

Mr. Rasmus called the January 30, 2023 MASD Buildings and Grounds Meeting to order at 6:41 p.m.

Present in the Elementary Conference room were Joseph Rasmus, Whitney Holloway (via ZOOM), William Berger, Susan Myers, Heather Mausteller, Susan Farr, Matthew McWilliams, Matthew Wardecker (Schneider Electric), and Chelsea Rosenberger.

UPDATE ON SOLAR VOLTAIC INITIATIVE/LAND ACQUISITION INITIATIVE: CAPITAL RESERVE

- Mr. Rasmus opened the meeting by re-introducing Mr. Matthew Wardecker of Schneider Electric to make a presentation for Millville Area School District in regards to the Solar Voltaic and Land Acquisition Initiative. Going further, Mr. Rasmus explained that the school district had recently updated the roofs in the summer of 2022. He explained that Mr. Matthew McWilliams, Supervisor of Buildings & Grounds, reached out to the Farr family about the potential acquisition of land by the school district who were receptive to the discussion. Previously, the district had reached out to the Book family, but they were not interested in selling land. Mr. Rasmus shared that in October, Mr. Wardecker met with the Administrative team to discuss the proposal.
- Since then, Mr. Rasmus, Mr. McWilliams and Mrs. Holloway met with the Farr family to discuss the potential land acquisition. Mr. Rasmus showed the parcel of land proposed to the Committee, explaining that the Farr family did not name a price for the land, rather asking that the district make a proposal for their consideration. With that being said, Mr. Rasmus explained that if the Committee decides to take this proposed land acquisition to the full board, they would need to review local real estate figures.
- Mr. Matthew Wardecker of Schneider Electric then shared his presentation with the Committee, beginning with an explanation that because the district is under contract with PPL Electric, you can connect the solar panels to the power grid as opposed to needing a direct connection. Mr. Wardecker explained that there are two directions that the district could go for the solar project. One option is for the district to own the panels. He explained that because the district is a public entity, we can take a direct payment tax credit. Therefore, 30 percent of the total cost would be reimbursed to the district. Additionally, Mr. Wardecker explained that there could be a 10 percent added on reimbursement if the district uses domestic materials like steel, etc.
 - To this, Mrs. Heather Mausteller asked if it would be more realistic to say that the amount of reimbursement would be 30% because there is no guarantee the district will use domestically created materials. Mr. Wardecker answered that he could absolutely ensure the additional 10 percent.
 - Mrs. Sue Myers then asked if the district were to own the panels, would we be responsible for all maintenance as well as disposal. Mr. Wardecker answered that the life expectancy for the panels would be about 20-30 years, with degradation about 5 percent every year. He added that this area does have a lot of rain, so that would keep the surface of the panels relatively clean. He shared that the highest maintenance cost would be checking the electrical connection (usually annually) and an inverter in about 10-15 years.
 - Mrs. Myers then asked what the cost of an inverter might be. Mr. Wardecker answered that he would need to get the figures for that but did not have the numbers with him at the time.
 - Mrs. Myers then added that the East Lycoming School District has had solar panels operational for some time and would be interested to see their average maintenance cost figures.
 - Mr. Wardecker clarified that the proponent of having district-owned panels would be the fact that the price of electric is going up and is so variable.
- Mr. Wardecker continued to explain the second type of direction for the district in this project. He shared that this would be through the district acquiring a Solar Power Purchase Agreement (PPA). After a review of the district's electric cost, Mr. Wardecker explained that the Electric contract was up for renewal in May. At the present time, he shared that the district is paying about 5.5% a kilowatt hour. He explained that his company, Schneider Electric is the third largest purchaser of electric because they purchase electric in bulk. He shared that by doing that, Schneider Electric was able to lock in another school district for a 9 cent per kilowatt hour cost.
 - Mr. Rasmus added that he and Mrs. Holloway are concerned about the upcoming contract renewal, adding that the pricing proposed by Schneider Electric is on the conservative side compared to other companies. Mr. Wardecker shared that Schneider Electric would walk through the contract renewal process with the district, but it would be as an outside investor.

- Going further, Mr. Wardecker explained about Solar Renewable Energy Credits (SRECs) which have been going up and down in terms of the amount available.
 - Mr. Rasmus then asked if the district were to go through the process, vet all of the options, and take it to the board, at what point would the PPL rebate be locked in for the district. Mr. Wardecker replied that the rebate would be one time only, but Schneider Electric would work with the utilities companies to get that rebate for the district.
- Mr. Wardecker continued by giving the Committee some additional items to consider. Schneider Electric can help the district find financing, grants, rebates, etc. Also, he believed that the district would be available for COPS – SVP, IRA and Renew America’s Schools funds, explaining that some could be used for the other capital improvements needed in the district such as updated windows, doors, etc. Then, Mr. Wardecker reiterated that Millville Area School District’s electric supply contract is up in May, so Schneider Electric could assist the district in procuring a new contract. Additionally, he explained that Schneider would be able to guarantee the district an energy savings over 20 years, explaining that if the district did not hit that savings, then Schneider Electric would pay the difference from what was proposed to the actual cost. Mr. Wardecker further explained that recently Schneider Electric had to write a substantial check to Mahanoy School District for that very reason. Finally, he shared that the solar project could help potentially fund other infrastructure improvements, adding that the time has never been better to do a solar project with so many rebates from federal, state and utilities.
 - Then, Mr. Wardecker reviewed the next steps for the district. He explained that the district would need to advertise for an RFPQ to procure an energy services company. After a company is chosen and procured, the district would need to have an Investment Grade Audit completed by the contractor. Within the first step, Mr. Wardecker said that Schneider Electric would help the district find and apply for available grants. At that point, Schneider would be able to give better information. From there, if every thing aligned with the district’s plan, we would decide on pursuing district-owned panels or the PPA agreement. Additionally, Mr. Wardecker shared that things found in the Investment Grade Audit could be used as a bargaining tool in the land acquisition proposal.
 - Mr. Rasmus then asked what the Investment Grade Audit would involve. Mr. Wardecker answered that the company would look into the positioning of the solar panels and contact PPL to find out what would be needed with actual figures.
 - Mr. Rasmus then commented that after looking at the figures and calculations in Mr. Wardecker’s presentation, the district would be looking at a total cost of about 3.5 million dollars for 20 years.
 - Mrs. Myers added that the process would have to also go through the filing and processes for attaining permits, zoning, concerns from the community, etc. She believed that the district would almost need to own the property first, then go through the process with the community. Mr. Rasmus asked if there was a way to assess the zoning issues and other concerns prior to the purchase of the land. Mr. Wardecker added that Pennsylvania has enacted some solar friendly laws and that Schneider Electric does have a full marketing team that would help with the community engagement and awareness of the project. Mrs. Myers added that recently, the Eyer family went through an incredible ordeal in terms of community outrage when attempting to put in solar panels on their own property.
 - Mr. Rasmus then asked if the Committee decides to take this project to the whole board for consideration and wanted to move forward with the Investment Grade Audit, what would that entail. Mr. Wardecker explained that the cost to the district would come when the district says the field and land is looking good and would like to move forward with the capital improvements as proposed.
 - Mrs. Mausteller then asked if Schneider Electric would still help the district find and apply for grants even if we do not move forward with the solar project. Mr. Wardecker answered that yes, that would be part of the Investment Grade Audit and therefore part of the conceptual design.
 - Mr. Rasmus then asked for clarification on if the district decides to move forward and procure Schneider Electric for the project then decide to leave the project, would there be an exit fee at that point to the district. Mr. Wardecker clarified that there would be an exit fee for the district at that point.
 - Mr. Wardecker then thanked the Committee for their time and for their thoughtful questions.
 - After Mr. Wardecker left the meeting, Mr. Rasmus commented to the Committee his belief that it would be irresponsible on the part of the district to not fully investigate this project.

- Mr. William Berger then asked if the district were to look into the acquisition of another piece of land, how much land would be needed. Mr. McWilliams answered that about 6 acres would be needed to cover the entire solar project.
- Mr. McWilliams then asked if it might be possible to split the solar panels in two locations on land the district already owns. The Committee members agreed that it may be possible to do that.
- In conclusion, Mr. McWilliams asked about the summer power usage, if the district does not use as much during that time, would the solar panels still be generating power. Mr. Rasmus answered that the Investment Grade Audit would figure in this concern.

ROCK CLIMBING WALL ELEMENTARY/HEART ASSOCIATION FUNDRAISING WILL SUBSIDIZE

- Mr. Rasmus explained that our Physical Education teacher Mrs. Miranda Pell wanted the Buildings and Grounds Committee to consider the acquisition of a rock climbing wall in the Elementary gym. Mr. McWilliams went further to explain that the proposed rock wall would be in the back lobby of the gym with a rubber lock so that the wall can be stored up and away when not in use.
 - Mrs. Susan Farr shared her concern with anything that could cause harm or liability, with this equipment not having a harness or anything to hold the students. Mr. Rasmus answered that unfortunately, there are areas of risk in many different places in schools. Therefore in this case, as with many others, there would need to be protocols and instruction put in place to minimize this result.
 - Mrs. Mausteller asked when students would use this equipment. To this, Mr. Rasmus answered that it would be used in Physical Education class, so it would be completely supervised; adding that there would be no cost to the district because it will be paid for by money fundraised through the Heart Health campaign.
 - Mr. Berger asked if there would be a mat used underneath for safety. Mrs. Holloway answered that she had not heard back from the insurance company yet on the liability coverage for this equipment. Mr. Rasmus concluded the discussion by saying he would wait until the district heard back from the insurance company to move forward with the project.

WATER FOUNTAIN/WATER BOTTLE FILLING STATION RETROFIT INITIATIVE

- Mr. Rasmus opened the discussion by explaining that the district has continued to rent water bottle filling stations at a cost of \$7,000 a year.
- Mr. McWilliams showed the Committee a retrofit model to go over the existing water fountains. He shared that if desired, they could start with only retrofitting one water fountain to see how it goes and add more at a later time.
 - Mrs. Farr answered that it was reasonable to start with one or two before retrofitting all of the water fountains. Mrs. Mausteller asked Mr. McWilliams if starting with two in each building would be good for the time being. He answered that it would be reasonable to do that.

PAPER PRODUCT SAVINGS INITIATIVE: COST ANALYSIS BETWEEN STATUS QUO AND IDENTIFIED VENDOR

- Mr. McWilliams shared some pricing savings information with the Cintas company for Janitorial supplies over the next 3 years.
 - Mrs. Myers asked Mr. McWilliams to inquire about the difference in pricing after the 3 years proposal is finished.
 - Mr. McWilliams answered that he would get that information for the Committee.
- The Committee agreed that Mr. McWilliams could move forward.

DISTRICT SIGNAGE: CMAVTS – PROVIDER OF SIGNAGE

- Mr. Rasmus explained to the Committee that this issue was broached previously with the former Supervisor of Buildings and Grounds and High School Principal. He shared that recently there was an issue with the names of hallways during a safety drill, and as a result, it was determined that there needed to be signage on exterior windows. Previously, Mr. Rasmus explained he had talked to the Director at Columbia Montour Area Vocational Technical School about utilizing some of the students in the technical shop classes to create signage for Millville Area School District. However, that would no longer be an option, and Mr. Rasmus asked Mr. McWilliams to get some quotes/numbers to purchase this signage instead.

- Mr. Rasmus shared that he received the threat assessment review from the Center of Safe Schools and would share the information with the Committee. Mrs. Myers answered in the discussion her agreement that utilizing simple naming systems such as A, B, and C would be helpful in an emergency.

FIRE ALARM CONTRACTOR: COST ANALYSIS OF BERKSHIRE VS IDENTIFIED CONTRACTOR

- Mr. McWilliams shared that the fire alarms currently in use by Berkshire by the district have greatly increased in price. He reached out to get pricing from other contractors but had not yet received a quote.

SERVICE CONTRACT: PREVENTATIVE MAINTENANCE: MCCLURE COMPANY

- Mr. McWilliams explained to the Committee that the Preventative Maintenance contract for the district has expired. Going further, Mr. McWilliams shared that McClure prepared a new proposal for service, but they needed to go through it to remove some of the items.

TOPICAL ITEMS

- Mr. Rasmus shared that the district would be looking for a new Groundskeeper and if anyone knew of someone for the position to please encourage them to apply.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:22 pm.

Chelsea Rosenberger
Assistant Board Secretary