

## Work Session

The Mayor and City Council of the City of Norfolk, Nebraska, held a work session in the Council Chambers, 309 North 5th Street, Norfolk, Nebraska, on Tuesday, January 21, 2020, beginning at 12:00 p.m.

Mayor Josh Moenning called the meeting to order.

Roll call found the following present: Mayor Josh Moenning and Councilmembers Shane Clausen, Gary L. Jackson, Jim Lange, Rob Merrill, Thad Murren, Dick Pfeil and Fred Wiebelhaus. Absent: Corey Granquist.

Staff members present were City Administrator Andy Colvin, City Clerk Brianna Duerst, Finance Officer Randy Gates, City Attorney Danielle Myers-Noelle, Public Works Director Steven Rames, Risk Manager Lyle Lutt, Public Safety Director Shane Weidner, Communications Manager Liz Lienemann, Police Captain Chad Reiman.

## Solar Project

Public Works Director Steve Rames provided an update of the solar project consisting of approximately 48 acres of City owned property and presented a general layout of the project. Rames said there are three agreements needed to move the project forward.

1. Power purchase agreement between SunVest and NPPD (20 year agreement)
2. Land lease between City and SunVest (20 year term, 15 year extension with notice)
3. a. Community Solar Project Agreement – City takes over NPPD’s Power Purchase Agreement, or  
b. Professional Retail Operations Agreement (current DSL agreement terminates 1/01/2031)

Rames said the recommendation is to execute the land lease agreement and community solar project agreement, which allows the power purchase agreement to be signed by NPPD and SunVest and moves the project forward. Over next several months, continue to have the discussion of whether or not the City would want to sign the NPPD Professional Retail Operations Agreement and put into place another 20-year agreement.

The solar project would be an 8.5-megawatt project which would be the largest community solar project in the state of Nebraska. The 8.5-megawatts turn into 9,200 solar shares that would be available to the community. The City would want to capture some of those shares primarily to recapture some of the costs associated with the project. Because of the size, this will be the first community solar project that has a lower cost for power than the current retail power rate. For previous smaller projects, the cost of the solar shares is higher than the retail power rate, but generally there would be enough interest in the renewable energy that enough people would be willing to pay more. How the shares are to be distributed is part of the conversation over the next several months.

Tim Arlt, NPPD, discussed the City’s partnership with NPPD and highlights of the Enhanced Professional Retail Operations (Pro) Agreement.

- Article I – Term – 20 year agreement. Removes all ties to the wholesaler power contract.
- Article II – Lease of distribution system – no changes

- Article II – Operations and use of facilities - no changes
- Article IV – Payments (2 options)
  1. Flexible lease payment percentage up to 14% in 0.5% annual increments if adopted by City Council. A 0.5% increase in lease payment (from 12% to 12.5%) would result in an additional \$229,000/year based on 2019 data. Five NPPD communities have implemented this option.
  2. MM-Rider option – remove the Miscellaneous Municipal Rider rate from accounts where 50% or more of the revenue is tax funded. City would collect approximately an additional \$274,000/year. Three NNPD communities have implemented this option.
- Article V – Maintenance of facilities – no change
- Article VI – Retail Advisory Committee – creates a Retail Advisory Committee and removes the Retail Rate Review Committee and Power Resources Advisory Board.
- Article VII – Renewable Generation – new article that provides for the integration of renewable resources. Currently capped at 10% renewable energy, but Article VII provides greater flexibility.

Rames said as a function of a lower cost power the lease payment will decrease. In order for the City to capture back the lower lease payment, the City would need to consume about 13% of the total shares.

Rames said another component of the project is a 1-megawatt battery storage system, but is a separate project and will require separate agreements. Other components of the project include an easement for the battery storage, an easement for the water main, an easement for pollinator crop and an educational element.

Construction of the project could begin as soon as early summer if agreements are signed and zoning, permitting and environmental processes are complete.

### Benjamin Avenue Design Review

Rames provided a summary of the project so far and discussed the key components of the corridor with focus on particular intersections. Rames is looking for direction from Council which direction to keep the project moving forward.

Rames presented information about roundabouts and discussed the increase safety and reduction in pedestrian collisions as roundabouts force traffic to slow down. Rames further discussed conflict points in roundabouts vs. a traditional intersection, the efficiency of roundabouts moving more traffic as well as the reduced environmental impact of roundabouts. These components give reason to consider roundabouts when redesigning a traditional intersection.

Rames said in general, the corridor is being widened from its current four lanes to five lanes with turn lanes where warranted. The right-of-way is currently 80 feet wide, an estimated 10-12 feet on either side will need to be acquired for the project. Rames noted the raised medians in the corridor allow for some landscaping as well as help control traffic. Key sections of the corridor:

- 12th Street, Square Turn Blvd and Queen City Blvd – looking to close Square Turn Blvd at Benjamin Ave with 12th St becoming main corridor to the area south of Benjamin Ave. A roundabout was considered at Queen City Blvd but due to economic constraints that design has been removed. The current design includes a turn lane for

eastbound traffic turning south onto Queen City Blvd and raised medians for turn lanes.

Need to seek input from public safety departments as this street is utilized greatly. A challenge exists with three residential properties, specifically two that have driveway access off Benjamin Ave. Design shows the right-of-way will be just to south of sidewalk with little room left for driveway.

- Riverside Blvd – Original design had roundabout further east, with a greater impact shared amongst three properties. Current design moved roundabout further west with most impact on one property, which would require either removing and reconstructing the drive through or a buy-out with option to reconstruct elsewhere on site. Rames also discussed a traditional intersection at Riverside Blvd.
- YMCA – looking to reconstruct entrance to YMCA a bit further west, would provide ingress and egress and would be designed and built as a potential full intersection. Would not signalize at this point but long-term vision is it would be a signalized intersection.
- Between YMCA and 1st Street – A traffic simulation has been suggested to show to the school and parents. Schemmer currently working on amendment to contract to add the level of detail needed to provide the traffic simulation. Rames discussed the proposed traffic flows of the parking lot. Discussion of closing private access to the two businesses on the north side of Benjamin Avenue.

Rames discussed the cost potential cost differences between a roundabout vs a signalized intersection saying the constructions costs are probably similar but the roundabout will require greater costs for right-of-way acquisitions.

Doug Holle, Schemmer, mentioned the need to look at life-cycle costs of the two types of intersections. While a signalized intersection may a lower up-front cost, a roundabout requires less maintenance. Also discussed increased safety.

Councilmember Wiebelhaus expressed concerns over the time and cost of acquiring property necessary to construct a roundabout as well as a concern for the businesses in the area.

Moening noted this corridor is only going to get busier in the future and to keep in mind the long-term benefits of selecting a design that is conducive now and in the future.

Councilmember Clausen expressed frustration over the process with not having more information presented to Council earlier in the decision making process and said discussion of expansion has been going on for several years but design has been changed from what has been discussed which makes it difficult to communicate potential changes with community members.

Councilmember Lange said the biggest area of discussion is the intersection of Riverside Blvd and Benjamin Ave and discussed accident information he gathered from NPD from 2000 to 2013. A majority (nearly 70%) of accidents in the corridor were rear-end accidents, left-turn accidents and sideswipe accidents. Lange noted an issue with accesses that are very close to intersections. Lange said the public really wants to see this road fixed and has concerns with missing another construction season as construction costs are continuing to rise.

Moening asked Rames about timeframe of the project if a roundabout was the preferred option. Rames said we are a point where we need to move the design forward to get to a point where construction limits are fixed, and a lot depends on how the right-of-way acquisition goes. Rames said there are 64 parcels, most of which we will require some sort of right-of-way acquisition.

Moenning discussed the upcoming second and final public meeting and whether to bring one preferred design or two options for the Riverside Blvd and Benjamin Ave intersection. Rames said he was hoping to present one option, but does not feel presenting two options is a wrong decision. Better cost estimates could be presented at that time. Moenning said he would recommend having the second public meeting as soon as possible and presenting both options of a roundabout and signalized intersection at Riverside Blvd and Benjamin Ave.

Troy Uhlir, member of the Visionary Committee, discussed the process the committee has gone through to get to this point. Uhlir asked about timeframe of the project as it will affect business owners in the area and said streamlining of the process will be important. Uhlir also said he would like to see the full intersection at the YMCA done right away, as it would create another stop and slow traffic down.

Moenning clarified that two options, one with the roundabout and one with a signalized intersection at Riverside Blvd and Benjamin Avenue, will be presented at the next public meeting

There being no further business, the Mayor adjourned the meeting at 2:06 p.m.

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Josh Moenning  
Mayor

ATTEST:

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Brianna Duerst  
City Clerk

( S E A L )