

Willmar Utilities continues LED streetlight trial

Utility official says he hopes to have dozen lights up by the end of the year

By David Little

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WILLMAR — Officials of Willmar Municipal Utilities are continuing to study replacing high-pressure sodium streetlights with costlier but energy-efficient LED streetlights. LED stands for light-emitting diode.

The utility this year bought three Phillips-brand LED units and placed one at each of three residential locations. Also, the utility received a sample GE-brand LED unit that was placed near a Phillips unit on 23rd Street Southeast for comparison purposes Sept. 26.

Jeff Kimpling, manager of electric services, told the Municipal Utilities Commission on Monday that the GE unit's "on-the-street" light pattern was as good or better than the Phillips unit. Also, Kimpling said the GE unit cuts off the light pattern at the curb line. He said some people want their front yard lit up while others complain about too much light for sleeping.

Following this review, Kimpling said he ordered the purchase of three GE units for a one-year test program.

Kimpling said the utility is finally getting LED testing information from sales people after nine months of requests. He said the utility will be receiving sample units from four other LED manufacturers for testing.

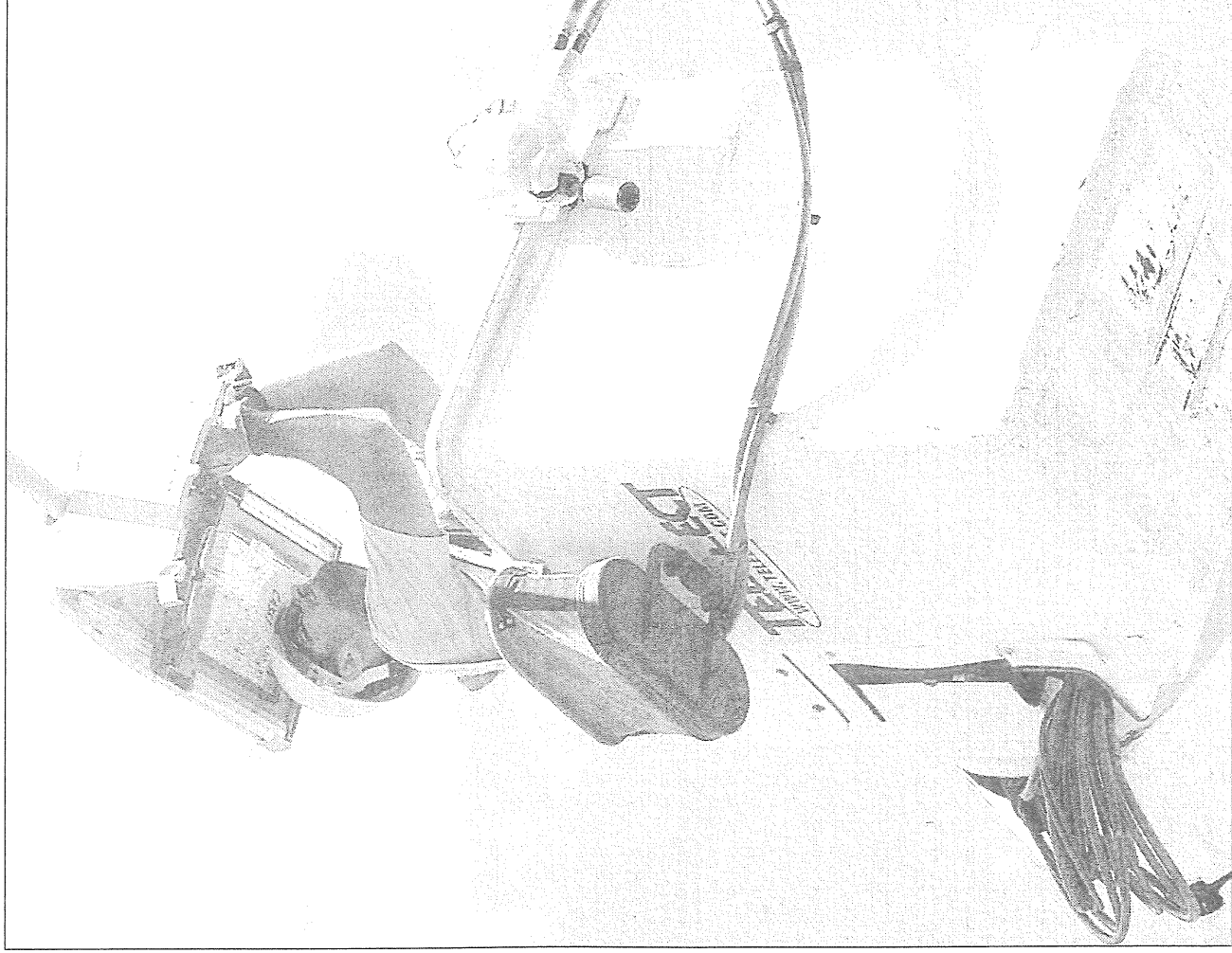
Kimpling said he hopes to have a dozen lights up by the end of the year.

"We'll have purchased six of them now," he said. "We would like to do a section of a longer street and get 6 or 7 of them up in a row. We've got a couple of possible streets targeted for that."

Kimpling said prices remain in the range of \$400 to \$450.

Wesley Hompe, general manager, said LED technology is advancing relatively rapidly.

"A couple of years ago when people are asking us about LEDs, we honestly could say they were not ready for prime time," Hompe said. "They're getting close to ready for us to do except the price point is still relatively high compared to what we can get existing lights and that's why we're doing this test



Tribune photo

Casey Jenny, an employee with Willmar Municipal Utilities, installs an LED street lamp June 23 in a neighborhood in southeast Willmar. Officials will continue to test the three Phillips-brand LED units the utility placed at three residential locations around the city.

and looking at all the different patterns."

Hompe asks commissioners, City Council members and utility customers to report what they think about the LED units. The light produced by an LED is whiter compared with the light from a high-pressure sodium, which has a brownish tint.

"Once you get to a certain point, I'm sure we're going to have people ask us are you ready to do this as a program and replace high-pressure sodiums with LEDs. One day that might be. We're moving a lot more in that direction lately because they've gotten better," said Hompe.

NYC's Bloomberg: \$500K to gay marriage campaigns

NEW YORK (AP) — Mayor Michael Bloomberg is poised to spend \$500,000 of his personal fortune on gay marriage campaigns in Maine, Minnesota and Washington state, he said Monday, following up on a major political spending push the billionaire businessman-turned-politician announced last week.

Bloomberg already had established himself as an outspoken, and generous, supporter of same-sex marriage. He unveiled a \$250,000 contribution to a Maryland gay marriage effort earlier this month and has backed four New York Republican senators who crossed party lines to vote for legalizing gay marriage in the state last year. Mon-

day's move deepened Bloomberg's involvement in the issue outside New York, and it reflected his vow to give at least \$10 million by Election Day to moderate candidates and to ballot initiatives supporting gay marriage and other issues around the country.

"Marriage equality is the next big step in America's long march of freedom," Bloomberg said in a statement Monday.

His new contributions, intended as challenge grants to spur matching donations, include \$125,000 to a group backing a ballot initiative that would legalize

gay marriage in Maine and \$250,000 to an organization seeking to uphold it in Washington. A Washington law legalizing same-sex marriage was passed and signed this year, but it's on hold until next month's referendum.

Bloomberg is giving another \$125,000 to a group work-

ing against a Minnesota constitutional amendment that would strengthen an existing law against same-sex marriage. A dozen Minnesota businesspeople already have raised \$125,000 to match Bloomberg's gift, said the organization, Minnesotaans United for All Families.

Kimpling said the city has about 2,500 street lights. Replacing all high-pressure sodium lights with LEDs would cost a couple million dollars.

"We're not going to jump with both feet on the LED right now," Kimpling said. "The utility is diligently checking them out and trying to find if it's acceptable to use right now."

In other business, the commissioners traveled by bus to observe unloading coal at the power plant; visited two of three substations, which convert incoming high-voltage power to useable lower voltage power; the northeast water treatment plant; service center; and power plant switching yard power transformer.

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nesotaans United for All Families.

Minneapolis teen in court on theft charges for allegedly stealing phones from Wal-Mart

19-year-old one of three charged after police are called to Willmar retail store

By Gretchen Schlosser

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WILLMAR — Antenese Scottesia Baker, 19, of Minneapolis, made her first appearance Monday on two felony theft charges for her role in stealing cell phone from a Willmar retail store this summer.

Unconditional bail was set at \$7,500. Baker also faces misdemeanor theft charge. Her next appearance is Nov. 13 in Kandiyohi County District Court.

Baker is one of three women charged in the case. Terresa Marie Morrow, 21, and Demetri Lynise Smith, 22, also of Minneapolis, are charged in the case. Both have active arrest warrants.

Another woman, Tynika Nicole White, 27, of Minneapolis, was originally charged in the case, but those charges were dismissed Oct. 5.

According to the complaint, Willmar police were called on June 19 to the area of Best Buy, along First Street South regarding the alleged shoplifting of cell phones by four women at Wal-Mart. A store loss prevention employee had followed the women to Target and then to the Best Buy parking lot.

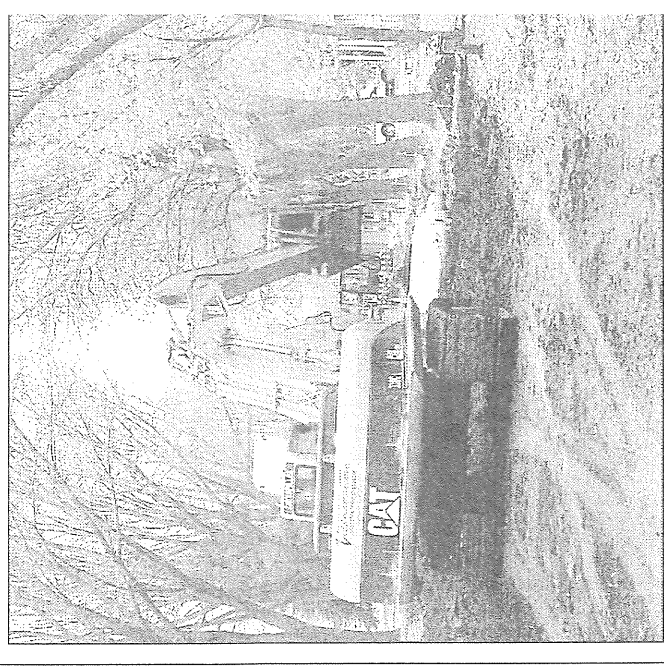
When questioned by the officer about why they were in Willmar, the women all gave different answers, including that they were visiting a friend or were in town to return baby shower gifts. The officer saw plastic packaging in the car for cell phones and equipment. Baker, the owner of the car, allowed the officers to search the vehicle. The search revealed a Boost Mobile phone, instruction manual, cords and packaging.

Morrow was taken into custody, as there was a warrant for her arrest. A search of her purse revealed two cell phones that matched the serial numbers of those taken from Wal-Mart.

Loss prevention officials at Wal-Mart told police the women appeared to be working together, by distracting employees or acting as a lookout while another woman took a phone, before theft alarms went off in the store. The women then fled from the store.

Surveillance video also showed the woman shoplifting gaming system merchandise.

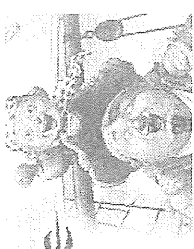
Digging deep



Tribune photo by Gary Mill

Crews with Voss Plumbing and Heating of Paynesville work Monday on 14th Street Southwest in Willmar. The street's pavement has been removed from Grac Avenue to Willmar Avenue.

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