

Cape Coral light flap leaves some seeing red

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Posted: Sep 10, 2015 11:15 PM EDT Updated: Sep 11, 2015 12:22 AM EDT

By Graham Hunter, Reporter

A few LED street lights at a Cape Coral water treatment facility are causing some to see red after the city asked the Lee County Electric Cooperative (LCEC) for an energy-efficient pilot program.

But NBC2 learned the result isn't quite what the city wanted.

Oliver Clarke, a city engineer, is ready to move forward and start installing LED street lights, and residents are ready for it, too. Clarke says it's time for replacements because they'll save money, and he wants to show them off in the community.

He said the energy savings is equal to 374 homes -- or more than 3,000 tons of coal -- and almost \$1 million per year.

"There's no reason for us to delay," he said. "Other communities have done it. It's not that hard to figure out."

Resident Dick Zack agrees.

"How do you walk away from a million-dollar savings," he said.

Clarke wanted the demonstration of the LED lights on SE 32nd Terrace near Del Prado because it's an already developed roadway and a place where it would be easy for people to see them.

LCEC, though, says it's not that easy.

CEO Dennie Hamilton said there was a liability concern.

"We declined to put them where they requested. We found a separate location to put those lights in," he said.

"They insisted on a location that was impossible for the public to view it," Clarke said.

For now, the only place the lights are visible is behind the gates at the water treatment facility -- and Hamilton concedes that they weren't supposed to be back that far. He said they'll be moved soon.

"This was a case where we dropped the ball," Hamilton said.

Now, both Clarke and the rest of the community are ready to move on.

Clarke would like the lights put in at 1,100 school bus stops in the city that don't have a street light nearby.

"With everybody changing light bulbs over to LEDs because they save money," Zack said, "it's the logical way to go."