

Public Utilities Committee Meeting
Friday, January 19, 2024, 9:00 a.m. Village Hall

Members Present: Berger, Porter, Mayor, Street Commissioner Alder

Visitors: Mike Wise, Daniel Wise, Tom Troxell (Electric Vehicle Charging consultant – via phone)

Wise distributed and reviewed a handout. He looked at the Village's electric power usage and coupled it with Troxell's help to look at how that usage might increase with EV chargers. Troxell clarified it was four level two and one dual port fast EV chargers. Wise explained that currently the Village has a really good electric rate which is good for the Village but bad for a solar developer because it will be hard for someone to come in and say they will build solar for the Village and provide a power purchase agreement (PPA) and beat that rate. It probably would not happen even with the investment tax credit (ITC). With the five charges, Wise showed an increase in the amount of electricity. He shared an analysis of how much solar it would take to cover 80% of the Village's electric load, which would be a 60KW system. The cost of this solar is \$.11 over 30 years. With a 3% escalator on the Village's current cost, it would come out at \$231,000 over 30 years. Even applying the escalator on the Village's current cost, Wise would not be saving the Village money with a PPA even over 30 years. Sometimes there are no money savings the first year, but by year 10, they can project that the Village will cumulatively see savings. In this case, they cannot get there with a PPA.

Wise said there were two funding programs. One is an energy efficiency and conservation block grant program, for which the Village may be eligible. The Northeast Ohio Public Energy Council (NOPEC) has the PACE program whereby the Village could get a cash credit for a solar project. For example, with a \$100,000 solar system, the Village could get a \$30,000 tax credit which is a cash credit under the Investment Tax Credit (ITC). The Village can apply to the IRS for a check for this amount. This would leave \$70,000 for the system and NOPEC would finance the \$70,000 and then assess the Village on its tax bill for this property. The solar project assessment is paid over 20 years. The cost is 4%. This changes the discussion from a PPA program to the Village owning the system from the beginning through PACE and ITC. Daniel Wise further explained that the point of the PACE program is to boost the energy efficiency of the building, so many of the requirements are to put solar on the roof instead of a ground system. Similarly, the grant program favors putting EV's on the building.

Porter noted that the proposal presented by Wise involves Village Hall, the Service Department, and the Police Department. Daniel Wise explained that the idea is to master meter it, so all three meters are in one location. He spoke with the utility company, and they are ok with it, but the Village would have to initiate it through a work order. Once the process is done, it makes it easier to do solar. He further explained that the ground mount is more expensive but easier to install in one spot. Mike Wise clarified ground mount is more expensive for smaller projects because there is a run to the meter. When it is on a roof, there is no run or trenching and the meter is right there.

Porter discussed the advantage of replacing the Service Department roof in conjunction with solar panel installation. Wise said if the roof is more than 12 years old, the solar panels will

outlive the roof which creates the necessity to remove the panels to replace the roof. However, it is not as expensive as they might think.

Daniel Wise discussed the EV charging aspect of the project. Porter provided mileage details for the police vehicles and said that eventually, the Village may go to all electric police vehicles. He asked if the charging stations and associated panels could be added down the road. Wise said yes and explained that the Village would want to consider sizing the system at 90 – 95% or more knowing there will be a need for the power. Porter observed that the cost of the EV charging station is \$130,000, \$60,000 for the 4 chargers and \$70,000 for the quick charge one. There was discussion about a discrepancy in pricing in the handout and Troxell provided clarification that the four chargers would be \$35,000.

Porter asked how much money could be obtained through the grant program, and Wise said it depends on a case-by-case basis as does the NOPEC program. They would not know until they did an application. The NOPEC program is \$100,000 to \$500,000. Porter advised that he hates debt, but with a \$231,000 project with a grant for \$100,000, it makes it more cost effective for the Village to pursue it. Council looks at the cost, the payback, what it will do for the Village, and what the maintenance requirements are over time. Porter reviewed the timeline for bidding for the project by March or April in conjunction with the replacement of the Service Department roof, with a completion date for both over the summer. If the total cost is \$230,000 and the grant is not significant, his guess is that the cost benefit analysis will be negative for the solar project. If they can get lots of money from the block grant, that would make it easier for the Village to undertake the project.

Wise explained that from a process standpoint, he has been trying to understand the needs of the Village, costs, and available structures. Wise said if the Village were ready to go forward, he would procure the charging and solar costs and then do a grant application to see what is available. This would then be presented to the Village for final approval. They would not want to do this unless the Village were 80% prepared to go forward because Wise would be incurring costs to do this. This would be the next step. He thought it would make sense for the Village to own the system through ITC and NOPEC. The Village could pay off the debt earlier as well. Wise would provide these numbers to the Village as part of the process.

Porter noted that the Village needed to replace the salt dome this year, which would be \$600,000. However, the solar opportunity is here because of the roof replacement and other things that are going on. For Council's point of view, it is about the bottom line, the cost, and payback period. At \$231,000, it is not feasible for the Village to do it. The grants are crucial.

Wise asked if the Village planned to make the chargers available to the public. Porter did not think so. Berger said this is not a consideration at this point. Wise indicated that it would be more of a public service, and Porter said that if this was a component of getting a grant, then the Village would do it.

There was discussion of the Village's generators.

Wise proposed looking into the block grant for more definitive information for the Village. Porter thought if the cost could be reduced to \$100,000 that Council would look at it favorably. Wise asked if there would be interest in the assessment through NOPEC if there were a balance.

Porter thought the Village would pay the balance out of pocket because incurring debt is not something the Village has historically done. Wise advised that like the Erosion Special Improvement District (ESID) assessment, the Village would see no charges for the first year and could then pay it off. Berger thought a 12-month interest free loan is an option.

Porter asked if Wise could provide the grant information for one of the upcoming meetings. The solar presentation concluded.

Berger addressed the projects the committee would like accomplished in 2024. He asked for the status of the ditching project across Bell and behind the houses. The Street Commissioner said as conditions allow, they will move forward. Porter thought this meant April. Porter noted that there was also the 500 Manor Brook storm water issue. The Street Commissioner and Engineer looked at the grate and thought they could just remove it to resolve the problem. Berger asked whose property it was on, and the Street Commissioner said it belonged to the Homeowners' Association (HOA). Berger stated that the Village would need an easement for access. The Street Commissioner suggested that the HOA could remove it, but Berger said they would not know how. Porter said no easement was required, only permission from the HOA. Berger told the Street Commissioner to contact Coral Management which runs the HOA. The Mayor asked if he should bring it up at the Master Association's meeting and Berger said yes. Porter suggested obtaining their meeting minutes that reflect their permission. Berger, Canton, and the Mayor would be attending the Master Association meeting on January 24th.

Other storm water projects for 2024 include Fairview Rd. which is 300 feet of pipe installation. This will go out for quotes soon according to the Street Commissioner. The Mayor asked if this would be combined with the ditching behind Laura Heilman's house. The Street Commissioner said it may be two different contractors depending on the numbers. Berger asked if the Street Commissioner had a budget, and the Street Commissioner said there was plenty of money for storm water. Additionally, the money needed relative to the Road Program and culvert pipes will be considerably less. There are very few culvert pipes on the proposed roads.

The committee discussed reseeding the grass and planting 15 trees with the Manor Brook project. The Mayor said he would address landscaping along Chillicothe Rd. with the Master Association. He suggested working with them in an effort to get them happy and ready for Phase II. Berger said that Phase II is not being presented to the Whitetail HOA, but to Manor Brook Gardens, who will not be at the meeting. Porter explained that if Phase I looks as intended, then selling Phase II will be easier.

The Street Commissioner brought up needed work with Rarick Cemetery. The Mayor said that the Cemetery is a public utility but the Properties Committee did not have much and would address it.

The Mayor addressed the Hyfi sensor bill and suggested obtaining a printout of data from it to justify the \$1,700 per year.

An employee luncheon at Augie's was discussed by the Mayor relating to the revised Employee Handbook and storm water training for the Service Department staff on January 30th. Chagrin River Watershed Partners (CRWP) will now be addressing the Storm Water Report.

The Mayor attended the Northeast Ohio Area Coordinating Agency (NOACA) meeting and said Connecting to Power a Clean Future for Ohio was there. They worked with Moreland Hills with its solar project. There is no cost to join the organization and they can help look for grants for solar. The Mayor would check them out further.

At the luncheon on January 30th, the Mayor will ask former Patrol Officer Steve Balaban to attend to discuss his grant writing business.

The NOPEC Sustainability program was discussed by the Mayor.

The Mayor was in contact with Yellow Light and asked if they should be involved in the Village's solar exploration. Porter said the Village is still waiting on a proposal from Yellow Light but they can bid. Berger suggested letting the Wises manage the process since Yellow Light is a solar installer.

The grant process for the solar project was discussed and the Mayor proposed that the grant writer might be able to get the money as easily as the Wises could. Berger said that if the Village were to hire Balaban, he would want him to direct his efforts in finding grants for the salt dome and let the Wises worry about the solar project. For grants, Porter suggested exploring the angle of the salt dome, storm water, and pollution reduction. Berger offered that Balaban would be costing the Village \$1,000 per month plus a percentage of what he gets. If the Village is serious, then it needs to identify the projects it wants to address. The Mayor said that Balaban came to the Village and wondered if the Village should go out looking for other grant writers. The committee discussed the going rates for grant writers.

Porter addressed the Village campus water supply issue. According to historic records, the water has a high sodium content. He wondered if the Holtz property well was different. The Village well is 300 feet deep. The Street Commissioner said the Holtz well is about 50 feet deep. He wondered whether it would be possible or desirable to use the Holtz well for water for the Village. Secondly, Porter suggested bringing in Kinetico to see if a filtration system can be used to make the salty water better and cost the Village less. The Street Commissioner would ask Ayers Well Service to test the water from the Holtz well as a first step before Kinetico. The Street Commissioner indicated there were two wells that serviced Village Hall and asked if they were both high sodium, and Porter said yes.

Berger asked about EV construction vehicles, and the Street Commissioner said they are coming out but are not efficient enough. EV charging stations were discussed as was battery technology and automated equipment.

Berger adjourned the meeting at 10:11 a.m.