

ITEM #: 19
DATE: 11-28-23
DEPT: ADMIN

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

SUBJECT: DEFERRAL REQUEST OF SIDEWALK INSTALLATION AND CONNECTION DISTRICT PAYMENTS FOR ALLIANT ENERGY SUBDIVISION SITE ON EAST LINCOLN WAY

BACKGROUND:

Alliant Energy is an economic development partner with the City of Ames for the development of the Prairie View Industrial Center (PVIC) located within Ames east of I-35. The PVIC area is over 1000 acres in size and planned to host large general and heavy industrial users. To this end, the City of Ames has recently completed the installation of water and sewer lines along East Lincoln Way to support development in the area. The City established a connection district for the water and sewer infrastructure to recoup our cost at the time of development.

Alliant Energy is the natural gas and electric provider for this area and has acquired title to hundreds of acres of land to encourage siting of industrial development in the PVIC. Alliant Energy also needs to make infrastructure improvements in this area to serve the planned intense industrial development. Alliant approached City staff earlier this summer about the construction of a large substation needed to provide power for industrial uses in this area. At this meeting staff discussed the location of the facility and the City's development standards that would apply. Alliant described the need to be adjacent to other overhead power transmission lines to tie the site into the overall grid. In this case, they would connect to the City of Ames Electric high voltage lines that run south from the PVIC area.

At the conclusion of these meetings, Alliant identified a desire for some of the typical improvement and fee requirements to be deferred due to their use being supportive infrastructure. **City Council received a letter earlier this summer dated August 21st outlining Alliant's interest in relief from zoning standards for 1) connection fees, 2) sidewalk deferral, and 3) access road paving (Attachment A). The area of specific interest is two parcels totaling approximately 80 acres, of which 18 acres would be developed for a substation (Attachment B).**

City Council referred this item to staff for more information on September 12th. At the Planning and Housing Department Workplan discussion on October 24th, City Council authorized Alliant to apply for zoning text amendment related to paving. The remaining two issues are now before City Council for direction.

Connection Fees

In preparing the Prairie View Industrial Center (East Lincoln Way east of I-35) for development, municipal water and sanitary sewer utilities have been extended through the area. To recover the City of Ames investment in these utilities, a water and sanitary sewer connection district was created. **These connection fees are required to be paid prior to final plat or site plan approval, including all future phases, and is deemed to include the individual parcel and all other adjacent or contiguous parcels under common ownership. This trigger was established to ensure the City was repaid fully for all land served by the improvements and as quickly as possible. The fees are required regardless of use on the site.**

However, the Municipal Code allows City Council to approve an alternative schedule for the timing of connection fee payment within a connection district. **As requested by Alliant Energy, City staff supports Alliant paying the connection fees for the 18-acre substation site and City Council approving payment for the rest of the 80-acre site when a site plan or other subdivision is submitted that includes the remaining 62 acres. This support is based upon the proposed use is for a utility needed to serve all of PVIC, rather for a private development.**

Sidewalk Deferral

City's Chapter 23 Subdivision standards and missing infrastructure standards of Chapter 22 both require installation of a sidewalk along one side of all streets within industrial areas. **In this instance, no sidewalk exists along Lincoln Way and a sidewalk would be required along with either a subdivision approval of a minor site development plan. Alliant is asking that a deferral be granted at the time of platting due to the lack of improvements in the area to connect to and that the substation itself has no travel demands.**

The City's Traffic Division is exploring options for a path or sidewalk design along East Lincoln Way and, therefore, supports a temporary deferral due to the current conditions and potential for an alternative improvement requirement. Deferral of sidewalk installation is permissible as part of Chapter 23 development standards when it is determined to be premature. This approach is similar to that of Wyffel's sidewalk deferral request along Teller Avenue.

Access Road Paving

The third element of the Alliant letter was a request to limit the amount of on-site paving needed for access to the substation. Staff encouraged placing the substation back from Lincoln Way to allow for better industrial development options for the remaining land area. **Our zoning standards require all vehicle maneuvering areas to be paved, regardless of use or frequency of vehicle travel. Alliant requested that the zoning ordinance be modified to allow for a waiver of paving requirements for utility uses that have little vehicle traffic.** The connection to Lincoln Way would still be a paved access, only the portion of the drive that exclusively serves the substation would be relieved of paving requirements. City Council initiated in October a text amendment to allow for staff to approve a waiver of paving requirements for utility projects. City Council will review the zoning text amendment for approval in January. Therefore, no action further action regarding this request is needed at this time.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Direct staff to prepare an agreement to be considered along with the Final Plat approval to allow for an alternative schedule of connection fee payments and deferral of the sidewalk installation.
2. Decline to support an alternative schedule of connection fee payment at this time.
3. Decline to support the deferral of the sidewalk installation at this time.

CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

The issues identified by Alliant are commonly addressed with the City's subdivision process. In this case, Alliant is seeking earlier direction and support of these issues to determine how to proceed with development of the 80 acres. **Staff believes that with a subdivision configuration that allows for the eventual development of the site in its entirety, partial deferrals as requested by Alliant are appropriate because of the proposed utility use.**

The final details of the configuration of the site will be determined through the subdivision platting process at which time the City Council can verify the requests meet the City's interests and Alliant's interests. Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that City Council adopt Alternative 1.

ATTACHMENT(S):

[Attachment A - Alliant Letter Prairie View Industrial Complex](#)

[Attachment B Alliant Location Map.pdf](#)