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Energy Commission Resolution of Support for Wheeler Center Solar Park

In November 2019, Ann Arbor's City Council unanimously adopted a Climate Emergency Declaration committing to chart a path for how the entire Ann Arbor community could achieve a just transition to carbon neutrality by the year 2030. In June 2020, City Council unanimously adopted the A<sup>2</sup>ZERO Carbon Neutrality Plan, a document created with input from thousands of Ann Arborites that lays out seven strategies for our community to achieve carbon neutrality in the timeframe established by Council.

The first of seven strategies in A<sup>2</sup>ZERO is *Powering our community with 100% renewable energy*. Included within that strategy are four actions: community choice aggregation, bulk purchase of renewables, community solar, and a landfill solar project. This project advances two of these four actions: Community solar and the landfill solar project.

In 2018-2019, the City began discussing the creation of a landfill solar park on the City's capped landfill. After preliminary internal discussions, the City reached out to DTE to evaluate their interest in the concept. After months of discussion, DTE and the City decided to commission a preliminary assessment to evaluate if the utility infrastructure onsite could handle an influx of power from a large solar system at the city's capped landfill. The results of this assessment, conducted by Black and Veatch, showed that, with modest improvements, the DTE sub-transmission network, which runs across the City's landfill, could handle an influx of additional power from the proposed solar park.

With these results, the City, through approvals by City Council, and DTE commissioned interconnection studies to get specific details about the improvements needed and associated costs. These studies provided specific details necessary to further design and refine the proposed landfill solar project. Findings once again confirmed that the project was possible with minor infrastructure improvements.

During this time the City also intervened in the MPSC case U-20713 related to the Voluntary Green Pricing program. In that intervention, the City made the case that the landfill solar project should serve as a pilot/demonstration project of community solar, thereby allowing any resident or business to subscribe to the project, invest in local renewable energy, and receive the credits associated with renewable energy production from the project. The City also agreed to serve as the anchor tenant for the project, thereby ensuring that no customer cross-subsidization would take place. The settlement agreement putting this into place was unanimously agreed to by the City Council and was approved by the MPSC last year.

In 2021, DTE worked with the City and released a request for proposals from developers interested in designing and constructing the proposed landfill solar system that integrated City priorities, including key contracting policies. There was a robust response and DTE was able to identify top potential candidates based on proposed designs. DTE and the City both agreed regarding the preferred contractor.

Today, the City and DTE are preparing to bring the final project to City Council for their consideration. This is scheduled to take place this spring. Before presenting to City Council, the Office of Sustainability and Innovations and DTE are presenting the project to the Energy Commission for their consideration.

Because this project is explicitly identified in A<sup>2</sup>ZERO (landfill solar project) and because it advances community solar (another A<sup>2</sup>ZERO action), City staff are in support of this project.

WHEREAS, The City has adopted an aggressive and bold goal to achieve a just transition to community-wide carbon neutrality by the year 2030;

WHEREAS, Strategy 1 of A<sup>2</sup>ZERO calls for *Powering Our Electrical Grid with 100% Renewable Energy*;

WHEREAS, Actions 3 and 4 under Strategy 1 are the development of community solar programs and a landfill solar project;

WHEREAS, The Ann Arbor Office of Sustainability and Innovations has been working with numerous stakeholders including Pittsfield Township and DTE for nearly 3 years to design the landfill solar project;

WHEREAS, The City of Ann Arbor intervened in U-20713 and achieved a settlement that would make the landfill solar project, should it move forward, a community solar project with the City of Ann Arbor serving as the anchor tenant;

WHEREAS, Community solar for Ann Arbor is only possible, at this time, when done in conjunction with DTE;

WHEREAS, This project would lead to rapid installation of solar energy on one of the only large undeveloped parcels of land in the City;

WHEREAS, This project would reduce greenhouse gas emissions quickly, be additional to what is

currently available on the grid, and would offer a low-income solar subscription which advances equity - three core criteria included in the adopted Energy Criteria and Principles;

WHEREAS, This project would also be a local, quick, and transferable project, thereby aligning with three of the principles stated in the adopted Energy Criteria and Principles;

WHEREAS, This project would advance two actions identified within A<sup>2</sup>ZERO and serve as a demonstration project for both landfill solar deployments and community solar programs;

RESOLVED, The Ann Arbor Energy Commission supports the proposed Wheeler Center Solar Park;

RESOLVED, The Energy Commission encourages City Council to approve the proposed Wheeler Center Solar Park with the goal of ground breaking, as possible, in 2022.