



MINUTES

RICHLAND CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP MEETING

Tuesday, March 25, 2025

Richland City Hall ~ Council Chambers
625 Swift Boulevard

City Council Workshop - 6:00 p.m.

Mayor Richardson called the Council workshop to order at 6:00 p.m.

Attendance: Mayor Richardson	Present
Mayor Pro Tem Kent	Present
Councilmember Jones	Present
Councilmember Lukson	Present (Remote via Zoom)
Councilmember Maier	Present
Councilmember VanDyke	Present
Councilmember Whitten	Present

Also present were City Manager Amundson, Deputy City Manager Schiessl, Assistant City Manager Florence, City Attorney Kintzley, Finance Director Allen, Fire Chief Huntington, Public Works Director D'Alessandro, Chief of Police Pilcher, and City Clerk Rogers.

Agenda Items

1. Industrial Growth of the City North of the Northwest Advanced Clean Energy Park

Deputy City Manager (DCM) Schiessl began by stating the purpose of the discussion was to explore potential Industrial Growth North of the Northwest Advanced Clean Energy Park (NACEP). He was joined by Tim Haddick from the Department of Energy (DOE), with additional representatives from DOE, Pacific Northwest Site Office (PNSO), and Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL) present in the audience for possible input.

DCM Schiessl framed the discussion as a high-level policy question and two task-level questions: to determine whether the City and its partners should engage with Congress to acquire additional industrial land from the DOE; whether the City should engage the DOE regarding fire services; and whether the City should engage with DOE regarding possible acquisition and operation of a substation and electric distribution system.

DCM Schiessl rooted the conversation in the City of Richland's policy documents, noting that the Strategic Plan calls for high-performance government, strengthened partnerships, and focused development, all of which are tied to the success of the Clean Energy Park. He also referenced the Comprehensive Land Use Plan (CLUP), which encourage commercial and industrial growth on lands previously owned by the DOE. In addition, he cited Contract 350-19, a 2019 agreement with Battelle that supported the

creation of a new fire station in north Richland and expanded emergency response capabilities to serve DOE interests, particularly at PNNL.

Using maps from the presentation, DCM Schiessl reviewed the current status of NACEP, highlighting the commitments already made to projects such as Ruby Flats Solar, Washington Energy LLC, and Atlas Agro, as well as a potential data center interest. He pointed out that interest in the park has exceeded expectations, prompting the need to begin planning for the next phase of industrial development.

The focus then shifted to a 5,200-acre corridor north of the Clean Energy Park identified as industrial in DOE's CLUP. The area has minimal existing infrastructure, limited to a few access roads, a power distribution line, and a rail line to Energy Northwest, and would require significant investment and coordination for development.

Several maps illustrating ownership complexities were referenced. One key project mentioned was the proposed 8,000-acre Hecate Solar Farm, which overlaps with land surrounding the Clean Energy Park. DCM Schiessl emphasized the need for careful planning and a long-term outlook, noting that land acquisition processes can take six (6) to eight (8) years, as demonstrated by the last land transfer facilitated by Tri-Cities Development Council (TRIDEC). That previous transfer, like the one now being considered, occurred at no cost but came with requirements for economic development and restrictions on land use.

Councilmembers raised questions about infrastructure needs, environmental conditions, costs, potential risks, and the feasibility of including residential development (which the DOE does not support for this land). DCM Schiessl acknowledged risks related to acquiring former nuclear land but assured that due diligence and environmental review would be part of any acquisition effort. He also addressed the ongoing role of the Intertribal Advisory Board (ITAB), which was established to uphold tribal consultation obligations after the previous land transfer. He indicated that future negotiations might involve further tribal considerations, such as access to culturally significant lands like Rattlesnake Mountain.

Mr. Haddick affirmed that DOE's long-term intent is to reduce its physical footprint to the central plateau of the Hanford site, which aligns with local interests in repurposing surrounding land for industrial growth. While he could not commit on behalf of DOE, Mr. Haddick confirmed that DOE's land-use planning supports industrial use of the area in question.

DCM Schiessl concluded that, given the strategic importance of the land, increasing interest from private partners, and alignment with local and federal plans, the City should begin preliminary engagement with congressional and federal partners to explore the possibility of acquiring the land. He reiterated that starting the process now was prudent, as the timeline to complete a transfer and ready the land for development is lengthy and complex.

Mr. Haddick presented on the proposed development of Hanford Fire Station 93. He explained that PNSO and PNNL had previously approached Richland City Council to explore the potential for expanding fire services further north. This idea originally stemmed from a decision made over a decade ago by the Richland Operations Office to eventually replace the current fire station in the 300 Area with a new facility closer to the Central Plateau.

Although the process was delayed by events such as COVID-19, planning has resumed and a new station near the vitrification plant is now in development. The project has received funding and is expected to break ground this summer, with completion anticipated in two and a half to three years.

Meanwhile, Fire Station 93 has continued to deteriorate and is reaching a point where it may no longer be habitable. This has prompted an accelerated timeline for relocating its personnel and services. In collaboration with PNSO and PNNL, the City is now examining the feasibility of moving operations further north sooner than originally planned.

Mr. Haddick also highlighted the growing need for emergency response services at the Hammer and PTA facilities along Horn Rapids Road, which are currently underserved. As a result, the City is being asked to consider expanding the response area to not only include the Hanford 300 Area, but also Hammer Training and Patrol Training Academy (PTA). The proposed timeline for the move could be early as this fall, and the City's interest and capacity to support this expanded plan is now under discussion.

Next, DCM Schiessl presented on the possible acquisition and operation of a substation and electric distribution infrastructure currently operated by DOE, along with a transmission line that serves a small electric load. He noted that although the substation is large, it supports a relatively small load, resulting in underutilization. The station was described as redundant, well-built, and not suffering from deferred maintenance, though its components are becoming obsolete due to age and outdated technology.

DCM Schiessl framed this presentation as preliminary notice that the Energy Services Department may bring forward a recommendation later in the year for the City to take over this infrastructure. If that happens, the City would begin serving small loads in the Hanford 300 Area directly by the end of the year, and the substation's connection to the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) grid could be utilized for broader energy needs.

It was noted that in North Richland, utility service rights are influenced by proximity to new loads. Currently, Benton PUD serves Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory (LIGO) and has a presence in the Hanford 400 Area, which may be significant as the City considers expanding its industrial base.

Council offered comments and engaged in a question-and-answer session with staff and Mr. Haddick throughout the presentations.

Additional information can be found in the PowerPoint Presentation included in the agenda packet.

Closing Comments

At Mayor Richardson's request, Fire Chief Huntington provided an update to the Yakima Delta fire that began on Sunday morning.

Future Workshop Agenda Items

None.

Adjournment

Mayor Richardson adjourned the workshop at 7:13 p.m.

APPROVED:



Theresa Richardson, Mayor

ATTEST:



Jennifer Rogers, City Clerk

DATE APPROVED: April 1, 2025

DATE PUBLISHED: April 2, 2025