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The moment for ZENN: Palm Desert buys 2 electric cars

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They're not golf carts, but not quite cars.

The latest additions to Palm Desert's municipal fleet will be two zero-emission, no-noise vehicles - otherwise known as ZENN cars. The City Council voted unanimously June 26 to purchase the all-electric vehicles as part of the city's efforts to become more energy-efficient.

"This car was extremely exciting," said Councilman Jim Ferguson, who along with other council members and staff test drove the diminutive two-seater before the council meeting on June 26. "It's got great pickup, good stability and suspension and braking."

The ZENN is about 10 feet long, 4 feet wide and just under 5 feet high, said Bill Williams, director of sales for ZENN Motor Co., headquartered in Canada. It can be charged from a regular household plug and can go about 30 to 35 miles on a single charge.

"It fills and exceeds the safety of a golf cart," Williams said. "Many of our errands are within a mile or two of our homes. It's a little behavior change to use this car when an opportunity arises."

Palm Desert is ordering souped-up models with air conditioning and radios, for about \$22,000 apiece. The cars will be used for maintenance work around the Civic Center complex and the city's corporation yard, said Bo Chen, a city engineer who also gave the ZENN a spin.

"I think it's great," Chen said. "It's like a little run-around errand car."

The one drawback for Ferguson and Chen is the ZENN's limited speed. It is classified as a neighborhood electric vehicle, which means it can't go over 25 miles an hour.

But Williams said that's more than enough speed for running errands in the Civic Center area - or in the El Paseo shopping district.

"When gas is \$10, people will see the light," he said.
