

NEIGHBORHOOD INFORMATION MEETING

Project:	Riverside Solar Garden (500 Riverside Avenue)
Date:	July 8, 2014
Applicant:	Clean Energy Collective
Project Planner:	Ryan Mounce

Project Planner & Applicant Presentation Summary:

The meeting began at approximately 6:05 p.m. The Project Planner gave a brief overview of the City's development review process for the project and next steps. No formal development application has yet been submitted to the City for review. If and when the project moves forward, this project will be an Administrative, or Type 1, project. The decision maker for Type 1 projects are Administrative Hearing Officers, and not the Planning & Zoning Board.

New Land Use Code standards are set to go into effect in early July, creating a new Solar Energy System Use, and creating requirements for these systems such that they should include perimeter fencing and landscape screening, and for systems on building rooftops, regulating height and pitch of the solar panels.

The applicant gave a brief presentation, outlining the size, phasing and site plan for the project. The initial phase one system size is estimated at 333 kilowatts, with the potential for an additional 192 kw of solar collections in phase two.

The solar panels and racking will be two to three feet off the ground, and have a fixed tilt. In some locations of the world, panels track the sun, but given latitude at this location it is not necessary. There will be a small shelter that houses an inverter and metering equipment.

The panels will be community-owned; Fort Collins Utility customers can purchase panels and receive credits for the power generated by the panels on utility bills. Real time monitoring of the power your panels are generating is also available.

Questions, Comments, Concerns & Responses:

Question (Citizen): The handout showing the Development Review process doesn't show they are on step two, is this correct?

Response (City): These are two separate handouts, the one you have illustrates the ways to provide feedback and communicate during the overall development review process.

Question (Citizen): This is not a net metering? A sell back?

Response (Applicant): Kilowatts used as a credit. Amount of credit is monetized and then subtracted from your bill. This is not the same as if you had installed solar panels on your roof sold energy back into the grid directly.

Question (Citizen): Is the tax credit used for Operations & Maintenance (O&M)?

Response (Applicant): A portion of the purchase amount is deposited into an account for Operations & Maintenance, and a portion of the monthly production is deposited into O&M.

Question (Citizen): What is the amount of credit used for O&M?

Response (Applicant): I don't have the exact figure, but it is around 6 or 7%.

Question (Citizen): What is the limiting factor to get the extra kilowatts (Phase 2)?

Response (Applicant): The City rebate is only approved and appropriated for the first 333 kilowatts. There is already a proposal for money for the rebate past this threshold for the remaining 192 kilowatts.

Question (Citizen): Is the site in the Floodplain?

Response (City): A small portion of the site is in the floodplain – on the north, but most of the site is not as it is elevated approximately 30' above the river. Where panels are currently proposed is not within the floodplain.

Question (Citizen): Will the site be fenced to protect it from vandalism?

Response (City): The new requirements for solar energy systems require fencing to be placed around the solar panels.

Question (Citizen): Will the fence be higher than 6 feet? Is that enough to protect from vandalism? Will there be barbwire?

Response (City): It could be higher than 6 feet; the new requirements are for a fence between 5 to 7 feet tall. There is no plan for barbwire.

Question (Citizen): Will there be insurance, and what does that cover?

Response (Applicant): Vandalism, hail damage, etc.

Question (Citizen): Does each panel have a microinverter?

Response (Applicant): No, there is a central inverter.

Question (Citizen): Is there a tradeoff in overall production efficiency for microinverters versus a central inverter?

Response (Applicant): Could depend on who you talk with, we believe central inverter has better efficiency.

Question (Citizen): Will the fence issue be resolved before the project is approved?

Response (City): For other projects, fencing is approved with the project and we expect that to occur with this project. There have been very preliminary discussions about an Art in Public Places project at the site, and whether that could be incorporated into the fencing design and construction.

Question (Citizen): There are a lot of animals on site or that pass through. How will this project effect their movement?

Response (City): As part of the City's development process the applicants have submitted an Ecological Characterization Study for the site that will document these types of qualities. The study recommended an area along the east of the site and near the river to be preserved as a riparian or movement corridor. Wildlife could continue to utilize those spaces.

Question (Citizen): What is the intention of the north western corner and along Riverside?

Response (City): There is a plan for a trail along the eastside of the railroad tracks that would extend up to the tracks, but I am not aware of other plans specifically for the northwestern corner.

Question (Citizen): Why is there space between the two phases?

Response (Applicant): It is just a visual to delineate the difference between the two phases.

Question (Citizen): Utilities provides a rebate for a 3kw array – is this going to change?

Response (City): We are going to keep the threshold at 3kw for the time being.

Question (Citizen): How is Clean Energy Collective (CEC) governed? Is there a board?

Response (Applicant): It is a privately owned company, and we do have a governing board.

Question (Citizen): Will there be electromagnetic emissions?? Will CEC be using the safest converter and inverters? I've read the safest kind is sine converters.

Response (Applicant): Our converters will be sine wave, both for safety and because they are the most efficient converters – it makes sense to use them.

Question (Citizen): Are heat and glare a problem?

Response (Applicant): The panels can put off a lot of heat if you're standing right next to them– this is good in winter to clean off the snow, but panels work better when colder and they're designed to absorb the light and convert to electricity, not generate heat/glare. The panels are also coated with an anti-glare solution.

Response (City): The Land Use Code also has requirements that the applicants will have to demonstrate heat and glare will not be an issue beyond the perimeter of their site.

Question (Citizen): Would you be able to feel the heat within 500ft?

Response (Applicant): No, you'd have to be much closer to the panel to feel heat effects.

Question (Citizen): Will drivers on Riverside be affected? Very rarely – glare studies show a very low chance. There may be a brief flash, just as might happen if you drive by a parked car and the sun hits the windshield just right.

Question (Citizen): is there the intent to use the fencing to block the view of the panels?

Response (City): We would like feedback for that, so far we've heard of multiple viewpoints – some want the panels to be completely screened, while others would like to see the panels, to know there is this green energy production source taking place. It could fit in with the concept of FortZED.

Question/Informal Poll: Should we have a show of hands on if people want the panels fully screened?

*About half the audience wanted the panels screened; the other half of the audience visible

Comment (Citizen): If we didn't want to see it we should put it on a different part of town. I'd like to see the panels.

Comment (Citizen): I'd like to see the fencing done in an artistic way, and that could help both viewpoints.

Response (City): There will also be some landscaping that will accompany the fence and trail along the Riverside frontage.

Response (City): There have also been other creative ideas suggested, both recently and in past proposals at this site for putting in waves or berms.

Comment (Applicant): Developers care about safety first. Then cost – however we are in a unique location. We would like to find a middle ground between fencing and aesthetics. We will follow what the city feels is best.

Question (Citizen): Is this for business or residential users?

Response (City): The City allows small and mid-size business to buy in as well as residential users.

Question (Citizen): Will this make any noise?

Response (Applicant): you can only hear it if you are close – outside of the fence area will be quiet. If you are next to the inverter it sounds similar to the projector in this room. There is also only noise when electricity is being generated, it is silent at night.

Comment (Citizen): The area is already really loud with car/truck traffic on Riverside and the trains.

Question (Citizen): How long does the equipment last?

Response (Applicant): The panels have a 25-year warranty. The inverter is insured for 10 years. We have seen panels used as long as 30 years; they are still generating electricity, but not as much as when they were first installed – there is some degradation over time. We would like to be here for 50 years, so we may have to replace panels along the way, but panels don't go obsolete as fast as computers

Question (Citizen): What is CEC's goal --you said it's in your interest to take care of the project and O&M?

Response (Applicant): Developers want to develop a project and make a profit. We also have a long term motivation – our name is on it. This industry is very reputation-oriented. We can't make very much money off just one project, but many, so we make sure these sites and our reputation is looked after.

Question (Citizen): Is the LLC company setup for O&M its own entity?

Response (Applicant): Yes, it would continue to operate independently even if CEC went bankrupt in the future. This protects buyers.

Question (Citizen): Is this an investment? Can the value depreciate?

Response (Applicant): This is not considered an investment in the traditional sense, that isn't allowed by law and the SEC. You can sell the panels you buy to another interested buyer within Fort Collins Utilities, or work with us to remarket it.

Question (Citizen): Is there tax depreciation?

Response (Applicant): No.

Response (Applicant): Buyers own the panel, not a share of the company.

Question (Citizen): So if I move, do I keep getting credit?

Response (Applicant): Yes if you are still served by FC utilities

Question (Citizen): What if you are in the County not the City?

Response (Applicant): If you are inside the service area of FC utilities then you are eligible.

Question (Citizen): How much of the project has already been bought?

Response (Applicant): Taking reservations right now. Can't official buy until two to three weeks before it is built, but approximately thirty percent has already been reserved.

Question (Citizen): Do all the panels have to be bought before construction?

Response (Applicant): No, we build the project using our own funds, there aren't pre-leasing requirements. We believe it will all be bought.