

Denton may get heat and power plant

Saturday, February 5, 2011

By Lowell Brown / Staff Writer

Denton Municipal Electric is studying the potential application of a 10-megawatt combined heat and power plant in Denton, but details of the project haven't been made public.

DME has signed confidentiality agreements with a limited number of customers whose businesses could benefit from the proposed energy facility, so officials are restricted in what they can say for now, spokeswoman Lisa Lemons said.

DME officials have discussed the project with the City Council and the council-appointed Public Utilities Board in closed-door sessions, she said.

The council on Tuesday approved a \$146,806 contract with engineering firm Burns & McDonnell to secure the necessary environmental permits to build the proposed facility. The action came with no public discussion as part of the council's consent agenda, where multiple items are passed with a single vote.

The city had already hired the firm to handle air permits for natural gas turbines that would be part of the facility. The project also is expected to include the construction of a natural gas pipeline, according to documents provided to the council.

The exact location has not been made public.

Combined heat and power, also known as CHP or cogeneration, is when electricity and thermal energy is produced simultaneously from a single fuel source, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. The facilities are an alternative to the more common practice of customers buying power from a local utility and burning fuel in a furnace or boiler to make thermal energy.

The Environmental Protection Agency estimates that two-thirds of the energy in fuel is lost as vented heat at most U.S. power plants. CHP facilities use heat-recovery technology to trap some of the wasted heat.

The EPA promotes the facilities because of their potential to reduce fossil fuel use and the associated air pollution, including greenhouse gases.

LOWELL BROWN can be reached at 940-566-6882. His e-mail address is lmbrown@dentonrc.com.