THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE

STAFF REPORT

Council Meeting Date: September 27, 2022

Subject: Interlocal Agreement with Buncombe County for Solar Feasibility Study.

Staff Resource(s): Bridget Herring, Sustainability Director

Action Requested: Adoption of a resolution authorizing the City Manager to enter into an interlocal agreement with Buncombe County to study the feasibility of installing solar on North Fork Reservoir and Lake Julian.

Background:

- The City will enter into an interlocal agreement with Buncombe County to give the authority to retain professional services for various feasibility studies (cost/benefit, utility infrastructure, environmental impact, service impact, etc.) of installing a floating solar energy system on the North Fork Reservoir.
- Buncombe County will manage vendor outreach, procurement, agreements for all professional services required and all fees associated with such services.
- The City will coordinate with Buncombe County staff and associated vendors to schedule access to the site and provide relevant information.
- The City will have a role in determining feasibility studies to be conducted.
- Feasibility of a floating solar system will also be considered concurrently for Lake Julian.
- The City does not own this site.

Council Goal(s):

- Thriving Local Economy
- A Clean and Healthy Environment

Committees(s):

- Planning and Economic Development, September 12 - supported interlocal agreement with Buncombe County for Solar Feasibility Study.

Pro(s):

- Supports Resolution 18-279 Establishing a 100% Renewable Energy Goal
- Supports Resolution 20-25 Declaration of a Climate Emergency
- Action prioritized in Moving to 100% Renewable Energy Roadmap

Con(s):

- This is a complex site for a variety of reasons, it is of the utmost importance that Council and the community understand that this effort may not result in solar being installed on the North Fork Reservoir.
- Feasibility may be deemed impractical due to:
    - A possible change in Water Supply I (WS1) designation (which is the most pristine designation available). North Fork Reservoir is the largest and most important source of water for the City of Asheville and is recognized as one of the best water sources within the state of North Carolina.
    - Any change in quality negatively impacts our ability to provide the best drinking water possible.
    - Lack of compliance with existing view shed agreement with the Blue Ridge Parkway
    - Ability to maintain security of our source of water at the reservoir which is currently highly restricted.

    - Impacts on endangered wildlife. Resident Bald Eagles use this reservoir, which may be impacted by a project of this nature.
    - Restrictions or potential requirement coming from the easement with the Conservation Trust of North Carolina
    - Lack of available utility infrastructure to connect to the utility grid
    - Ability to withstand water fluctuation in extreme weather conditions (most recently Tropical Storm Fred)
    - The cost of the project may outweigh the benefits and funding has not been currently identified

Fiscal Impact:

- No City funds will be utilized to complete this study.
- Buncombe County has budgeted $150,000 in total for studies at both North Fork Reservoir and Lake Julian. Buncombe County will provide 100% of the funding required for the feasibility studies and the only cost to the City will be through dedicated staff time.

Suggested Motion:

- Motion to adopt a resolution authorizing the City Manager to enter into an interlocal agreement with Buncombe County to study feasibility of installing solar on North Fork Reservoir and Lake Julian.

Attachment(s)

- Resolution

RESOLUTION NO. 22-____

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER TO ENTER INTO AN INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT WITH BUNCOMBE COUNTY TO STUDY THE FEASIBILITY OF INSTALLING SOLAR ON NORTH FORK RESERVOIR (CITY OWNED PROPERTY) AND LAKE JULIAN

WHEREAS, the City of Asheville has authority pursuant to N.C.G.S. 160A-461, units of local government may enter into agreements with each other in order to jointly exercise any power or function of local government; and

WHEREAS, per City Council Resolution No. 18-279, the City established a goal to transition to 100% renewable energy from fossil fuel energy by December 31, 2030; and

WHEREAS, onsite renewable energy systems will support City Council Resolution No. 11-77 to reduce the municipal carbon footprint at a rate of 4% per year; and

WHEREAS, partnering with Buncombe County will reduce the fiscal burden from the City to study installing a floating solar energy system on the North Fork Reservoir; and

WHEREAS, the City will coordinate with Buncombe County staff and associated vendors and the Conservation Trust of North Carolina which holds an easement on the North Fork property, to schedule access to the site, provide relevant information and have a role in determining feasibility studies to be conducted.

;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE THAT:

The City Manager is hereby authorized to enter into an interlocal agreement with Buncombe County to study the feasibility of installing a solar energy system on the North Fork Reservoir and Lake Julian. .

Read, approved and adopted this the 27th day of September, 2022.

_____ _____

City Clerk Mayor

Approved as to form:

_____

City Attorney