



## Request for Council Action

**TO:** Mayor and City Council

**THROUGH:** Tim Murray, City Administrator

**FROM:** Deanna Kuennen, Com and Econ Dev Director

**MEETING DATE:** January 26, 2021

**SUBJECT:** Authorize the Execution of a Memorandum of Understanding between MREA and the City of Faribault regarding a Solar Group Buy Program

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### **Background:**

The Department of Community and Economic Development periodically receives inquiries regarding solar panel installation on homes and businesses in Faribault. Often property owners struggle to understand their options and the City permitting process for solar panel installations. Nonprofit organizations, including Midwest Renewable Energy Association (MREA), work with cities throughout the United States to answer questions about solar installations. Additionally, if property owners are interested, these nonprofit organizations can help facilitate a group purchase discount on solar installations.

The City of Northfield asked if the City of Faribault would be interested in participating with them in such a program. MREA will run the program, but the City of Northfield and the City of Faribault would help promote the program and provide information about the permitting process. MREA is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to help educate people about renewable energy. If people are interested in a solar installation, MREA can then help them work with a solar provider. MREA has successfully negotiated a solar group buy discount of up to 15 percent by organizing a group of interested parties in solar installations. MREA does not sell or install solar panels. Their goal is to help people understand the benefits of renewable energy.

Like Faribault's participation in Xcel's Partners in Energy Program, there is no direct cost for the City to participate in the Solar Group Program with Northfield and MREA. MREA would run the program, but the Faribault City Planner would participate in meetings to help Faribault property owners navigate the City's permitting process. The City would also help property owners become aware of the program by providing a link to the program on the City's website and posting flyers in appropriate locations. Interested

members of the City's Environmental Commission and interested residents would serve on an advisory committee to help promote the program.

**Recommendation:**

Authorize the Execution of a Memorandum of Understanding between MREA and the City of Faribault regarding a Solar Group Buy Program.

**Attachments:**

- Memorandum of Understanding between MREA and the City of Faribault regarding a Solar Group Buy Program



## MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

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On behalf of the MREA, I confirm our intent to partner with Faribault, MN, on a Grow Solar (solar group buy) program. Northfield and Faribault, MN will be MREA's primary partners for this program. Our program does not require a formal contract with you as there is no financial obligation, the jurisdiction role is advisory, and we fully address the program roles and responsibilities in a master service agreement with the selected contractor.

MREA holds the agreement with the solar installer (selected through competitive bid process by Advisory Committee), which outlines the scope of work and the terms and conditions of their participation. The contract requires the installer to adhere to the pricing schema they proposed, subject to audit by MREA. MREA's contract with the installer holds harmless the MREA, the Advisory Committee, the Program Team and all the program partners (jurisdictions and local nonprofit organizations, if any). The installer carries liability for the work they perform. For each solar installation, each individual property owner enters into their own contract with the installer separately.

In signing this memorandum, all parties commit to supporting the successful execution of the program as described as follows:

MREA will administer the program and manage public engagement including program website and public information sessions (i.e. Solar Power Hours). These responsibilities include but are not limited to:

- Preparing requests for proposals, establishing requirements and qualifications for the solar contractor, including but not limited to: NABCEP certification, Master Electrician on staff, locally headquartered.
- Convening advisory committee to review request for proposals and evaluate contractor proposals, including preparing a scoring rubric.
- Developing unique Grow Solar Rice County "Solar Power Hour" presentation;
- Developing and implementing a schedule of public information sessions;
- Contracting and managing local Solar Power Hour presentation facilitator;

- Creating promotional materials including posters, handbills, yard signs;
- Developing community partnerships to support program outreach efforts;
- Targeted social media advertising;
- Facilitating weekly conference calls with program partners;
- If necessary, auditing proposals given to participants by Contractor;
- Drafting press releases;
- Cultivating email contacts and sending regular informational and promotional emails;
- Developing local promotional partnerships with Solar Power Hour host venues and others.

To assist in facilitating a successful program, Faribault will strive to:

- Invite local stakeholders to join Northfield, Faribault, and MREA as partners to help promote the program;
- Have a staff member serve on an advisory committee, which ratifies request for proposals and evaluates proposals to select solar contractor for the program;
- Have a staff member participate in a limited number of team meetings via teleconference (typically 1 hour per week);
- Help MREA publicize the program by placing information on the City website, posting flyers, and other similar activities
- Provide a public space for in-person presentation, if gatherings are deemed safe by public health officials;
- Provide a projector, screen, and laptop for local facilitation of any in-person presentations; and
- Provide Faribault residents and businesses with an overview of the permitting process for solar installations in Faribault.

ACCEPTED BY:

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Peter Murphy  
Solar Program Director  
MREA

Date

Faribault City Council

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Kevin F. Voracek, Mayor

Date

ATTEST:

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Timothy C. Murray, City Administrator

Date