



City of Rockford, Minnesota

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City of Rockford, Minnesota

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The City of Rockford and Wright-Hennepin Cooperative sign agreement for State's first Bantam solar project.

The Rockford City Council approved a project - nearly a year in the making - at the June 23rd City Council Meeting. Dan Madsen, City Administrator and Special Counsel, describes the city's agreement with Wright-Hennepin Cooperative Electric Association (WH) as a unique solar project between a city and an energy cooperative designed to generate solar energy specific to a community, built within the community it is designed to serve. "Bantam" solar projects are projects which: are owned and maintained by the cooperative; annually generate one-half megawatts of energy or less; are constructed on municipal land otherwise unsuitable for development or other use; and directly support the cost of municipal operations. For Rockford, the Bantam solar project will result in 60 solar panels being installed on the city-owned Rockford City Center Mall, and 271 solar panels being installed near one of the city's water towers.

What are "Bantam" projects?

- (1) Solar projects owned and maintained by the cooperative
- (2) Annually generating 500 kilowatt hours of energy or less
- (3) Constructed on municipal land otherwise unsuitable for development or other use
- (4) That directly support the cost of municipal operations

The terms and conditions of the 25 year agreement provide for 67% of the City's electric energy profile being received from solar energy and result in cost savings over the term of the agreement. These savings, however, are not the primary goal of the Agreement.

"The City wanted to both physically and proactively integrate solar energy into our community and was looking for a cooperative agreement that met our shared goals in a creative, yet practical, way" Madsen said. "By providing otherwise unusable land; ground by a water tower and the roof of a city-owned building, we were able to provide a financial benefit and solar energy solution for our community while supporting WH's interest in expanding their solar program to the benefit of their cooperative and the greater Rockford area."

Steve Nisbet, WH Vice President External Relations and Power Solutions added, "This is a pilot project for Wright Hennepin and it was all about collaboration. WH had two primary points of focus - to work with the City of Rockford to develop a solar solution that delivered on their goals while delivering on the WH charter for the benefit of all of our members."

While many cities, school districts, residents and businesses are looking to solar as a renewable solution; an alternative to fossil based energy, Rockford Mayor Renee Hafften highlights the importance of community and its inherent ability to create new and specialized projects. "Our city is progressive and forward thinking," Hafften said, "so keeping this project local to our city and visible to our community is important."

Rockford's Bantam Solar Highlights:

- 25 year agreement
- Approximately 300,000 annual kwh
- 67% of city's electric use solar based
- Future phased expansions proposed

The Agreements for the Rockford Bantam Project have been signed and preparation of the solar array installation sites are under way. A ribbon cutting ceremony for the project will be scheduled later this fall. For more information, contact Rockford City Hall at (763) 477-6565 or visit the city's website: www.cityofrockford.org.