

March 16, 2016

Dear Community Members and Interested Parties,

I am writing to provide you with an update on the next steps for the Kinnickinnic River Corridor Plan and the River Falls Hydroelectric Project. You can read my [December 11, 2015 letter](#) on the City's website.

In the seven years I have been fortunate to call River Falls home, I have found this community be engaging, thoughtful, and ready for a change. Like most of you, I like the small town feel, big city proximity, and the access to the natural environment River Falls offers. I consider it an honor to help the community set a course and realize its hopes and dreams for the future. There is a lot going on in the City and a lot to be proud of. We are a consensus-focused community and we know how to rally around things that are important to us. The next three years present a unique opportunity for all of us to rally, to set a course, and determine our future as it relates to the River.

The City Council endorsed a strategy of engagement and study for the Kinnickinnic River Corridor Plan that would examine our community, the River, and the relationship amongst the two over the next three years. A key aspect in many people's minds is the fate of the two dams.

Shortly, City staff will be releasing two requests for proposal for professional consultants that reflect the path before us. As you know, the river corridor plan assumed an extension of the City's license to operate the hydroelectric facilities at least until August 31, 2023. An extension puts the re-licensing deadline at August 31, 2021. That request was initially denied by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). We filed a request for rehearing that is under consideration by FERC. Unfortunately, FERC is unable to give us a timeline on their review of our extension and we have some initial paperwork to complete by August 31, 2016 regarding the hydroelectric facilities. Given the uncertainty, we are proceeding as if the requested extension will not be granted.

The denial of the license extension is not a reason to abandon, hasten, or somehow materially change our plans to discuss that larger river corridor. The City Council-endorsed community planning process for the river corridor is still a key strategic priority for the coming years. I encourage all community members and interested parties to focus our time and energy on this process (The Kinnickinnic River Corridor Planning Process). It is a unique planning opportunity where the community gets to decide the vision for the Kinnickinnic River from tip-to-toe in and around the City of River Falls. That plan has the potential to be transformative for the community (with or without the dams).

Alongside the river corridor plan process, the City will also be proceeding with the very minimal technical relicensing of the hydroelectric facilities allowed by law. That is, we will submit basic documents and fulfill the minimum requirements for relicensing to keep that option open, in anticipation that the Corridor plan will ultimately determine the fate of hydroelectric generation and the dams.

While the primary focus is the river corridor plan, the City cannot ignore the reality of the licensing requirements it faces. These submittals **will be** for dam relicensing. In **no way** does that

March 16, 2016

commit the City to continue to operate the hydroelectric facilities for 30 years. We own the facilities and we can cease operations at any point that the community determines it is in its best interest. The hydroelectric relicensing does not require 30 years of operation it simply allows that as an option. The key date for relicensing is not August 31, 2016. Rather, that is the date a minimal application for re-licensing must be submitted. The key date for a relicensing decision remains August 31, 2018.

To continue along this path, proposals will be requested from professional consulting firms to provide planning and technical support for the river corridor plan process **and** for the relicensing of the hydroelectric project. There will be significant opportunities for input on the river corridor, and I encourage all of you to get involved. The process will be energizing and will require the community to set priorities and their vision.

I see few sets of circumstances that a decision on the dams will be made before 2017.

The City Council has repeatedly indicated that the implementation plan for the adopted Kinnickinnic River Corridor Plan is the path with which the community can indicate its desires to them. Again, in the river corridor plan, the community gets to make decisions and provide the vision. It can do so by taking the time necessary to evaluate important factors, have significant community dialogue and sort out the complexities inherent in financial, cultural, and environmental dynamics.

Thank you to all of you who have written your city representatives and city staff, and have participated in the process thus far. I am excited for the steps ahead and look forward to working with everyone to develop a plan we can all be proud of.

Stay vigilant, but be patient. This process will take years, not months. Your engagement will be crucial for our collective success.

Sincerely,

Scot E. Simpson, City Administrator