

SUBJECT: NORTH MAIN STREET PHOTOVOLTAIC ELECTRICAL GENERATION FACILITY (SOLAR FARM) – STREET TREE REMOVAL REQUEST

SOURCE: Public Works Department - Engineering Division

COMMENT: The developer, imMODO Solar, has submitted a building permit application for a Solar Photovoltaic Electrical Generation Facility (Solar Farm) on the west side of N. Main Street between W. North Grand Avenue and W. Linda Vista Avenue. Specific street infrastructure requirements include, but are not limited to, the construction of curbs, gutters and connecting pavement along N. Main Street and W. Linda Vista Avenue. In addition to the street project conditions is the requirement to construct a minimum 30' wide street frontage landscape buffer.

City Staff completed the first review of the street improvement plans and discovered that the developer did not intend to remove the existing large trees. Removal of these trees could become a sensitive issue with the public and for that reason only, the developer chose not to remove the existing trees. A thorough review of the improvement plans revealed that the existing large trees will be very close to the street once the proposed curb and gutter is constructed. AASHTO Geometric Design of Highways and Streets state two horizontal obstruction-free or "clear zone" policies and they are as follows:

- "For low speed rural collectors or rural local roads, a minimum clear-zone width of ten (10) feet should be provided."
- "For urban arterials, collectors and local streets where curbs are utilized, spaces for clear zones are generally restricted. A minimum offset distance of eighteen (18) inches should be provided beyond the face of curb, with wider offsets provided where practical."

In this particular case, there are eleven (11) large trees within 10 feet of the curb face and should be removed per the first stated policy. Five (5) of the eleven (11) trees are within 18 inches of the proposed curb face. Staff has recommended to the developer that all eleven (11) trees be removed for safety reasons. The developer is willing to remove the trees if directed to do so by the City.

Present and past City Councils have yet to adopt a tree ordinance, making the trees eligible for removal. The period for removing trees is the only substantive concern that the developer needs to be aware of. Removal of trees is allowed when not in conflict with migratory bird season, which is from February 1<sup>st</sup> through August 15<sup>th</sup>.

N. Main Street is designated an urban arterial, but currently functions as a rural collector. The speed limit for this segment of N. Main Street is 50 MPH. Staff is recommending the removal of the trees per the ASHTO low speed rural collector designation, exclusive of the proposed curb and gutter construction. It is the City Engineer's opinion that this segment of N. Main Street will continue to function as a rural collector for several years and speeds are typically higher than other streets within the City. These factors reinforced the City Engineer's opinion that this segment of N. Main Street should be designated as a 10 foot minimum clear zone.

RECOMMENDATION: That the City Council:

1. Designate a ten (10) foot "Clear Zone" along N. Main Street between W. North Grand Avenue and W. Linda Vista Avenue;
2. Authorize staff to implement the AASHTO design policies specific to creation of a safe "Clear Zone"; and
3. Authorize Staff to direct the developer of the N. Main Street Solar Farm to remove existing large trees within the designated "Clear Zone".