

Chino Valley Council hears presentation on APS battery energy storage facility

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Originally Published: May 3, 2022 1:24 p.m.

APS is planning to construct a battery energy storage facility next to its solar field on 1900 East Road 4 South in Chino Valley as part of its Solar After Sunset program.

These battery cells will capture solar energy at midday and store it for use after sunset. The facility will have 120 cubes, with approximately 830 battery cells per cube, for a total of about 99,800 battery cells.

Mackenzie Rodgers, division director for APS' Northern Arizona division, gave a presentation about the battery storage project to the Chino Valley Town Council during its regular meeting April 26 at town hall.

The construction of the energy storage facility will begin in October and should be completed by April 2023. It will provide power for 10,000 homes for four hours at a time. The site was designed for batteries when it was built in 2011. The battery energy storage system will be on a half acre of the 150 acres for the solar plant. The batteries will be visible from East Road 4 South, but will not reach above the fence line.

Rodgers said APS has worked closely with first responders to ensure they are fully trained to respond to any situation adding that the facility will be a safe distance from any homes. The batteries will be 2,300 feet from the nearest home.

“Safety is our number one priority and this project is no different,” she said.

Rodgers said the energy storage facility will help APS reach its goal of 100 percent clean energy by 2050. APS now has 50 percent of its electricity as carbon free. Another target is 65 percent by 2030.

Chino Valley Mayor Jack Miller told Rodgers that she gave a good presentation. The presentation was informational and did not require any council action.

Rodgers also gave a presentation about APS' Fire Mitigation Program saying that APS is ranked among the most reliable electric utilities in America. She said that wildfires are unpredictable in Arizona with 402,000 lightning strikes last year.

She said their program involves prevention, mitigation and response.

The prevention includes helping with firewise pointers, removing vegetation, creating defensible spaces around power poles and tips of where trees should or should not be placed.

Regarding mitigation, if there is a power outage APS will not restore power until it can be done safely and mesh is placed around the wooden poles in case of fire. Local “troublemen” are available 24/7 in case issues arise.

The response can include notifications in case of fire and alerts for outtages. Customers can receive these messages on social media ranging from email to Facebook.

During the call to the public, Bob Schacherer, a member of Chino Alliance for Responsible Growth, said when he moved to Chino Valley that it was a nice and quiet town with friendly people, but a lot is changing. He said residents don’t find out about a lot of the zoning changes until it’s too late.

“You are swaying toward developers and not the people. That’s why I will run for council,” he said.

Council action taken as a result of public comments are limited to directing staff to study the matter or schedule the matter for consideration, or responding to the criticism. There was no response to Schacherer’s comments.

In other council news:

*Town Manager Cindy Blackmore praised the opening of the new disc golf course at Chino Valley Community Center Park. She specifically praised Koby Scherer for putting in a lot of hours to create the park and Ryan Hannon for designing the park.

*The council approved spending \$72,280 with EPS Group, Inc., for the Perkinsville Road, Water and Sewer extension. The vote was unanimous with Councilman Lon Turner absent.

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