



Minutes of January 7, 2020

A meeting of the Wausau Water Works Commission was called to order at 1:30 p.m. in City Hall on January 7, 2020. In compliance with Wisconsin Statutes, this meeting was posted and receipted for by the Wausau Daily Herald on January 3, 2020.

Members present: President Mielke, Commissioners Force, Gehin, Miller, Herbst.

Others present: Eric Lindman, Dave Erickson, Scott Boers, Valerie Swanborg, Steve Opatik/Becher Hoppe, Tonia Westphal/Clark Dietz.

1) Approve Minutes of the December 3, 2019 Meeting.

Herbst moved to approve the minutes of the December 3, 2019 meeting. Seconded by Miller and the motion carried 5-0.

2) Director's Report on Utility Operations.

Gehin commented on the letter that was sent to the EPA and DNR by GHD and if the Mayor should be sending a letter supporting that position or is that necessary? Lindman responded that GHD will be setting up a conference call with the EPA in January and will be interested to hear EPA's response to the letter. Lindman advised that it is a very good point and depending on how that letter is received, it may be a great follow up after that phone call and to keep it on the front burner so it doesn't get lost with the EPA. He feels it's going to be a long process. Gehin advised depending on the outcome of the conference call and if we do send the letter, he would also send it to our congress folks. Mielke advised that we have been in contact with all of our elected representatives on this. Force asked for clarification on GHD. Lindman advised they are our environmental consultant on the superfund site that is regulated with the EPA.

Force asked for clarification on the 12 water running complaints which all turned out to be ground water. What does that mean? Boers responded that those are water running complaints called in either by residents or other members of city staff. These could be suspected main breaks or a leak that we go and investigate. He's looking to express that a lot of this takes time and depending on the severity of the issue, it's all staff time and resources that we have to dedicate to these calls for customer service. Force asked how ground water can get to the surface and run across the sidewalk. Boers advised a lot of it is water from melting snow. Right now we are experiencing a lot of issues that we would expect in spring. There are several spots around town where roads had been placed where creek beds used to be or where natural flowing water used to run.

Gehin advised he was reading the Federal Register on the Lead and Copper rules. Are those

final positions or is it just out for comment? Boers responded that they're expecting those to be passed in July 2020 and go into effect in 2023. The DNR is starting to implement some things already.

Gehin said they were notified about the bypass pumping for the interceptor work and he's curious as to how many homes were actually affected. Erickson advised we know of a dozen but part of the instructions to the homeowners was to contact the contractor or the contractor's insurance company. They may have records of others that we don't have. Also, late last week an attorney filed an open records request for that same information.

Force asked if we have any idea why the DNR requested a 30 day extension to review the Wastewater Facility Plan, is that a manpower issue? Lindman advised that's correct, they just haven't been able to get through all of it.

Gehin went back to the previous discussion that he raised about the backups from the bypass pumping. Were homes flooded by inches or just water coming out of the drains? Erickson responded some homes were flooded by inches and some by feet. In one case the sump pump was pumping it out into the back yard, so that was discharged to the ground surface. Gehin said it sounded as if it was backing up for 2-3 hours but he thinks it had to be longer for that to happen. Erickson advised much of that line by the plant is flat so he's not surprised, it's the lower lying homes that would be affected.

Director's Report placed on file.

3) Discussion and Possible Action on Approving the Method for Procurement Related to Programming/Integration at the WWTF & DWTF.

Lindman explained that when we were working through the initial facility plan and started into the design process with Becher Hoppe and Donohue for both of the treatment facilities, we had Donohue prepare a request for qualifications for the programming and integration work that's needed for both of the plants. That would include the SCADA, the software and the automation at the plants. As we've gotten into the design of the facilities, we started discussing if there is more of a benefit for us to have the design engineer, Donohue, do this just as they're going to do the construction oversight work simply because they're so familiar with everything. They would do all the integration and programming work. This would basically be a sole source with Donohue. We've been trying to figure out if it's worth bidding to 4 vendors that aren't fully familiar with the facilities or is it better for us to work directly with the design contractor and have one responsible entity for this work. Staff has been leaning toward moving ahead with Donohue and making that recommendation. It's being brought before the commission to see if they would be in favor, have questions or would like to see any additional information.

Gehin responded that he wanted to make sure this was a sole contract with Donohue and not something that would be in conflict with Becher Hoppe. Lindman confirmed this would be Donohue. We wanted the programming and integration to be done by one contractor for both plants so everything is similar. We could bid it out to the pre-qualified contractors or sole source with Donohue.

Force asked about the cost impact. Lindman advised he didn't have any costs but we are talking approximately a half million dollars for this work and it could even be more. This is a significant part of the project because this is what we will rely on for the plants to give us information and to make adjustments to treatment on both sides.

Force asked what if we bid it out and see what the price ranges were. Lindman advised we certainly can however Donohue has said they will not bid if we bid them out.

Gehin advised he would be comfortable with Donohue primarily because there shouldn't be any issues with coordination or oversight. From a continuity standpoint, he would go that way.

Maybe for us to consider it, they should give us a number, then bring it back for reconsideration. Force agreed but wants to make sure Donohue doesn't have free reign to just charge whatever without any control by us on what the overall cost might be. Lindman advised that we run that risk every time we do a sole source and that's why we've struggled with this. Force responded that it would be nice to have a do not exceed number, it sounds like we don't have a clue what it's going to cost. Erickson advised that he doesn't have a number but wanted to comment that if we did bid this out to other contractors, we would need a pretty extensive spec. There would be a cost from Donohue to just develop that spec.

Miller indicated that when Lindman made the original presentation, he mentioned that staff was leaning in one direction and in the memo, mentions that Donohue has first-hand knowledge of how the utility wants to operate. His sense is if Lindman and qualified staff feel it should go a certain direction then he would certainly be in favor of that.

Motion by Gehin to support proceeding with Donohue but to come back to the commission once we have a number. Seconded by Miller. Force supports this as long as we get that number. Motion carried 5-0.

Lindman will come back to the commission with a scope of services and a number for the commission to review.

Force commented on the format of the water utility rates in the newsletter and on the water bills. He noticed we use cubic feet to measure water usage and for the average homeowner, he would suggest they have no idea how much a cubic foot of water is. He would like to see that measured in gallons and some efforts made for a new way to present that information both on the report and in the billing to our customers.

4) Adjourn.

There being no further business to discuss, motion was made by Gehin to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Force. Motion carried 5-0.