



CITY OF GRAND RAPIDS

House Energy Committee 6/19/19 – HB 4477 (Johnson)

Good morning and thank you Chairman Bellino and members of the House Energy Committee for having a hearing to consider House Bill 4477. My name is Karyn Ferrick and I am the Government and Legislative Affairs Manager for the City of Grand Rapids. Here with me today is Battalion Chief Jack Johnson from the Grand Rapids Fire Department.

House Bill 4477 is a step in the right direction as it relates to both public safety and the environment. The City of Grand Rapids supports this direction and applauds you for considering this legislation. This bill would provide an incentive to installing backup energy systems that are powered using renewable energy sources such as solar panels. Battalion Chief Johnson is going to speak to how this legislation would have been helpful during a recent ice storm in Grand Rapids.

On February 7th, 2019 the City of Grand Rapids and the greater Kent County region was impacted by an ice storm. The storm left more than 42,000 city residents without power and taxed the emergency response services with over 300 calls for downed power lines and approximately 150 branches or trees blocking streets and sidewalks.

The City's Emergency Operations Center opened that morning and began coordinating efforts to assist the residents affected by the outage. Two emergency shelters were opened for those unable to find alternate methods of heating during the frigid temperatures.

Of particular concern were two large adult care facilities. One of the facilities had a generator; however, it was only able to be operational for 12-24 hours. The residents that relied on oxygen and other palliative care measures that relied on electricity needed to be moved to the aforementioned emergency shelters. The EOC with the assistance of GRFD, GRPD and the Rapid Transit system moved the residents to the shelters, where they remained for the next 3 days.

If these facilities had the capability to operate from their own microgrid, the impact to the residents and the City would have been minimal.

In addition to the adult care facilities that were without power, some of the Fire Stations in the city also experienced a power loss. Currently all GR City Fire Stations have backup generators powered by natural gas. As the City moves towards greener initiatives for long term sustainability, the option to receive power from renewable resources during times of emergency would assist in making our carbon footprint smaller.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak about HB 4477 and we would welcome the opportunity to work with the Chair and the Sponsor of this bill as it moves through the process.