



Minutes of February 2, 2021

A meeting of the Wausau Water Works Commission was called to order at 1:30 p.m. in City Hall on February 2, 2021. In compliance with Wisconsin Statutes, this meeting was posted and receipted for by the Wausau Daily Herald on January 28, 2021.

Members present: President Rosenberg, Commissioners Robinson, Herbst, Force, Gehin.

Others present: Eric Lindman, Dave Erickson, Scott Boers, Tonia Westphal/Clark Dietz, Lisa Zahrt/Clark Dietz.

1) Approve Minutes of January 12, 2021 Meeting.

Force moved to approve the minutes of the January 12, 2021 meeting. Seconded by Herbst. Motion to approve the minutes carried 5-0.

2) Director's Report on Utility Operations.

Lindman noted that he wanted to keep the lead and copper rules on the forefront as there will be implications to the utility for that. Any new detailed information will be brought forward at future meetings. There is a cheat sheet in the packet showing the differences as to what the old rules were and what the new rules will be. Robinson asked if we have an inventory of all of our lead service lines. Lindman responded we do not. Robinson asked how hard that would be for us to do. Lindman advised that it's not difficult but it is time consuming. Boers added that we need to have the registry sent to the state by January 16, 2024. At this point, we are not required to know what all of the materials are however, anything that is unknown will be counted as lead. He estimates that we have 5,000 lead services on the utility side. It's a little more difficult to estimate the private side but believes it's approximately 8,000-10,000 lead services. Lindman explained that the only way to confirm that is to go inside the homes and check the pipe that comes into the house. We've been doing that as we've been doing meter change outs. With the lead and copper rule, we will need to establish a lead service line replacement plan by about the same timeframe in 2024. We'll bring that back several times for the commission's review on how best we move forward with that, whether it's mandating that through an ordinance or some other process. Robinson stated that he would imagine there would be significantly more pressure on the use of the state dollars for replacement of lead service lines. Would it be advantageous for the city to look at a larger request to the state for next year or before 2024? Lindman advised that we'd love to make a larger request to the state and this year we are requesting funding to replace 100 private service lines. If we stay on that pace it would take 30+ years to replace them all. At this time, we only have the capacity to do 100 replacements. We'd have to look at doing something different. Lindman also indicated that increasing the amount that we're doing will also create a cost to the utility. This is something the commission will need to review as part of the plan as well.

Gehin asked about the labeling of unknown service material as lead, will that be date sensitive as well since after a certain date, lead could no longer be used? Boer's confirmed there is a date and believes it was 1970. Those homes could be presumed as copper rather than lead. Gehin read an article in the AWWA newsletter about the replacement of lead services in Green Bay. Was that all on the

public side or private as well? Boers responded that they were complete replacements, meaning both sides however, the city of Green Bay offered a lot of funding. He's not sure if they have the PSC replacement program where they have rate money available for private side replacements but does know they have been applying for the same funding as we have. Gehin asked if we could be forced to replace the private side at our expense. Boers explained we will not be forced to replace the private side of the service at our expense but will need to offer to replace them at their expense and have a plan in place to help those that cannot economically accomplish that. Lindman advised that could come in the form of a low interest loan or the PSC also allows for up to 50% of user rates to be used on the private side, that could be another option but then that would involve all users in the city helping to pay for private service lines.

Gehin advised that there is an update on well 3 and it's pending a letter of acceptance by the EPA.

3) Discussion/Update on Proposed Solar Array for the New Water Treatment Facility.

Westphal explained that they were under contract in December and started site surveying right away. They've looked at calculating what size array would be needed based on the load of the new plant. 3 million kWh converts to a range of 0.83 MW – 1.86 MW for the 40-90% sizing, which comes from the original RFP. In this scenario, we would need 6-8 acres of viable property per MW. That's a range of 6-15 acres for the 40-90% sizing of this array. Based on the site field survey and some soil work there was not 15 acres available in one location. In the meantime, the property at 1010 Bugbee became potentially available per agenda item #4. The cost for a 40% single site array at about 6-8 acres in conservative numbers is about \$1.5 million. To do a full 90%, which would need to be over multiple sites is closer to \$3.5 million. These are rough numbers with contingencies built in for racking and system performance, There is bedrock, steep topography and trees on this site which makes placement important.

Gehin asked what our goal was as far as our needs for power. Westphal explained we were looking for 40-90% based on the RFP. The goal is determined by the budget and affinity for the project.

Gehin asked about the 1010 Bugbee site and the clearing of trees. What was the commitment to the neighborhood about a buffer zone? Lindman responded that the property discussed with the residents was on the south side of where the treatment facility was. He did reach out to Lisa Rasmussen because it is her district and she was certainly ok with the utility's potential to purchase it and that it may be better than leaving it up to the private sector. The solar arrays can be seen but are not obtrusive and that is what Rasmussen relayed back. She didn't feel it would be a detriment to the area.

Robinson asked what the payback or estimated savings with this. Westphal responded that the rate of return would depend on what percent we decide to go with, actual construction costs and the plant itself. Zahrt stated that the plant is not built yet so we don't have a complete load picture. They took the design load and estimated run time to get to the 3 million kWh. At this point, that is the best that they can do and the payback would depend on where that really falls when the plant is operational.

Robinson asked if they think we can get 3 million kWh generated, what does that translate to in terms of savings. Westphal advised that is something that they will put together in the next step. If he's looking for just a general rate of return on a solar array they can work with their solar partner and put something together but in this particular case they haven't done a specific calculation for this system. Solar array equipment has come down as much as 80% in the last 10-15 years. Even with the tariffs put in place a couple years ago, solar is a cost effective solution for producing power. The difference with our array vs. several in the state is that people are building arrays to sell additional power back to the utility. This is not intended to do that as all of the power generated will be used to power the plant. The bulk rate for selling power here is very low.

Gehin asked if it would be there recommendation to have the units as close to the water treatment plant as possible. Westphal stated that it would cost less if it was closer to the plant because of electrical length and stepping of the electrical.

Lindman indicated that once we know the overall load at the plant, the property we need and the cost we can get a more accurate estimate of what the payback would be. Mathy Construction approached the utility about the sale of the property at 1010 Bugbee. Gehin thought the initial purpose to buy this land was for future wells. Would that still be part of a future plan? Lindman responded that we bought the property to the north for \$1.1 million. The 1010 Bugbee portion was originally part of

that for \$1.5 million. At the time it wasn't something we needed immediately. This property is much less expensive than it was in 2016.

Force indicated that whenever we have the discussions about alternative power, the issue of payback always comes up. Unless things have changed, usually the use of solar does not turn out to be the most cost effective option. However, he would urge us to look a little bit beyond that to the environmental benefit of going with an alternative energy source and also the climate change argument. Robinson agreed with that but it's also important to do our due diligence with spending public dollars on it. He would hope we will be able to generate what the return on investment is.

Westphal brought forth a resource called Renew. They have a lot of data and information that could be helpful as we move forward with the public. Most of the time the public is receptive to something like solar.

Lindman indicated that during the public information meetings proposing the new facilities, there were questions whether we had looked at alternative energy sources. The public in general terms is on board with considering these things and once we have details it would be good to potentially have public information meetings to roll it out before any final decisions are made. We need to understand this isn't a few hundred thousand dollars, we're looking at a couple million dollars.

Lindman wanted to clarify that in the RFP with Clark Dietz we asked for a 40%, 60% and 90% power generation of what our load would be. Is the commission still okay with moving ahead with that? The consensus was yes to move ahead.

4) Discussion and Possible Action on the Purchase of 1010 Bugbee Ave.

Lindman advised that Mathy Construction approached us regarding this property. They were looking at putting this property up for sale publicly but wanted to see if we had an interest in purchasing it. We spoke with Clark Dietz to see if it could be usable for solar. Based on what Westphal and Zahrt said in the previous agenda item is that we think it would be. There are also other advantages to having this property, such as future wells and wellhead protection plans. We do have a well in the corner of that property. Based on that and the cost, would the commission like us to take a look at this and possibly do a phase one environmental on it to see if this is a site than can be used or if it has been filled with construction debris.

Motion by Gehin to authorize staff to do due diligence associated with the possible purchase of 1010 Bugbee Ave. Seconded by Force.

Force reiterated what Lindman said that even if we don't do solar arrays there are other uses for this property.

Motion carried 5-0.

5) Presentation on Rain Barrels.

Force talked through a packet he provided on 4 different rain barrel programs he found had been offered in communities. League City, TX offers the purchasing and reselling of rain barrels to users and water bill rebates of \$25/per barrel per year. Madison doesn't get involved with the purchasing and reselling but rather provide information to their customers about what rain barrels are, how they can be acquired and installed. Force indicated he has one and installation and maintenance is not a tough thing. Another possibility would be to publicize the barrels and invite customers to order them from a local supplier. Menards and Home Depot are more expensive than what you would pay through some of these organized programs. There are 2 systems that he found. Blue Barrel out of California suggests repurposing barrels or finding a local provider as getting rid of these barrels isn't easy. He has not been able to find a local provider as of today. The other is Rain Water Solutions out of North Carolina, they make their own barrels, ship them to you and handle all of the transactions. They have a lot of locations around the country.

Robinson talked to the environmental service division for the City of Superior and they have run an intermittent rain barrel program and composting program since 2010. They take used barrels that the utility has, buy kits from Menards and offer an educational program. The rain barrels sell for \$40.00 and the compost bins for \$30.00. He was thinking the farmer's market would make a good pick up site. Force stated that he would like for the board to express a firm interest in pursuing the program. He would like everyone to review the material that's been distributed between now and the next meeting

and perhaps form a task force to come back at the March meeting with a few recommendations that we could consider. The first step would be a motion to seriously pursue a rain barrel program and the second would be to establish a mechanism of coming up with a recommendation at the next meeting.

Motion by Herbst to pursue a rain barrel program, seconded by Gehin.

Robinson would encourage us to look at the role of the utility, whether we facilitate, buy or distribute, is there an educational component, is it limited to rain barrels and is there a corresponding credit of some sort such as storm water.

Motion carried 5-0.

Robinson would like the utility to do an educational program on PFAS and suggested we bring this forward at a future meeting.

Adjourn.

There being no further business to discuss, motion was made by Robinson to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Gehin.