



Minutes of February 15, 2022

A meeting of the Wausau Water Works Commission was called to order at 9:05 a.m. in City Hall on Tuesday, February 15th, 2022. In compliance with Wisconsin Statutes, this meeting was posted and receipted for by the Wausau Daily Herald on February 14th, 2022.

Members Present: President Rosenberg, Commissioners Herbst, Gehin, Force, Robinson
Others Present: Eric Lindman, Scott Boers, Ben Brooks, Council Members: Becky McElhaney, Tom Kilian, Debra Ryan, Citizens of Wausau- Via Webex: Dr. Sarah Yang/Department of Health Services (DHS), Kyle Burton/Department of Natural Resources (DNR)

1) Pre- Registered Citizens for Matters Appearing on the Agenda and Other Public Comment.

Rosenberg allowed the pre-registered Citizens present to speak.

G. Gisselman: 319 Park Ave- Requested that Wausau Water Commission take swift/decisive action in dealing with PFAS in our water.

B. Grau: 1115 N 10th St- Requested that future meetings be reviewed because working families couldn't attend. We need to hear that you will take action in both short/long term protection against PFAS contamination and take action to conduct meetings convenient to working families.

Dr. R. Baker: 3308 Springdale Ave- Stated that in August 2020 we ran water test on our zip code that found 11 contaminants by going to ewg.org. It's not just PFAS but other contaminants as well that needs to be addressed especially for our children. Bottled water was suggested but plastics from the bottled water have at least 38 chemicals with some being carcinogenic. EPA has known about PFAS since 1998 and yet there are no standards, DNR is looking into this but anyone can look at environmentalworkinggroup.org to find what's happening in their water supply.

D. Ryan: 702 Elm St- Presented with the option of possibly having water filters provided but not sure the cost of these filters or an alternative can also be using stainless steel pots.

T. Killian: 133 E Thomas St- Pointed that on the City's Website page under Wausau Water Works, there are statements you can read about what you can use with Wausau Water and suggested that foods made from powder or gelatin should use water from a safe source. We can find clarity on the website and forgo any confusion or inconsistency in other public messages. Residents would like immediate interim solution either by use of mobile filtration at the plant or home filtering options and/or use federal funds which include ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) Funding.

S. Kelch: 802 Augusta Ave- Requested that in planning interim of long/short term solutions, we need to make sure everyone has access to safe water including the low income.

D. Diny: 708 Fulton St- Agree that we should not let urgency trump time on setting meetings. We need to not panic and prioritize what numbers mean and what experts say.

We have to get this right. Maybe we can drill test wells or confirm that we have it in entire Aquaphor. Can we prioritize wells or buy water from neighboring community? PFAS is a statewide emerging issue and we need to put our best minds to work.

M. Duginske: 2901 N 7th St- Requested if there was a medical lab test that can be performed to measure PFAS in the body and a safe temporary solution.

Rosenberg stated with no further comments, we will be moving on.

No Action needed.

2) Presentation and Discussion on Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl (PFAS) in City Water.

Rosenberg stated we have folks from Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Department of Health Services (DHS) via WebEx to address any questions the Commission may have regarding PFAS. In January, Wausau Water Works worked with DNR and DHS to voluntarily test our wells for PFAS. All 6 of those wells exceed the proposed standards. Our results ranged from 23-48 Parts Per Trillion (ppt). DNR is proposing 20 ppt or less for municipal water.

Kyle Burton (with WDNR) started with the brief description of the samples in January 2022 from the 6 wells to better understand the quality of the water. Results shared with us (DNR) and DHS that exceeded the recommended standard of 20 ppt. which prompted a requirement to notify the public.

Lindman reiterated that the City has and continues to meet Safe Drinking Water Standards, we take direction from the DNR who regulates drinking water in the State, at this time we have been given no direction or action items given to us, but should that change, we will react and immediately notify the public of any changes. We are in the process of setting up a pilot bench test for removal of PFAS to be proactive as we know this is a concern to residents. We are looking at the best short and long term options to provide the safest water possible to the City residents. Wausau Water Works is committed to providing safe water to the residents. We will keep you informed as we work through this process in finding solutions and this discussion is the start of that.

Robinson began that in 2016 the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) established the health advisory level of 70 ppt that has been driving the discussion. States such as New Jersey, California, New Hampshire, Minnesota, Michigan, Massachusetts and Vermont have all adopted standards for PFOA and PFOS that are below the recommended standard for the State of Wisconsin. The issue before us as a Commission is how will we responsibly react while we don't have standards at this time until EPA acts. We are not likely to take action until EPA has a standard but we know there are effects on human health, immune system, developmental issues, birth weights, cancer in liver, bio accumulations in the body, they pose a lasting problem and PFAS are everywhere. If you're interested you can go to your doctor and ask for a blood serum test. You can get PFAS through grilling your food or eating fast food in various containers. We have an obligation to try to minimize the impact in our water system. What will we use? I would propose we look to the superfund record for the evaluation process and at short term and long-term effectiveness and if we can accelerate the construction of the treatment plant. In the long term we need to identify the source but in short term how do we provide safe water. EPA is in the process of revising the 70 ppt and may have a proposal by end of this fall, proposed rules next year. We need to act now and we can look at the new facility coming up online to see if we can accelerate that process.

Force stated he agrees with Robinson. How did we determine the establishment or the scientific reasoning for 20 ppt instead of 10 ppt or 30 ppt? Is there a solution to what seems to be working for the removal of PFAS in other communities?

Dr. Yang (with DHS) replied that the 20 ppt was reached utilizing scientific based models. We looked at what was available from EPA and looked at Federal and State agencies and what peer review scientific information was out there. We then looked at risks in unborn babies and breastfed infants. Because health effects are different from animals than in people, we used a model that estimated the levels that the research animals were exposed to and what it would be equivalent to in humans. In 2016, EPA used the levels of exposure to a pregnant mom and determined that the best way to estimate that would be the exposure in that baby. The unborn baby and a breastfed baby. We used the study that used that modeling method to predict exposure and that was how we got the 20 ppt compared to the 70 ppt is to make sure we protect the most sensitive population.

Rosenberg reiterated Force's second question on how we can get solutions from other communities that are working for the removal of PFAS.

Burton (with DNR) replied every community are doing things differently, but the difference is that not all the sources were affected in the communities that were over the recommended standard. They were able to eliminate sources and still have capacity to serve water such as turning off wells or shut certain wells off. There were some other States such as Woodbury, Minnesota using granulated activated carbon for PFAS. They constructed a whole new treatment plant but Wausau is ahead because there is a new plant coming in where we can have the opportunity to work with techs and professionals and construct it into the new plant.

Gehin stated that we've been having issues over the years but did I hear you say we could drink the water.

Dr. Yang stated that they were recommending people reduce their exposure to the water but are not telling people to stop drinking the water. We know people who have been exposed to high levels in their drinking water that switched had levels go down, so the sooner you switch your drinking water source, the better for your health.

Gehin asked if the studies were tied with a certain volume of water consumed by an individual.

Dr. Yang recommended standards were based on a young child who consumes 1 liter a day but that's protectant to all populations. The general amount of water maybe 2 liters for an adult consumption?

Gehin asked Mr. Burton for the characterized standard of PFAS if this was per individual PFAS element or an additive?

Burton (with DNR) replied standard being proposed was for 2 PFAS compounds, PFOA and PFOS in the sum of 20 alone per contaminant or combined is standard, it's a combined standard. As a note, we do have recommended standards for additional PFAS compounds, and we do add 4 additional to that combined standard but for simplicity it makes sense to look at just the two compounds that are of concern.

Gehin asked if we were under any orders at this time or directives. We wouldn't want to rush into something that could cause unexpected outcomes or cause other issues, so we needed to do this carefully. The example of lead water service was brought up to shed light on the difficulty of people responding to requests to change the private side of their water line services.

Burton (with DNR) replied that because this is an unregulated contaminant, we as a State Agency do not have authority to require corrective action, but we have been working closely with Wausau and the only thing we were requiring was notification to the public which was announced.

Robinson questioned Burton to see if other communities left their wells in service that tested with PFAS and if we had the ability to tap into other community wells for a blending process.

Burton (with DNR) replied that the measure of the quality of the water at the finished water point for what's going out to the customer. There have been situations where communities were able to blend the water to where the other side to the customers did not exceed the levels recommended.

Lindman replied that it's the volume needed.

Rosenberg stated the question from a citizen regarding bottled water.

Dr. Yang (with DHS) replied stating that the FDA does have some standards regarding PFAS in bottled water but doesn't know the number. You could go online to the FDA website and look for bottled water to see what they are striving for. You could look for one that is filtered then you would know it's being treated via reverse osmosis or filtered. If bottled at the source then you won't know what's in there.

Rosenberg stated with no further question, moving on to the next Agenda item.

No Action needed.

3) Discussion and Possible Action on Short Term PFAS Removal Options.

Lindman began by saying upon request we have taken a look and brainstormed some options that could possibly be look at for their feasibility so the commission can look at both immediate and what the solution would be as the new treatment facility will have when it goes online. Option 1 is in progress to establish the pilot and the bench testing. There will be options moving forward and we might have some presentations at the March meeting for those options and timelines with the engineering firms that we are working with. We looked at some of the different scenarios but the feasibility of these are extremely challenging and at this time we don't know if we can feasibly implement those options in a more timely, immediate manner that would affect the entire community and be efficient and sustainable. If anyone has any questions or specifics, one of the last options would be bringing in a full filtration system for the water we are currently treating and then distributing that. When you start looking at drinking water, it's a fairly sophisticated process, but when you start changing the chemistry of water in any way shape or form, when you start distributing that in the system, we have a corrosion control treatment to keep the public safe from lead leaching into the water but when you disrupt that chemistry without proper testing we could compromise that corrosion control treatment and that would put the public more at risk so this is very concerning when it comes to providing safe water. We have a direction that we are moving to create a solution and reduce PFAS in the water and moving forward to keep commission and public informed so that they can make the best decision in the best interest of the utility and the users.

Robinson questioned what the daily production of water in gallons were and the reservoir capacity. He also questioned if there would be any potential or concern in us evaluating potential release of residual PFAS in those structures along with the schedule for when the new water plant would be operational or if there are plans to accelerate the construction?

Boers replied with 4.5 million gallons with the reservoir capacity everywhere about 5.5 million gallons. There are concerns in reservoirs and water mains for the potential release of residual PFAS but we will also be evaluating what effects that could have on our water mains and what would have some potential residual release in the future. Barring any further construction issue items and equipment availability, plan is by end of July to early August and at this time it wouldn't be feasible to accelerate the construction at the plant.

Force questioned the pilot study timing and expectation. Maybe some of our water users may be interested in installing filters. I'm not sure what the finances are, but would we consider an in-home treatment device and crediting the water bill sort of like how we did the rain barrels. What can we do at the treatment plant for long term permanent solution that would include a budget issue and meantime we have immediate concern on how people can remove

PFAS quickly so they may be open to installing a filter but we need to move forward.

Lindman replied that once the testing begins, a reasonable expectation within the next 2-3 months to have something to look at to see which options to consider for the Commission. The installation of water filters can be an option for us to look at but we would have to look at the funding source for that. For the rain barrels we had to look at using user rates for certain things or if it was an ARPA option, it would be the decision of the Council.

Robinson recalled that part of the federal infrastructure bill was setting aside \$10 billion for PFAS remediation. What can be directed towards treatment technologies on a Statewide basis? Can we request proposal from other firms such as innovative solutions like drip irrigation, firms in California and Massachusetts that are designing ion exchange programs and granulated active carbon filtration systems. Can we be more inclusive to bring the best minds for the solutions.

Rosenberg replied stating the document for the Build Back Better plan infrastructure on page 237 talking about money flowing through the states but are still developing criteria. They are looking for long term solutions but if we find something that would work with treatment facility we could be reimbursed for that assuming what we do is appropriate and scientifically based. UW Milwaukee research on nanopore materials can be something that we can look at and work alongside folks with State and Government to make sure that solution is meeting the expectations, it's promising but it's still new.

Lindman reiterated that the Mayor has been in contact with the DNR's office and trying to figure out when the funding will be available. The city is in a good position right now, we have an open safe drinking water act loan. A lot of the money would be principal forgiveness through that program. The avenue that we would like to take would be that we would be able to access the funds at the time but be a forgivable loan vs tack onto the loan that we have to pay back. That is an option, they have no guarantees at this point but that's an avenue we are pursuing. We can move forward along with direct communication with the DNR because they are the approval authority.

Gehin questioned if we can take well 3 and 6 offline temporarily as an option.

Force questioned what a suitable time would be to offer meetings in the future.

Rosenberg stated we can have feedback on time but what could we do on the short term solutions?

Robinson began that with short term solutions such as in-house filtration systems, there has to be a good understanding of operation and what the expectations are. We need to be cautious in investing short-term. We don't know about the bio accumulative effects but Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) was looking at 21 ppt for a child as the standard for PFOA and 14 for PFOS. What recommendations would you have regarding children directly and interim basis?

Dr Yang (with DHS) replied stating DHS recommends the 20 ppt for all population that is the level that is suggested for all groups of people. In terms of timing, we don't know how long PFAS has been in the water so we don't know how much time we have left, so that's why we are encouraging people take action now to reduce exposure. We are not telling people to immediately stop drinking their water but if you can think of ways to switch and maybe drink bottled water half a day. At this time, DHS feels there is some health risk associated with this water and we encourage you guys to think on what options make most sense.

McElhaney brought forth the concerns of the residents regarding the health issues right now. Hearing we don't have to move immediately with the short term is not an option. I know we don't want to act to hastily but we don't know what to do so we are not going to do anything is not an option right now. When I voted for the building of the water plant, I did it reluctantly because of the money but I felt that the local government has responsibility of

giving us clean water. I'm disappointed that we are putting this much money into the new system but with this new multi-million dollar system, do we have any PFAS removal planned into the new plant? McElhaney also requested that when we are thinking of treatment options to remove PFAS that the water bills not increase because it is already high.

Lindman stated it was considered during the design which is the reason we pointed towards the anion exchange for the final treatment but because there is no regulation on it, the plant itself and the media we are using with that anion exchange wasn't part of the design which is why we are going back to do the pilot study to take a look at the anion exchange to determine if that additional media is an option as well. We also have planned space and options for emerging contaminants in the future with the anticipation that this is not the only one we are going to see come up in future years, so we may have to expand the plant and account for additional treatment. At the current site we have no additional space for future PFAS or future treatment.

Robinson questioned if there were any opportunities for discussion on options in accelerating the construction of the new plant and having it online or if it was the supply issues solely.

Boers replied stating we can have those discussions but in the lines of taking a conservative approach and looking at having a pilot study done by the time we put that online those timeframes would almost coincide but rushing a pilot study may not be in the best interest of our entire water system. I agree expedited but we have to look at the effects of what it could do to different parts of the system and that July timeframe would fit with what we could do with an expedited pilot. Haste without waste is good.

Force stated that there are a number of things that home-owners are responsible for in maintaining their homes but if they are determined to have the in-home treatment device to help reduce the consumption of PFAS they would be responsible for the maintenance and I don't see a reason why we couldn't supply or fund a treatment for those who want to put them in but what we are hearing is a lot of people want to do something now not in 6 months or a year from now. Residents want the ability to do something in their home now.

Rosenberg stated if the commission had enough information to make a motion.

Rosenberg reiterated the discussion of the made motion to support the pilot program and looking at various media resins with looking at all different approaches and the nanoporous solutions.

Motion by Herbst, Seconded by Gehin.

Motion carried 5-0.

Force motioned for a survey nationwide with engineering firms, governmental agencies, educational institutions who are dealing with PFAS with the consideration that we issue an RFP for engineering services from appropriate candidates. Herbst Seconded.

Gehin stated that review is appropriate but that we shouldn't issue an RFP until we have the data because it doesn't make sense.

Force amended to state that they come back to the commission with a recommendation based on reviews produced then we can recommend RFP at that time.

Rosenberg recapped the motion of surveying engineering firms and bringing that data back to the Commission.

Motion carried 5-0.

Robinson moved to direct staff to evaluate options including accelerating timing of plant construction and other operational changes such as blending supplies. Seconded by Force.

Force reiterated that the options would be evaluating some options like blending with other water sources or shutting down well 3, how do we know there's been an impact, will we test for PFAS again at some point.

Rosenberg stated we will be testing again.

Lindman answered confirming that we will test again with the pilot as we move forward with that.

Rosenberg recapped the motion is to direct staff to evaluate potential operational changes including acceleration of the plant construction, blending water, or shutting down wells or other options we would love to hear those too.

Motion carried 5-0.

Force requested that we make a motion to keep the option of looking into filters in some way but wasn't sure how we would execute that.

Robinson moved to direct staff to continue to evaluate point of source, treatment options for residential and businesses and bringing that report back in a special meeting or our next meeting scheduled for March 1st 2022.

Rosenberg requested to seek clarification on evaluation of the source filtration treatment options for residential and businesses that include schools and daycare centers. We did just mention for in home, in businesses, are we looking at those mobile semi-trucks, we want to continue looking at that filtering the water at the plant or are we mostly just talking about filtration systems in individual places.

Robinson implied for at home.

Force questioned how we were going to estimate how many of our 10,000 users would want to do that because that will determine the financial impact on the utility.

Killian commented that Wausau had over 17,000 households, DHS provides a PDF that includes in home methods to reduce PFAS and a link to certified products. In terms to quantity, these may reduce the quantity to some degree because it's unknown to some degree for filter products but for points of views, that's not much of a mystery. If we were to find the quantity of household coupled with a cost of a system at home then we will find that we have immediate federal funding on the table right now, we could spend ARPA funding to cover every household in town immediately if the Council will pass that. In my part of town, there are a lot of low-income neighbors. May I request that you hold this sooner in perhaps days instead of weeks particularly with pregnant women or nursing mothers. If households do not feel comfortable with the level in their water and realistically the money just isn't there right now, so if there were eligible federal funding then we can move it along a little bit sooner.

Rosenberg motioned along with directive to have staff evaluate, requesting finance committee consider costs with us in parallel.

Robinson stated that the Wisconsin Environmental Fund was accessed for funding and it's a different program but maybe there might be some potential funding there.

Burton (with DNR) replied stating the rules in the 738 does not allow Environmental Fund to supply water to public utilities.

Rosenberg recapped the motion to direct staff to evaluate point of source treatment for residents/ businesses etc. and all water users.

Motion carried 5-0.

Robinson requested if we could develop an outreach plan with the state and treatment devices that are available now and in providing education to citizens.

Force added that PFA information receive prominent display on the home page of City of Wausau's Website.

Rosenberg replied it is the case right now. March 1st is the next meeting.

Force requested the next meeting be at 7pm instead of 1pm.

Rosenberg replied there is an economic meeting but if the body wants to move the meeting to 7 or 7:15pm.

Robinson questioned if that would be a good time of day because at 7pm you may be getting people just coming home.

Rosenberg stated she could ask the Economic Committee to see if they may want to switch their time and will follow up with the Commission via email.

4) Adjourn.

There being no further business to discuss, motion to adjourn by Herbst, seconded by Gehin.

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

Gina Vang, Recording Secretary

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