



City of River Falls News Release

For Immediate Release:

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LICENSE EXTENSION GRANTED FOR RIVER FALLS HYDRO PROJECT Federal Energy Regulatory Commission Action Supports Kinnickinnic River Corridor Planning Process

On Thursday, March 17, 2016, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) [granted](#) rehearing of their earlier denial of the City's request for a five-year license extension for the River Falls Hydroelectric Project (P-10489) to accommodate the Kinnickinnic River Corridor Planning Process.

The City was issued a 30-year license by FERC in 1988 to operate the project until August 31, 2018, which required submittal of a license application by August 31, 2016. Today's action extends the license term to 2023 and delays any notice by the City to FERC to August 31, 2018 on whether the City will relicense or surrender the license. FERC's order found that the unique circumstances in this case, such as the unanimous stakeholder support for the extension, the river corridor plan, and the size of the project, all demonstrate that a five-year extension of the license is in the public interest.

"It's the common sense decision," noted Utilities Director Kevin Westhuis. "We will now be able to have the community discussion around the river corridor, the dams, and the hydros with the results of this discussion to guide us in making future decisions about the hydroelectric facilities in River Falls."

The City is now preparing to continue only with the Kinnickinnic River Corridor Planning Process as developed in consultation with stakeholders and endorsed by the River Falls City Council. The planning process will broaden the focus of the community to the broader Kinnickinnic River Corridor, and will simultaneously establish the vision for the River with or without the hydroelectric facilities.

In his letter to the community on March 16, City Administrator Scot Simpson indicated that the City would be issuing two separate consulting requests: one for the River Corridor Plan and one for a minimal hydroelectric relicensing process. Asked to react today, Simpson said, "In this case, I am fine with the fact that my letter was sent a day too soon. I am very pleased we can eliminate a dual track process and work together as a community without the licensing process standing in the way. This order immediately suspends our plans for two separate planning processes and I am thrilled FERC acted timely to allow us to all focus on the coordinated planning process by granting an extension of the license."

Community Development Director, Buddy Lucero, emphasized that, "throughout the preparation of the Kinnickinnic River Corridor Plan the City will be committed to active public outreach and participation."

The City Council and Utility Advisory Board (UAB) are still operating under a resolution that carefully considers any significant repairs to the hydroelectric facilities before approving them, in light of the unknown future they may have. This order does not change the cautious approach included in that action by the City Council. Any expense over \$5,000 still requires UAB approval. The resolution also directed net proceeds from operating the hydros to be used for future projects that will arise from the corridor plan.

The next few years will prove to be a fruitful and engaging time for the community as we look to the future and provide a vision to be realized in the years to come.

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