



## Council approves solar panels at Chesterfield athletic fields

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**CHESTERFIELD** • Chesterfield officials are pretty sure some glass solar panels to be installed as part of new bleacher cover rooftops on four of the athletic fields at the Chesterfield Valley Athletic Complex will hold up against the threat of foul balls.

“We even took a sample of this safety glass panel to a pitching machine out there and shot a ball at it at 60 miles per hour — it shattered but didn’t break,” Mike Geisel, the city’s director of public services, told the City Council on Monday night.

The City Council voted 5-2 to approve installation of the eight solar panel bleacher covers at the complex, at 17925 North Outer 40 Road, at a cost of up to \$204,000 by contractor Day and Night Solar. Council members Nancy Greenwood and Bruce DeGroot were opposed and Barry Flachsbart was absent.

The city originally had planned to use corrugated steel panels for the bleacher covers at a cost of \$154,000 but learned that the \$50,000 extra cost for installation of the solar panels would be reimbursed by Ameren Missouri, Geisel said.

“And the panels will potentially generate electricity that can be sold back to Ameren Missouri, to offset our cost, and generate an estimated \$4,700 annually in electrical savings for us,” he said.

“Ameren Missouri has agreed to buy back power generated from the panels for up to 10 years at a certain rate.”

These are the last of the fields at the complex to get bleacher covers but the first to have solar panels, he said.

However, Greenwood protested that these would be the first solar panels to be installed in any ballpark in this area, “and I have great reservations about our being the guinea pig for solar in ballfields,” she said.

Geisel countered that most other ballparks don’t use bleacher covers at all.

He said the solar panels will have a 25-year output warranty and there is a 10-year warranty on the solar inverter, with the system expected to hold up for more than 20 years.

“We were concerned that these covers would look different and wondered if they could be damaged by foul balls, so, just in case, we’ve designed a net to go over the top of these covers to prevent direct hits,” he said.

“And we are insured in case panels would break.”