

ITEM #:	34
DATE:	06-23-26
DEPT:	P&R

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

SUBJECT: SOLAR PANELS FOR FITCH FAMILY INDOOR AQUATIC CENTER AND STEVEN L. SCHAIKER PLAZA

BACKGROUND:

The City's Climate Action Plan includes increasing renewable energy generation with one source of generation being solar energy.

City buildings have been reviewed and two sites, the Fitch Family Indoor Aquatic Center (FFIAC) and Steven L. Schainker Plaza (SSP) building, are deemed suitable for adding solar panels to portions of the roof. The FFIAC natatorium was designed and constructed to accommodate the extra weight of solar panels on the natatorium roof and the SSP building is able to support an array of panels. In the FY 2026/27 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), funding has been allocated to install solar panels on both buildings.

Staff developed a Request For Proposals (RFP) for adding solar to the FFIAC and SSP. The RFP was distributed on March 27, 2026. A pre-proposal meeting was held on April 9, 2026 with multiple companies in attendance. This meeting also included on-site vis

City staff reviewed and scored the proposals on several criteria including the firm's understanding of the project, experience with similar projects, proposed solar equipment reliability, production guarantees and warranties, and familiarity with federal tax credits and how these projects can maximize the tax credits available for these projects. The firms submitting proposals and their rankings are shown below:

FIRM	PROPOSAL SCORE	RANK
True Solar, Tiffin, IA	1040	1
CB Solar Inc., Des Moines, IA	990	2
Ideal Energy, LLC, Fairfield, IA	865	3
Brightergy, Liberty, MO	855	4
Rabe Hardware, Inc., Blairstown, IA	850	5
ECG Solar, Anamosa, IA	830	6
All Energy Solar, Inc., St. Paul, MN	805	7
Eagle Point Solar, Dubuque, IA	800	8

1 Source Solar, Ankeny, IA	755	9/10*
Blue Sky Solar, Dubuque, IA	755	9/10*
Ziegler Energy Solutions, LLC, Bloomington, MN	630	11

*Tied score

The top four ranked firms were invited for an on-site interview. Firms gave an overview of their proposal and answered questions from staff regarding the proposed systems, including equipment components selected with proven performance, warranties, and their ability to demonstrate completion of similar projects, and their ability to obtain tax credits for other public entities.

The final rank of the four firms included scores from its proposal, interview, and proposed cost. These are shown below:

FIRM	PROPOSAL SCORE	INTERVIEW SCORE	COST SCORE	TOTAL SCORE	FINAL RANK
CB Solar Inc., Des Moines, IA	990	1505	364	2859	1
True Solar, Tiffin, IA	1040	1420	344	2804	2
Brightergy, Liberty, MO	855	1510	376	2741	3
Ideal Energy LLC, Fairfield, IA	865	1275	380	2520	4

Staff also completed a cost comparison for these four firms and this information is shown below:

	Brightergy	CB Solar	Ideal Energy	True Solar
Proposed Cost	\$451,360	\$463,760	\$443,757	\$490,030
After Utility Rebate*	\$342,860	\$347,820	\$347,187	\$361,410
Estimated 25 YR Utility Savings	\$541,421	\$497,288	\$444,469	\$548,269
Payback (Years)	17	18	20	17
Potential Federal Tax Credit**	\$180,544	\$139,128	\$177,503	\$147,009
10 YR Operations & Maintenance (O&M) Plan***	\$ 40,400	N/A	\$ 6,500	\$ 7,300
kW Proposed****	217	231.88	193.14	257.24

* The utility rebate estimate is provided by Ames Electric and would be issued to the City.

** The credit, if approved, could be anywhere between 30-40% of the total project cost. It is

not guaranteed the City will receive this credit.

***The RFP did not require an O&M Plan. The RFP stated, "Firms will provide Operations & Maintenance Service Plan as an optional proposal for up to five years for the entire solar system."

****RFP proposers were asked to recommend the size of systems utilizing as much of the identified rooftops as possible.

After considering all aspects of each firm's proposal, staff is prepared to recommend that a contract be awarded to CB Solar. CB Solar has completed 24 solar projects in Ames and is familiar with the Ames interconnection process. Additionally, CB Solar is also providing the best warranty package of the final four firms.

As seen in the table above, CB Solar has N/A for the 10-year O&M plan. Rather than propose a five-year O&M Plan, the warranty CB Solar offers include 10-year workmanship; 10-year production guarantee; 20-year inverter and optimizer; and a 25-year panel warranty. The company is confident in the quality of equipment being installed, as is reflected in their warranty package.

CB Solar will be installing a combined 231 kW system for the FFIAC and SSP. The lifespan of the equipment is 25-30 years. This system will reduce emissions by 158 MT CO₂e annually, equivalent to the greenhouse gas emissions from approximately 37 gasoline-powered passenger vehicles driven for one year.

The FY 2026/27 CIP includes \$700,000 for the installation of solar panels at FFIAC (\$585,000 from GO Bonds, and \$115,000 from Ames Electric rebates) and \$70,000 (\$57,500 from Council Priority fund and \$12,500 from Ames Electric rebates) for the installation of solar panels at SSP, for a total of \$770,000 available for these projects.

If approved, the solar installation on FFIAC is anticipated to be completed by the end of 2026. The solar installation at the SSP will be completed by spring 2027.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Award a contract to CB Solar, Inc., Des Moines, IA to install solar panels on the Fitch Family indoor Aquatic Center and the Steven L. Schainker Plaza building in the amount of \$463,760.
2. Award a contract to one of the other firms.
3. Do not award a contract at this time.
4. Refer back to staff with direction as to how to proceed.

CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Renewable energy is a goal of the City's adopted Climate Action Plan. Installing solar panels on FFIAC and SSP invests in renewable energy and reduces carbon emissions and electric utility costs at both facilities.

When staff reviewed the proposals for this project, CB Solar was scored the highest.

The firm's representatives are very knowledgeable and proposed a high-quality system for both facilities, offering the best warranty package of all firms who submitted a proposal. CB Solar has completed 24 projects in Ames and its familiarity with the Ames interconnection process is an advantage. Considering all of the information, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that City Council approve Alternative #1 as stated above.