

PKts. 11-08-19

MEMO



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To: Ames City Council
Steve Schainker, City Manager

From: Donald Kom, Electric Services Director

Date: 8 Nov 2019

Subject: Staff's Response to MetroNet Letter Requesting Attachment to City-owned Utility Poles

BACKGROUND:

The staff is in receipt of a letter from MetroNet, dated October 7, 2019. The letter is requesting access to an electric distribution line located on City property. The distribution line parallels a city access road, south of 13th street and near the WPC lime ponds. It is MetroNet's desire to connect their "backbone" fiber ring to the poles, and then bore underground to cross the railroad tracks, as a path to get from 1st street to Lincoln Way.

STAFF COMMENTS:

1. Typically, other utilities utilize City electric poles that are located in Public Right of Way and are open to others under a "Pole Attachment Agreement". What makes this situation different is that the locations of the poles being requested are not on public Right of Way, but are on public (City) land. For MetroNet to access the poles, they must request, and the city must grant an easement to the property. Under this situation, the City will have to determine the value of this easement to be charged to MetroNet.
2. Part of the pole line is located within a secured, fenced in area near the lime and ash ponds. For MetroNet to access this area, they will need to contact WPC Operations Center, or the Power Plant Control Room, and be escorted into the area by City personnel.
3. At the southern terminus of the line, MetroNet desire is to take their fiber underground and bore underneath the railroad tracks on its way to Lincoln Way. Both Electric Services and Water Pollution control have critical infrastructure buried at the point where MetroNet will be boring. If City facilities are struck it could mean a major power outage in parts of the City and/or a city-wide "boil water" order.
4. If MetroNet's goal is to have a "path" to move their backbone fiber from 1st street to Lincoln Way, Electric Services would like to offer alternative paths.

- a. There is an ITC transmission line that runs along Dayton Avenue between 13th street and Lincoln Way. Attaching to this pole line would accomplish the link MetroNet desires, but does result in a longer route.
- b. Electric Services does have several pole lines near MetroNet's preferred route. One such route would be to attached to the distribution line starting at 13th and Maxwell, head south – 9th street – Carroll – 6th street – Duff Avenue.

As the City Council can see, there are certain drawbacks to allowing any other utilities on these poles. The Council will have to decide if the benefits to supporting this new fiber internet provider's request outweigh the potential negative aspects to this arrangement. If the City Council wishes to proceed with granting an easement, it should direct staff to place such a discussion on a future Council agenda. If the Council does not wish to proceed with granting an easement, it should decline the request. City staff would then work with MetroNet to explore the alternatives described above.