

Falls City to apply for \$15 million grant for electric upgrades
(KLZA)-- Following a presentation by Falls City Economic Development and Growth Enterprise Executive Director Lucas Froeschl and an executive session Monday evening, the Falls City Council approved a directive to begin negotiations with the Omaha Public Power District in regards to a wholesale agreement in relation to the LB 977 grant application as recommended by the Board of Public Works.

In 2022 the Nebraska Legislature approved LB 977, which helped create a \$15 million grant that, in 2023, with some language adjustments to the original bill, tailored it specifically for Falls City.

Froeschl said it has been about 15 years in getting to this point and determining the best use of the money for rate payers and the future of Falls City.

Falls City does not have the capability to receive enough electricity from OPPD at the present time to supply additional large electrical users, despite having a piece of ownership in the Nebraska City 2, a coal fired power plant at Nebraska City due to limitations of the line supplying power to Falls City.

In 2009 Falls City invested \$7 million in the NC2 power plant to secure affordable power for Falls City but there is only one line feeding Falls City.

Due to the inability to receive all the power needed, at times Falls City has had to go out on the open market for additional power at higher rates that what power from the NC2 plant would have cost.

Froeschl noted that with only 1.5 to around 2 megawatts of extra power available it makes recruiting companies to Falls City especially challenging.

Froeschl noted that a 10-year period of large investments in Falls City and the surrounding area, amounting to about \$115 million have made the community more desirable for companies looking to locate a new or expanded business. Those investments included a new hospital, new aquatic park, a new library, a new Missouri River Bridge at Rulo, additional back-up power generation at the power plant, a new road to the industrial park, the Grand Weaver Hotel, a new motel by private investors and SNC's fiber to the home project and downtown improvements.

If the project for additional power comes to fruition, it would provide in the neighborhood of 10 additional megawatts of power to the community.

LB977 was created to help expand electrical system capabilities and enhance redundancy and resiliency.

The Nebraska Department of Economic Development is now accepting applications for those grant funds through the Site and Building Development Fund.

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