

Open Work Session

Discussion on Sale of County-Owned Property to Expand the Delmarva Power Substation Located on West Church Street, Hebron, MD

September 20, 2022

Mr. Mark Whitelock, Deputy Director of Public Works, came before Council and said a company called Urban Solar contacted him. He said they had an appraisal, which they got back for \$20,000 an acre, and this is all involved in expanding the DP&L substation in order to allow for a big solar project on Route 50. Mr. Cannon asked if they have to expand the substation in order to be able to accept the volume, to which Mr. Whitelock responded, yes. He said, in reading over the documents, he talked with Mr. Wilber and they need a little bit more clarification as it says approximately one acre plus or minus, and he does not really like plus or minus too much, so they are going to get some clarification on that as they could think they are selling an acre of land for \$20,000 and end up with 1.5 acres. He said it is a little subjective and it is not very clear, and they like clarity. Mr. Holloway asked if they have had it surveyed, to which Mr. Whitelock responded, no. Mr. Holloway said then they would know, to which Mr. Whitelock responded, somebody is going to have it surveyed, but he is not going to have it surveyed.

Mr. Whitelock said this is basically for upgrading the DP&L substation on Church Street in Hebron. Mr. Cannon asked if this is Mr. Whitelock's recommendation, to which Mr. Whitelock responded, yes. He said it really has no value to the County and is just derelict property behind the transfer station the same as the water tower site. He said it is not something they see themselves expanding to in the future.

Mr. Hastings said, just so it is said, obviously they need to prepare for an electric grid that is able to handle going forward in the future. He said two weeks ago California moved forward with basically having only electric vehicles, so that, of course, then affects a quarter of the States in the United States and many of the top vehicle manufacturers in the country. He said of course they all have said that they are stopping any gas vehicles within the next couple of years. Mr. Holloway then asked if Mr. Hastings is saying that vehicle manufacturers in the next couple of years are quitting making gas-powered vehicles, to which Mr. Hastings responded, by 2030, Chevrolet will no longer be making them, as well as Volvo. Mr. Holloway said that is not the next couple of years, to which Mr. Hastings responded, it is in seven years. He clarified, they are starting the process now to be completed within the next seven years. He said the County has to dramatically upgrade their infrastructure when it comes to this, which is a bigger topic, but certainly they need to have the capacity to move electric around. He said he thinks a couple of years ago they were talking about solar siting with MACo, and they were basically saying that the Eastern Shore, especially the Lower Shore, is one of those areas where they do not currently have capacity to move enough energy through the grid, so that is putting it in context of what they do.

Mr. Cannon asked if there is no foreseeable use of that property in the future, to which Mr. Whitelock responded, no. He said they actually have a fence line in there and this is outside of their fence line the same way as with the water tower site.

Mr. Holloway asked if it is in the town limits, to which Mr. Whitelock responded, yes, he believes it is. Mr. Holloway asked if Hebron is okay with it and are they going to have to approve this? Mr. Dodd asked if it is going to have to be annexed, to which Mr. Whitelock responded, no, he does not think it will have to be annexed. He said he was here last week for the water tower, and he does not think necessarily that the solar field is something the Town of Hebron wants there because some years ago they saw

plans for a mixed residential/commercial use in that field, so he thinks they were kind of hoping that something like that would come back, but he does not think it will. Mr. Holloway asked if Hebron has expressed support for this and does it need to go to their Zoning Department for approval, or do they even know about it, to which Mr. Whitelock responded, they know now because he told them about it last week. Mr. Holloway asked if they were okay with it, to which Mr. Whitelock responded, he thinks they were more or less indifferent to it. He said, for his purposes, Hebron zoning issues are for Hebron to worry about, not for him. Mr. Holloway said they should have respect for the Town of Hebron. Mr. Whitelock clarified, his only problem right now is plus or minus or approximately as far as the acreage.

Mrs. Hurley asked if they are selling this property or donating it, to which Mr. Whitelock responded, it is a sale and basically he believes it appraised at \$20,000 an acre. Mr. Dodd asked if that is what they are selling it for, to which Mr. Whitelock responded, yes. Mr. Holloway said they do not know if they have an acre or an acre and a half, to which Mr. Whitelock responded, it is approximately an acre plus or minus, but they are going to get clarification before they come back to Council. Mr. Cannon clarified, when this comes back as a Resolution, it will be exact, to which Mr. Whitelock responded, they will know exactly what it is.

Mr. Hastings said it looks like it is in the Town Transition zone, so this makes sense.

Mrs. Hurley said this has to come back for a Public Hearing to surplus the property first, and they can do that on October 18 because it has to be advertised for two weeks. She clarified, Council cannot vote at that meeting, so they will vote at the following meeting, which will be the first meeting in November, but the Public Hearing will be on October 18.

There was no further discussion.



John T. Cannon, President, At-Large



Ernest F. Davis, Vice President, District 1

absent

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