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By Jenny Lancour for the Daily Press

ESCANABA - Escanaba City Council is pleased with the progress being made as preliminary steps are taken toward the goal of a new power plant for the city.

The city recently received a good review on a recent study, showing no problems from an environmental standpoint, to build a 250-megawatt power plant. The Environmental Fatal Flaw Analysis (EFFA) was presented to Council last month (See related story). "That was very, very good news," Mayor Judi Schwalbach told Council members last Thursday. "We answered a lot of questions in that report."

Council is also pleased that Wisconsin Public Power Inc. (WPPI) has an interest in sharing ownership and costs in the new facility. WPPI is paying for half of the costs of the studies involved (See related story). A project of this magnitude requires several studies beyond the EFFA study, said Robert Headden, electrical superintendent. Once one study is accomplished, it gives the OK for other studies to follow, each reducing the risks to build a plant, he said.

Another study now underway is a Large Generator Interconnection Study to determine if modifications to the existing transmission system are too costly to build a new plant, Headden said.

This is a three-phase study starting with a feasibility study to determine if necessary transmission modifications are not excessive. A system impact study would then take place followed by a facilities study. WPPI is sharing in the cost of these studies. City Council approved an amount not to exceed \$100,000 for the city's share of the three-phase study.

The Large Generator Interconnection Study is required by the Midwestern Independent System Operator - which controls the transmission system - and the American Transmission Company - which owns the transmission lines.

Other items in the power plant timeline include a fuel study, the joint agreement between the city and WPPI, and applications to the Public Service Commission. Preliminary designs have to be drawn up. Air and water permit applications need to be submitted. Engineers and contractors have to be hired.

"This is a very complicated process. You have to ease forward and make sure you have everything covered," Headden said. "It's a long process." If everything goes as scheduled, a new power plant could be in service in Escanaba by the year 2011, Headden said. "This is not a given. The citizens of Escanaba will be the ones that make a decision," he added. "But to secure the city's future with

enough energy to back it up, right now, (a new plant) is the only option," Headden said.