberg, Alder Gary Gisselman, Alder Dawn Herbst, Eric Lindman, Scott Boers, Kaitlyn Bernarde

In accordance with Chapter 19, Wisc. Statutes, notice of this meeting was posted and sent to the Daily Herald in the proper manner.

### **Tour of the Wausau Water Treatment Plant and grounds**

17 people including Task Force members and neighborhood members participated in a tour of the administrative building and treatment plant led by Drinking Water Superintendent Scott Boers. Participants also viewed the different proposed sites and asked questions.

### **Discussion on the draft Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's).**

Task Force members, Alders and City staff met in the conference room. Task force members raised additional questions to be added to the original FAQ document:

- What is the depth of footing?
- Geotechnical investigation and what costs would be associated with it?
- What is the plan to address issues on Tierney? (Berm, fence, trees, etc.)
- What is the plan to beautify the solar array space?
- Justify the site selection (why here and not somewhere else).
- What is the issue between the City of Wausau and the Village of Maine

Discussion continued on the city's current relationship with the Village of Maine.

- If the land by Bugby/Tierney is not used for a solar array, what will the city do with it?
- What is the cost of a berm or other landscaping?
- What is the Task Force looking at doing?
- What can the city spend on the solar array?

Discussion continued on when to look at the financial range in the process of the task force.

- What is the new plant's electricity bill?
- How much of the electricity bill would be paid by solar?
- Task Force requested overall improvements to the FAQ document itself:
  - Make answers relatable (e.g., use residential comparisons for energy use).
  - Move to city/utility letterhead.
  - Make responses more robust and specific (local to Wausau).
- Could a solar array go on the roof?

At the September meeting, the committee would like to discuss the financials, the FAQ document, and to identify what proposals the committee wants to see.

Svetlick stated that the next neighborhood meeting will be September 27 at 6:30pm, and that they may need a larger room at NTC. The committee discussed sending out a mailer about the public meeting during the neighborhood meeting.

There was discussion on a meeting conflict for utility staff and Clark-Dietz on September 13. The committee agreed to move the next meeting to September 11 @ 5pm in Board Room on 2nd floor of City Hall due to the Council Chambers already being booked.

### **Adjourn**

Meeting adjourned at 8:03pm.



**DATE:** September 11, 2023

**SUBJECT:** DRAFT - City's Objective and Feedback Request for Solar at City Facilities

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**Solar Objective:** As part of the City's Strategic Plan to "Support and lead in green and eco-friendly efforts and initiatives for a cleaner, healthier and sustainable environment", the City is pursuing planning and installation of solar at or nearby city owned facilities. The goal is to use any generated power directly, reducing electric dependency and operational costs. The City is pursuing the following objectives:

- Reduce reliance on fossil fuels and decrease greenhouse gas emissions
- Improve grid security and stability
- Reduce electricity bills and get paid for electricity generated
- Accelerate the development and deployment of solar technology to support a decarbonized energy sector

**Background:** City staff has been considering solar at its facilities since 2017. With new laws changing in the State of Wisconsin and at the federal level, municipalities are now eligible for direct federal tax credits which improves the return on investment (ROI) for solar arrays. Through previous investigation it has been determined to place solar array facilities to directly use the power generated by the facility and then sell back any excess power to the utility company. New legislation now allows non-taxable entities, such as municipalities, to take advantage of tax credits and offset capital costs for the installation of a solar array, making these facilities more affordable.

Solar was part of the planning and design of the new drinking water facility. Land is available to build the solar array and the drinking water facility may directly use the power generated, reducing energy costs and helping to mitigate future rate increases. To look at a possible solar array for the new facility the City established a Solar Array Task Force to look at the feasibility and benefits of the solar array.

**Request Resident/Business Feedback:** The city would like feedback from residents on the use of solar to help offset ongoing electrical costs at city facilities. There are capital costs for these arrays and the Solar Task Force has set a goal for a ROI to be about 10-years and the arrays life expectancy is 30-years. The idea is to use the cost savings over the first ten years to pay back any loans for construction.

The City will be preparing periodic education materials which will be posted online for residents and the city will also be requesting resident feedback through emails and surveys in the near future related to proposed solar ideas/projects/concepts being considered by the city. Please stay tuned for future postings, information and requests for feedback.

## **DRAFT Solar Survey Questions**

1. There is a proposed recommendation any solar array have a Return on Investment of 10 years or less with a solar array life expectancy of 30 years. Do you feel this is a good and reasonable goal?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. The ROI should be less before the city moves ahead with such a project
  - d. The City should move ahead with solar as long as ROI is less than the expected life of the facility
  
2. A 6+ acre ground mounted solar array may be constructed adjacent to an existing residential neighborhood. It is proposed to be landscaped to match the existing neighborhood with direct feedback during design from neighborhood residents. If a ground mounted solar array were to be constructed in your neighborhood would you be in favor of the project?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
3. The new Drinking Water Treatment Facility currently has an approximate monthly electric bill of about \$48,000. This is expected to increase over time adding to the utility operational costs. How supportive are you of constructing alternative energy generation to support a healthy environment, mitigating future operational costs and would you be in favor of constructing the solar array if:
  - a. There was no rate increase
  - b. The rate increase was less than \$1.00 per month
  - c. The rate increase was between \$1.00 and \$2.00 per month
  
4. Would you like to see the City pursue building/owning/operating additional alternative energy sources to reduce electrical dependency on the traditional power grid? And are you willing to have your rates and/or taxes increased to make these projects a reality?
  - a. Only if there were no increases to taxes or rates
  - b. I am willing to pursue these projects only if my taxes increased less than 1%
  - c. I am willing to pursue these projects only if my taxes increased less than no more than 5%