

Open Work Session

Solar Facility Site Lease Agreement – Salisbury-Wicomico Regional Airport

April 5, 2022

Mr. Chris Davidson, Assistant Airport Manager, came before Council. He introduced Ms. Amberlee Young and Ms. Rachael Boots with the Community Power Group and said they can assist with any technical questions Council may have.

Mr. Davidson said this process started last spring in 2021 when the County put out an RFP for solar power to decrease their electricity costs. He said they received nine proposals, and Community Power Group clearly rose to the top as number one, so the County entered negotiations with them back in August 2021 and have been working with them ever since.

Mr. Davidson said, before they get into the weeds, he wants to point out a couple of things that make this a little more complicated than what it actually is. He explained, the reason there is so much paperwork is because there are two solar sites at one geographical location. He said one solar site is to fund the County's electrical bill, including the Government Office Building and others, and the other solar site is for the Airport's needs. He said each of the solar sites has three packages of documents. He said one is the site lease agreement, which is the actual land lease, and that is worth about \$1.6 million in revenue to the Airport. He said the next one is the agreement to purchase power from Community Power Group at a discounted rate. He said, as Council knows, they have been doing swap overs to LED lights and more efficient electronics, and that is the reason they have not seen significant electricity increases over the past few years, but it is forecasted they are going to have significant increases in costs in electricity going forward because they have reached the capacity of efficiency. He said the last is payment in lieu of taxes (PILOT) that is essentially going to give them \$600,000 in tax revenue.

Mr. Davidson said, in summation, over the course of its life, this will get the County and the Airport \$11 million on land that cannot be used for anything due to its geographic location and it being wetlands. He said it is about 20-21 acres off runway 32, and there is nothing they can build there because of the runway and also because there are wetlands that prevent them from using that land for anything else.

Mr. McCain asked how much experience Community Power Group has with these sites. He said he looked at their website and saw a lot about landfills, but, as far as airports, have they done a project at or near an airport, to which Ms. Young responded, they have a lot of experience with what they call specialty sites with landfills and airports. She said they have been working on a project in the City of Galesburg in the State of Illinois and have a few other proposed airport projects across the country. She said they have talked to the MAA and the FAA about this project, and they are supportive of the project.

Mr. Cannon thanked Mr. Davidson because the Council had questions earlier, and Mr. Davidson responded to those very well. He said they received a complete breakdown of the concerns Council had as a Body, and it helped out a lot in trying to navigate through this, so he thanks him for addressing that.

Mr. Davidson said he wants to talk about Mr. Adkins and all the great work he does with Plow Days and how they tried to accommodate. He said they created parking lot space for them in case there was overflow so they would still be able to park there. He clarified, they understand the Airport is a part of the community, and it is important to them that they continue to serve the community while also

creating a revenue stream that allows the Airport to grow. Mr. Cannon said he thinks that goes a long way and he really appreciates Mr. Davidson's comment and mentioning that.

Mr. Hastings asked, as far as this particular project, what are the bigger trends for putting in pollinator habitat and other kinds of things like that, and how do they address the land it is on, and of course some of this is quasi-wetland, so what are they doing for vegetation management and that kind of thing, understanding they do not want to put extra chemicals in the ground. Ms. Boots responded, she is the civil engineer on the project and Community Power Group generally uses pollinator-friendly ground cover. She said they would use a native seed mix and that would potentially help the neighboring farm. She said they also are recommending screening around the Mt. Hermon Road side and the Airport Road side, which is typically one to two rows of a native tree species, typically evergreen, so that is continually screened. She said they also recommend game fencing as a recommended security fence, or chain link fence depending on the Airport's security needs.

Mrs. Hurley said this requires a public hearing and they can have that on May 3 at 6:00 p.m.

Mr. Holloway clarified, these are wetlands, to which Ms. Boots responded, there is a two-acre wetland in the middle of the field, and they actually met with an MDE consultant. Mr. Holloway said he knows that property very well, and he guesses there is a low spot in the middle. He then clarified that the whole property is not wetlands, to which Ms. Boots responded, no, it is an emergent wetland, nontidal.

There was no further discussion.




John T. Cannon, President, At-Large



Ernest F. Davis, Vice President, District 1



William R. McCain, At-Large



Nicole Acle, District 2



Larry W. Dodd, District 3



Josh Hastings, District 4



Joe Holloway, District 5



Laura Hurley, Council Administrator