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Northampton Seeks Community Input on Energy Saving Streetlights

By the end of the summer of 2016, Northampton plans on replacing all of the city's public streetlights with new LED lights. Over 2,000 city owned streetlights will be replaced, saving the city an estimated \$170,000 in operating costs annually. According to Siemens Industry, Inc., the company chosen by Northampton to upgrade the streetlights, the new LED lights will use 70% less electricity than the current fixtures, further reducing the municipality's greenhouse gas emissions. The new streetlights will also last four times longer than current bulbs and, unlike the current bulbs, they contain no mercury, which is highly toxic to humans and other species if not disposed of properly.

Last week the Northampton City Council gave the Mayor final approval needed to advance this \$980,405 project. The city anticipates receiving nearly \$190,000 in electric utility energy efficiency rebates from National Grid to offset this cost. With that level of rebate and given the annual operating cost savings, the LED streetlights are expected to pay for themselves within five years.

The new LED streetlights will also produce less light than the current fixtures, however a person's ability to perceive objects, to see, by the LED streetlights will be an improvement over the current technology. This is because the spectrum of light provided by LED light is more compatible with human vision. Therefore, less light is needed to provide the same level of clarity. This is particularly true when compared to the yellow light produced by high-pressure sodium lamps that comprise the bulk of the city's current streetlights. According to Chris Mason, Northampton's Energy and Sustainability Officer, one thing the new LED lamps will not do is waste any light skyward. "Light will instead be directed closer to where it is actually needed, said Mr. Mason, meeting Northampton's Dark Sky requirements." Current streetlights were grandfathered when the city adopted the Dark Sky Ordinance in 2006.

"LED fixtures can also be made to produce white light ranging from a cooler, bluer light, to a white light, to a warmer, more yellow light," said Mr. Mason, "and the city would like feedback from the community on which they prefer before we give Siemens the go-ahead to purchase

the new streetlights.” Mr. Mason said that the city had already received numerous comments from residents that they did not want a blue-white light so the city has had Siemens install eight sample fixtures, four that would be considered “white” and four that would be considered “warm white.” These are located just south of downtown Northampton along Randolph Place, Holyoke Street and on Pleasant Street between Randolph and Holyoke.

Community members can go to <http://ma-northampton.civicplus.com/1688/LED-Streetlights> to see a map of the sample lamp locations and complete a feedback form on what fixtures are preferred. The city is particularly interested in hearing how well people like the different light colors. The feedback form will be available until May 9, 2016, allowing people 10 days to vote.