



# City Council Minutes

## The City of Cortland

### April 5, 2010

Council Meeting #10  
April 5, 2010  
Special Session  
City Hall  
7:00 PM

Present: Mayor Feiszli, Aldermen Tobin and Quail

Staff Present: Corporation Counsel Ronald Walsh and Director of Administration and Finance Bryan Gazda and Chris Bistocchi of DPW

Mayor Feiszli called the tenth Common Council meeting of the year to order at 7:00 PM.

No action was taken at this meeting due to a lack of a quorum, but an informational program was held and a presentation was given by Cortland Energy.

#### AGENDA

##### Item No. 1 – Presentation by Cortland Energy

Mark Skodzinsky of Cortland Energy distributed a handout regarding their proposed solar farm project on the Noss/Rosen site on Pendleton Street. Mr. Skodzinsky stated that Cortland Energy is a not for profit corporation. He explained that the Cortland based company was staffed by volunteers, but that might change if they were to get larger.

The plan is to start with seven (7) solar panels and as they receive more grants and donations they will add more units and sell the energy back to the grid. This project will also be used as a research facility and to help educate the public on renewable energy choices. He explained that they planned to design a ground mounted racking system where there would be no disturbance to the cap of the brown field. They plan to place concrete piers and a mount racking system designed by engineers to achieve this. He noted that the area is already fenced in and there is razor wire on the top of the fence. That will protect the panels which cost about \$2,000 each. He noted that they will be close to the high school and local manufacturing which are big power users. National Grid has noted that there have been some grid problems on that side of town and this project will help alleviate some of that.

He noted that the company plans to offer lease payments back to the City for the land at \$200 per acre per year. Depending on the amount of land used, that could be upwards of \$4,000 of income per year. He noted that because they are generating electricity, they also plan to donate a minimum of fifteen (15) percent of the energy generated from the solar farm back to the City. He noted that they couldn't direct the power to City Hall, but it basically would be a monetary give back to the City. He noted that it was hard to estimate how much electricity

would be generated until they were up and running, but perhaps they could give the City more than that once they began operations.

He opened a question and answer session at this point. He stated that the test phase of the project would involve around an acre of purchased panels. He went on to explain that if they were able to get enough funding for all twenty (20) acres, they could generate about one third (1/3) of the City's electricity needs. This plan also would depend on the location, direction and type of panels. He explained that one hundred percent (100) of the energy would go back to the grid, but fifteen (15) percent of the revenue would go back to the City. The dollar amount could not be estimated at this point. Grants and donations are anticipated to cover costs and there is a lot of federal money out there for renewable energy. The only cost to the company will be the cost of the land. He noted that once the panels are bought and installed by volunteers, the cost will only be the land. He noted that there is very little maintenance cost on the panels once they are installed.

He stated that weather would play a role, but there were different types of panels that could be purchased. They would be testing out panels to see which ones best suited the weather and the site. He stated that the panels would be tempered glass with a special coating on them. The company was attracted to the land in that there wasn't much use for that property and this could put the property to good use. The security of the area also attracted them as an acre of panels could run \$100,000. He noted that they currently didn't have funding and they were also waiting to receive their 501 (c) 3 status from the Internal Revenue Service soon. They also had preliminary commitments from some foundations that would like to give out grants. He stated that they would like to have the first installed before this summer.

He noted that being not for profit, the revenue generated would have to go back into the operation to grow it and to provide an educational and research facility. He stated that they did not plan to build a building on that site. There would be no slab poured or grading to disturb the cap. If they later decided to open an office, it would be on rented space somewhere in town. This project is a field research facility. He stated that National Grid only distributed power that they purchased from various producers and National Grid would pay Cortland Energy for the power it produced. National Grid is also mandated by the State to purchase power first from a renewable source, which this is. He also noted that eighty-five (85) percent of the revenue would be used to scale up the farm as time went by. There are no shareholders.

He noted that he and many of the volunteers were local individuals. He stated that once all the panels are installed, there would not be a lot of in and out traffic to the site. There might be a field researcher or two out there and there would be periodic cleaning of the panels. The panels are guaranteed for twenty (20) years. The specific cost of the panels is yet to be determined.

He stated that the company would negotiate with the City regarding access to the site to do maintenance that the EPA required as well as mowing of grass, etc. He also noted that if persons accessed the site illegally and they played around with the panels, they could be electrocuted. He stated the perimeter of the site was secured with fencing topped with razor wire and that should be enough. It was not as dangerous as a power sub-station, but if someone was playing around with the wires, it would be like playing around with the wiring in a house.

He noted that the company would like to purchase panels from a U.S. company if they could. The cost of the infrastructure and panels for the first install would be about \$100,000. This plan would be Phase I of the pilot program. He noted that being a 501 (c) 3, there was no payback,

so everything earned would be straight revenue. He noted that once they got past the installation of a few acres using grants and donations, the rest of the project would grow from revenues received. He noted that there were a lot of federal and state grant programs for this as well as the support of NYSERDA and National Grid. There are also National Brown Field Reuse programs through NYSERDA and National Grid. As soon as they receive the 501 (c) 3 status, grant monies could begin to be received. They currently have one (1) hard commitment and then some soft ones. There have been solar projects in California and Michigan, but none nearby or like this. He stated that there is more grant money available for development of a brown field site than for a site located on a regular piece of property. He noted that putting up security fencing for an alternate site would be very costly.

He stated that they would consider sharing the site, but from the initial plans from the other entity that he received, it looked like they planned to take up most of the land and there might be a concern from a security standpoint if the site were shared. There was some brief discussion regarding possible income comparisons between this company and a private company being on the site.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:33 p.m.

**I, CAROL TYTLER, CITY CLERK OF THE CITY OF CORTLAND, NEW YORK DO HEREBY CERTIFY THAT A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE COMMON COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF CORTLAND WAS HELD ON THE 5TH DAY OF APRIL 2010. I FURTHER CERTIFY THE FOREGOING MINUTES WERE PRESENTED TO THE MAYOR IN THE TIME REQUIRED.**

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CAROL TYTLER – CITY CLERK

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MAYOR SUSAN FEISZLI