FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 4, 2020

School Board makes final approval for solar project, on track to begin installation this month

[EAU CLAIRE, WI] The Eau Claire Area School District Board of Education made the final approval at the August 3 board meeting to accept the second gift of 360 panels for the Solar on Eau Claire Schools project, a fund of the Eau Claire Public Schools Foundation. The action paves the way for the arrays’ installation atop Memorial and North High schools, 360 panels at each building, beginning this month. All 720 panels for the project have been generously donated by the Couillard Solar Foundation.

“Couillard Solar Foundation emphasizes educating Wisconsin students on alternative energy sources that are environmentally and financially beneficial,” says Cal Couillard, the foundation’s creator. “As a graduate of the Eau Claire Area School District, I am personally excited to see this project come to fruition. This is a bright light for our students and Eau Claire community.”

Eagle Point Solar from Dubuque, IA was selected from the district’s competitive bid process, and recommended to the school board in July. With the recommendation approved, Eagle Point Solar will install the arrays, as part of the Solar on Schools initiative of Couillard Solar Foundation in partnership with Midwest Renewable Energy Association. Local solar specialists, Next Step Energy, and engineers, Lien & Peterson, facilitated the project’s early stages and design.

With the contract awarded, final numbers are in. The Solar on Eau Claire Schools project is raising the $291,000 needed to fund the electrical engineering design, installation, racking, and 25-year maintenance contract for the two arrays. The
campaign is nearing its goal, with approximately $35,000 left to raise, thanks in part to the Pablo Foundation matching gift challenges over the spring months.

Once installation is complete, the solar panels’ performance will be incorporated into the STEM curriculum at the two high schools, as well as expose students to career opportunities in the environmental and solar industries. In addition, the arrays will save Eau Claire Area School District approximately $20,000 per year in utility costs.

School board leader, Tim Nordin, shared his enthusiasm for the project. “As the Eau Claire School Board President, a parent of two children in Eau Claire schools, and a donor myself, I could not be more excited about this project,” he affirmed. “Solar on Eau Claire Schools is a great step forward for us in green energy, responsible stewardship of our environment and school budgets, and a better Eau Claire. It will also have enormous impacts on our students as they learn from solar data generated at their own schools, inspiring our future leaders to live and work with a focus on sustainable energy.”

Eau Claire Public Schools Foundation works to support innovation in the district’s schools and classrooms. “The community has truly shown up for this project. Because of Couillard Solar Foundation’s generous gift of panels, Pablo Foundation’s match challenges, and the incredible community response with their gifts, this innovative project is becoming realized,” said Eau Claire Public Schools Foundation Executive Director Sarah French. “We are grateful for the impact this will have on our students!”

With approximately $35,000 left to be raised, there is still time to join the initiative. Because the panels have been donated by the Couillard Solar Foundation, gifts to the Solar on Eau Claire Schools Fund support the project’s remaining costs, making it exclusively community supported. To donate, visit the ECPSF website at www.ecpsfound.org, keyword search “solar.”

Eau Claire Public Schools Foundation is a nonprofit, independent organization that connects the community and Eau Claire Area School District to inspire and enhance the educational experience of our students. Through charitable donations gifted from community members and businesses, ECPSF is able to provide schools with their greatest needs, support educator creativity, and grow endowment funds to enable future giving. www.ecpsfound.org