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## **EXPERIMENTAL BARGE MAY DRAW ENERGY FROM RIVER**

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Call it the little hydropower boat that could.

On Monday, the Hastings City Council approved the preliminary plan for an experimental hydropower barge that will, in theory, generate electricity from currents in the Mississippi River.

According to the proposal from Houston, Texas-based Hydro Green Energy, turbines attached to the underside of the barge will spin electrical generators on the boat's surface.

The power will flow to the city's existing hydropower plant, which produces energy for the regional electrical grid.

Hydro Green Energy proposed splitting its revenue, to the tune of about \$10,000 annually for Hastings. The barge is expected to drum up relatively little juice -- about one-fortieth of what's produced by the city's plant, said Public Works Director Tom Montgomery.

Rather than immediate profits, the company is mostly looking for proof that boat power is a viable form of alternative energy, Montgomery said. The field data will guide the construction of future hydropower systems.

The company said it chose Hastings because the city's hydropower plant is conveniently located, with a large area of open water behind it and transmission facilities already in place. And amending the city's federal licensing agreement for energy transmission could be relatively simple.

The council directed the city attorney to draw up a five-year contract, said acting Mayor Paul Hicks, who led the council meeting Monday in Mayor Michael Werner's absence.

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