



Minutes of February 5, 2024

A meeting of the Wausau Water Works Commission was called to order at 10:33 a.m. in City Hall on Monday, February 5, 2024. In compliance with Wisconsin Statutes, this meeting was posted and receipted for by the Wausau Daily Herald on February 2, 2024.

Members Present: President Rosenberg, Commissioners Herbst, Robinson, Force, Gehin
Others Present: Scott Boers, Eric Lindman, Ben Brooks, MaryAnne Groat, Susan Wojtkiewicz/Donohue, Andrew Dow/Donohue via Webex, Doug Diny/Alder, Tom Kilian/Alder.

1) Approve Minutes of January 8 & 9, 2024 Meetings.

Herbst motioned to approve minutes. Seconded by Gehin.
Motion Carried 5-0.

2) Director's Report on Utility Operations.

Lindman advised of updates on the Asset Management Software, the CIP contract as well as some updates on operational issues. Force stated that he frequently comments regarding the CIP lead service line replacement project and the need for community support. A question he often asks is if the community is behind us. His conclusion is that we don't have the needed support. 3 different council members have voted to revisit and perhaps cancel the contract we have with CIP. He has read many letters to the editor, opinions and memos criticizing the CIP partnership. In a previous meeting they approved the CIP contract contingent on the city's legal department working out several contractual questions. Have we seen these clarifications and is our approval still valid without them? It was difficult to find on the city's website but there is an equi-flow website designed specifically for Wausau. The phone number is a voice recording and he's emailed the contact address but hasn't received a response. The website also says that the lead line replacement will be at no cost to the homeowner and that may not be true. None of the critics are opposed to replacing lead lines, they're simply asking for communication and transparency about a project that will affect all homeowners in the city. Credibility is paramount if this project is to succeed and, in his opinion, we don't have it yet.

Gehin raised concerns that he believes there is confusion as some people have asked if the lead service line replacement includes the plumbing inside the home. He responds that it does not, it's just the service line and this has created a stir. That needs to be clear, we are only talking about the pipe coming into the house. Gehin also wanted to clarify that this will not affect every house, we have 15,000-16,000 homes but we do not have that many lead services. Boers stated a conservative estimate is that we could have up to 8,000 private lead services and about 3,500 lead services on the utility side.

Robinson wanted to clarify that the contract has been approved by council subject to the fine point issues with the contract. This would be a council issue if there were a motion for reconsideration? Rosenberg responded that is correct.

Director's Report Placed on File.

Alder Diny spoke from the podium. Part of the CDM Smith lead service line replacement recommendation from 2023 indicated the 1st step in this process was to conduct an inventory and his understanding is that we contracted with Clark Dietz to do that inventory. What is the status and what is their scope in relation to the CIP contract moving forward?

Lindman responded that the inventory is ongoing. There was an inventory completed for the lead service line plan that was submitted to the DNR. That included everything we had in GIS whether it was lead, not lead or unknown service lines. We do have quite a few unknown service lines in the city and if they're considered unknown, then they must be classified as lead until they are verified. As we get into homes and do public outreach for each of the areas we will be working in, that inventory will be updated on an ongoing basis.

3) Presentation on the Used Anion Exchange Gravel/Resin, PFAS Test Results, Regulations and Disposal Options.

Presentation by Susan Wojtkiewicz/Donohue. View presentation [here](#) at 9 minutes, 13 seconds.

4) Discussion and Possible Action on Disposal of the Used Anion Exchange Gravel/Resin.

Robinson stated that it's been said that there are limits on liability on disposal, how are those manifested or guaranteed? Is it contractual, insured, or bonded? Wojtkiewicz responded that she did not have that but is additional information that they could provide. Robinson said when it states there is no liability for the city or utility, that is limited. Wojtkiewicz stated that the intention was to have Andrew Dow/Donohue join via Webex to answer questions; however, Webex was not working properly, and he was unable to hear. Wojtkiewicz posed the question via phone call to Andrew Dow. Dow stated that Clean Harbor did send over terms and conditions that could be reviewed but she does believe that it would be contractual.

Force asked where the transportation costs for disposal are buried. Wojtkiewicz responded that those are in the resin disposal costs, that includes the transportation and the disposal. Their vehicles come here and haul the material away. Force asked about the anion exchange resin, with the new setup once the GAC columns are in operation, are we going to get PFAS buildup on the resin ahead of that? Wojtkiewicz responded that she would think that there would be some and that's why we are set up to change over the way that the plant operates. We could send water through the GAC first and then through the anion exchange. Force stated that he asks because we may have to regenerate the carbon and dispose of the resin, making our costs even higher. Wojtkiewicz confirmed that is correct.

Rosenberg stated that was a question she had as well. With the regenerating the carbon, she thought we could also regenerate the resin, is that not the case, it doesn't get regenerated? Wojtkiewicz stated resin does not get regenerated, but the carbon will.

Robinson encourages us to take a deep dive into where our liability stands. He's not opposed to the disposal, but we'd also want a good review as well on the process of PFAS removal to not foul the carbon.

Wojtkiewicz did receive a response from Andrew Dow that he did look at the documentation and the liability does appear to be written into the contract and they can share that with the city. Robinson reiterated that we want to be careful about how it's guaranteed, is it insurance based on claims, occurrence, etc. Lindman stated, we would run that through legal.

Gehin asked how long resin would last if we didn't have PFAS. Wojtkiewicz responded that it would last for years. It isn't something you'd be doing once a year without the PFAS. There is also a brine regeneration process for resin when the only concern is TOC and color.

Rosenberg interpreted that we would probably be looking for more information before a motion or decision is made.

Robinson stated that he is comfortable authorizing the execution of a contract subject to acceptable liability protection concerns for the City. That would be up to the attorneys to look at that. Rosenberg asked if that's something we'd want to bring back or is the commission comfortable with the attorney just looking through it? Robinson responded he is comfortable deferring this to the attorneys and their expertise.

Motion to approve the contract contingent on our attorneys and internal teams reviewing the contract, risk, and liabilities with using this hazardous waste disposal mechanism. Robinson also added contingent upon sufficient guarantees and assurances being in place.

Motion carried 5-0.

5) Discussion on a Lead Service Line Replacement Ordinance.

Lindman indicated there has been a lot of discussion back and forth on what the ordinance should include and if the commission is in support of putting an ordinance in place. The commission had requested additional public outreach but there is direction that we would need from the commission before we would set up anything to provide information to the public. He would also ask for the commission's consensus or direction on the document from the Municipal Environmental Group proposing a bill legislation.

Robinson mentioned one of the critical issues is what is the City's/Utility's role to pay for the customer's side of the replacement. Until we know that it's difficult to advance an ordinance. He supports an ordinance but there are several variables that we haven't defined and who is responsible for putting that policy in place. There would also be operational costs that are unknown as far as sampling, etc. The issues are costs, how we pay for it, how does it affect rates, are there other funding sources. Without knowing those things it's hard to put an ordinance in place that may impose a burden.

Rosenberg agreed and asked if we might have a better understanding of cost after this year's replacements and as we move ahead. Lindman responded that he thinks so, especially as far as the average cost for each replacement. The one thing that's always going to be in question is the funding because of how that's rolled out. We just don't know what that will be until late every year. We can only estimate that based on percentages that we currently know from the DNR.

Robinson asked if we need this ordinance to access some of that funding. Lindman responded that we don't need it, but it helps. We'd receive additional points for having an ordinance. With the new rules that are coming into play, they may not state it but eventually the municipalities are going to be forced into having an ordinance in some fashion, that's where the regulations are going. If we don't have an ordinance by the end of June this year, then we just won't get the additional points for next year's funding application.

Gehin asked about the sampling requirements after replacement. Based on what he read that will be quite a burden on staff. Boers explained with the new Lead and Copper Rule, we will be required to offer sampling upon the initial replacement and again in 6 months. We will have to offer pitchers and replacement filters as well. Gehin asked if we would have to do that for every replacement or could we demonstrate that we are not seeing any lead. Boers said no, it's pretty much spelled out in the rule.

Force stated they recognize we need an ordinance. He would like to see zero cost to the homeowner.

Lindman is trying to get direction on what information is necessary for further discussions.

Alder Kilian spoke from the podium raising concerns on the nature of the program and interfacing with people in their homes. He would like to convey that whoever is doing this be completely vetted. Not just a financial vetting process but a pristine, unblemished reputation.

6) Discussion on the Sanitary Survey Report and Notice of Noncompliance.

Boers indicated that he is requesting guidance. We have 3 deficiencies, 2 will be taken care of but the valve exercising is the one he would like to address. His concern is that we are short staffed and not able to meet our requirements. The DNR is asking for a letter stating how we will overcome this deficiency through this year. In the absence of making any staffing changes, how will we meet this requirement.

Robinson asked if this is something that could be contracted out and if so, at what cost. Boers responded that the costs he's seen greatly outweigh the cost to bring staff on. Robinson asked what our options are if we lack the current staff. Can we add staff in a timely manner or what is recommended for the most cost-effective approach? Boers said looking back at the staffing assessment that was done over a year ago, it mentioned we needed to add staff. We've been coming to this commission asking for additional staff for quite some time. We're at the point now where it's becoming an issue. We're going to have to look at adding staff, changing our pay scale, and doing something other than what's being done. We can look at contracting out if that's the way they feel they want to go.

Rosenberg asked if we are currently fully staffed. Boers responded that we are not, we have a distribution maintainer opening for the maintainer that just offered resignation, a plant operator as recruitment was unsuccessful and we will be advertising for a technician. Rosenberg asked if it would help once we get those positions filled. Boers responded that we will still be short staffed. We are going to have 3-4 times the amount of locates this year with the number of boring crews coming in. The Lead and Copper Rule is going to take 7 times more effort than what it has in the past to maintain compliance. The new Water Plant has 3-4 times more equipment than what we've had in the past. We aren't staffed for it, and he doesn't know what else he can do to bring the commission's attention to that.

Gehin thinks it's clear that the DNR doesn't care about our staffing levels, we just need to comply. It's going to be embarrassing if we can't comply due to staffing levels. Boers has given us warning that trying to comply was going to be extremely difficult.

Robinson requested that staff and administration develop recommendations relative to staffing to accomplish lead service line replacement and to address the ongoing operational issues and bring that back to the commission.

Rosenberg agreed and stated that the expectation is that we are in compliance and to understand how to get there concretely is very important. There have been job openings for a while so it's very important that we understand what is going on as she hears mixed reports from a variety of folks.

7) Discussion on the Wastewater PFAS Sampling Results from December 2023.

Brooks advised that the test results on the effluent reflected that it was below the proposed limits of the 8ppt. The bio solids are also below the limits of 16ng/g. Per the DNR if the bio solids are below the 16ng/g, there is no further action required. All of the testing periods have been less than that 16ng/g.

Brooks wanted to make a correction for the January 5, 2021 results, he misplaced the influent results on the report, those are actually the effluent results and he will make that correction on the next update.

8) Discussion and Possible Action for Sole Sourcing of Magnesium Hydroxide.

Brooks explained that this is the chemical used to maintain the PH and alkalinity within the wastewater treatment facility. The amount is \$252,000.00, which is the 2024 budgeted amount.

Gehin motioned to approve. Seconded by Herbst.

Motion carried 5-0.

9) Discussion and Possible Action on the Water Savvy Campaign Initiatives.

Herbst and Force came up with some ideas and suggestions for the public on how to save water. They would like to review and update the water saving practices that we previously sent as a flyer and perhaps on the billing statements. We've also talked about monthly billing and improving the reporting of water usage on the bills to make it easier to understand. Also, adding water saving tips in the city newsletter and maybe promote water savings through the local media.

Force brought up water used within the utility as he has heard citizens bring up concerns over the idea of them trying to save water and that the city itself should be trying conserve on water use as well.

Groat spoke about the struggle of going to a true monthly billing system as we're in the process of migrating to different meters and we're struggling with reading. It would be trying to accomplish reading monthly for the entire city. We could put something in the newsletter about splitting their bill and paying monthly.

Herbst asked where we are on replacing all the meters in the system. Boers responded about ¾ of the way through and it would cost about 1.6 million to replace what is left.

Force asked about the redesign of the bill to make it more easily understood. Boers said we could calculate cubic feet into gallons. We currently have one person that does the billing, if we go to monthly that would be a huge challenge going from 5,000 bills a month to 15,000. Groat reminded them of the increase in cost for postage, etc. as well.

10) Discussion and Possible Action Approving the Rain Barrel Program and Associated Subsidy for Cost of the Rain Barrels.

Lindman has been in touch with Rainwater Solutions, and they are willing to do the program just have we have in the past. They'll set up the website, we will provide the link to the public so they can order them. We are hoping to get the distribution done before Memorial Day weekend.

Force mentioned there is the day of distribution when people pick up their rain barrels and we do need people there to help. He's thinking we could get a Scout Troop or youth group as a service project to help us with that. It would take the burden off city employees.

Lindman advised staff could reach out to see if there is an organization that has interest in doing that.

Lindman said in the past, residents purchased for \$50, and the city would provide a subsidy of \$25. For non-residents they could purchase them but for the full cost of \$75.

Motion by Herbst to approve including the \$25 subsidy for rate payers. Seconded by Force.

Motion carried 5-0.

11) Adjourn.

Gehin motioned to adjourn. Seconded by Herbst.

Link to view meeting in its entirety: <https://tinyurl.com/wausaucitycouncil>

Michelle Weasler, Recording Secretary

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