

WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL held Monday, December 19, 2016, with the Green Team Solar Circle.

Mayor Pro Tem Davis started the meeting at 8:01 p.m. The meeting was held in the Council Room of the Municipal Building.

PRESENT WERE: Councilmembers Konrad E. Herling, Leta M. Mach, Edward V. J. Putens, Rodney M. Roberts and Mayor Pro Tem Judith F. Davis. Councilmember Silke I. Pope was detained due to a personal matter and arrived at 8:09 p.m. Mayor Jordan was unable to attend due to a business commitment.

STAFF PRESENT WERE: Michael McLaughlin, City Manager; Jim Sterling, Director of Public Works; Brian Kim, Assistant Director of Public Works; Luisa Robles, Sustainability Coordinator; and Cindy Murray, City Clerk.

ALSO PRESENT WERE: Robert Busler, Standard Solar, Inc.; John Lippert, Matt Dirksen and Michael Hartman, Greenbelt Advisory Committee on Environmental Sustainability; Steve Skolnik, Greenbelt Green Team; John Mason and Lore Rosenthal, Greenbelt Community Solar; Kathleen Gallagher, Greenbelt News Review; Neal Barnett, Bill Orleans and others.

Following introductions, Mr. Skolnik thanked Council for the opportunity to present the following three recommendations of the Greenbelt Advisory Committee on Environmental Sustainability (Green ACES) and the Greenbelt Green Team regarding solar generated electricity for the city.

1. Standard Solar's Proposal for Large Off-Site Ground-Mount Solar Array

Mr. Skolnik said that Green ACES and the Green Team had reviewed an unsolicited proposal received from Standard Solar, Inc. to provide solar-generated electricity for the city and recommend that Council consider accepting the proposal which would provide a good opportunity for the city to reduce its consumption of fossil fuels and accomplish Council's goal of the use of 20% renewable energy by 2022.

Mr. Skolnik noted that the State of Maryland has experienced tremendous growth in the use of solar energy in residential, business and the public sector which has resulted in lower installation costs and lower incentive payments. He said the solar energy cost is nearing parity with traditional utility energy costs.

Mr. Busler and Mr. Skolnik said many public facilities, counties and municipalities are incorporating solar in their energy mix. They reviewed solar energy projects in the counties of Montgomery, Anne Arundel, Cecil and St. Mary's, cities of Rockville and Bowie, towns of Emmitsburg and Poolesville, and at the University of Maryland, American University and Catholic University.

Mr. Skolnik reviewed the following details of the proposal from Standard Solar, Inc. for a large ground-mount solar array.

- Off-site (not on city lands), direct connection to Pepco grid*
- City purchases 100% of solar power the system generates under a 20-year Power Purchase Agreement (PPA)*

- City receives “virtual net metering” credit from Pepco at full retail rate
- Solar array is installed, operated and maintained by Standard Solar. The city has no capital cost and no responsibility for operation and maintenance for the entire 20-year period.

Ms. Mach asked if there was any time sensitivity to the proposal from Standard Solar. Mr. Skolnik encouraged Council to make a decision as soon as possible, noting that the project (as proposed) would be more costly in the future if the project were delayed.

Ms. Davis asked where the solar panels are manufactured. Mr. Busler said the proposed panels for the ground-mount solar array are manufactured in China. He added that American made panels can be obtained at an approximately 5% higher cost.

Mr. Roberts expressed concern regarding sole bid for the project. Mr. McLaughlin, Mr. Sterling and Ms. Robles noted the difficulty of comparing bids received for an off-site solar array if a request for proposals (RFP) were issued. Mr. Skolnik and Mr. Lippert agreed the bids would be difficult to judge especially given that the city won't own the land where the solar array is located, and stressed that it would be in the best interest of the city to proceed with the proposal from Standard Solar. Mr. Lippert added that Standard Solar is a good and reputable solar energy company. Mr. McLaughlin said that staff would review this matter further and determine if sole source is the best option.

2. Solar Proposal for Greenbriar

Mr. Skolnik said Green ACES and the Green Team encourage Council to grant permission to the Greenbriar Board for limited use of the city's right-of-way at the foot of Mandan Road for installation of ground-mounted solar panels which would directly connect at Greenbriar's heating and cooling plant. He said that although this project would not directly benefit the city itself, it would benefit all of Greenbriar.

3. Municipal Owned Solar Development

Mr. Skolnik said Green ACES and the Green Team have identified state grant funds that may be available through the University of Maryland Environmental Finance Center (UM-EFC) for municipal owned solar development projects.

Mr. Sterling advised that Public Works staff is already working on a grant application (due in early February) for a roof-mounted solar projects at the Springhill Lake Recreation Center. He said if a grant is received, the city would issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) and obtain bids for the project.

Mr. Skolnik reported that other municipal buildings suitable for future rooftop solar include Green Ridge House, Municipal Building, Youth Center, Community Center, Old Greenbelt Theatre, Schrom Hills Park and the Public Works Complex. He noted that all would need new roofs.

In response to a question from Mr. Putens, Mr. Skolnik said he would be happy to discuss solar projects with local homeowner associations.

Mr. Hartman and Ms. Rosenthal, 2-G Gardenway, Sue Stern, 5-K Gardenway, and Frank Gervasi, 163 Research Road, all expressed support for the proposed solar projects. Mr. Hartman added that Greenbelt Community Solar has purchased American made solar panels and have been very happy with them. The panels were installed at the Greenbelt Baptist Church.

Mr. Orleans, Greenbelt, asked and was provided answers to several questions.

After discussion, Council indicated its support for Recommendation #3 (Public Works staff to work with UM-EFC to develop a grant proposal for a roof-mounted solar project at the Springhill Lake Recreation Center); encouraged the Greenbriar Board to work with the city on Recommendation #2; and requested staff look further into Recommendation #1 (Standard Solar's proposal for large, off-site ground-mount solar array).

Council Reports

Ms. Mach provided a report from the National League of Cities City Summit.

Ms. Davis provided reports from the National League of Cities City Summit, the Environmental Scoping Session on the MAGLEV project, and the Chesapeake Bay Policy Committee meeting.

Informational Items

Mr. Putens requested a work session be scheduled regarding Financial Interest filing requirements. He also requested membership at the Greenbelt Aquatics and Fitness Center for retirees be discussed during the budget work sessions.

The meeting ended at 9:48 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Cindy Murray
City Clerk*