



Minutes of March 1, 2022

A meeting of the Wausau Water Works Commission was called to order at 6:00 p.m. in City Hall on Tuesday, March 1st, 2022. In compliance with Wisconsin Statutes, this meeting was posted and receipted for by the Wausau Daily Herald on February 25, 2022.

Members Present: President Rosenberg, Commissioners Herbst, Gehin, Force, Robinson
Others Present: Eric Lindman, Scott Boers, Ben Brooks, Valerie Swanborg, Debra Ryan, Tom Kilian, Anne Jacobson, Stephen Opatik/ Becher-Hoppe, Susan Wojtkiewicz/ Donohue, Andrew Dow/ Donohue, Mike Gerbitz/ Donohue
Via WebEx: Dan Bauman, Lou Larson, MaryAnne Groat

1) Approve Minutes of January 4th & February 15th 2022 Meeting.

Herbst moved to approve the minutes of the January 4th and February 15th 2022 meeting.
Seconded by Gehin.

Motion carried 4-0.

2) Director's Report on Utility Operations.

Force questioned personnel shortages and if there were possibilities of advertising or recruitment of more staff through local institutions or through apprenticeship.

Gehin questioned employee that resigned in wastewater if he moved to a different community or if it was a salary issue.

Brooks stated he moved to another community.

Lindman replied something did go to HR Committee city wide about an apprenticeship program that passed unanimously. At this time the utility does not have an established apprenticeship program in place.

Director's Report placed on file.

3) Presentation on Temporary and Permanent Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl (PFAS) Removal Options and Discussion on a Path Forward (Donohue & Associates and Becher Hoppe).

Gerbitz, Wojtkiewicz and Dow from Donohue presented with removal options. See attached PowerPoint in the packet starting at page 17 or view [online](#).

Wojtkiewicz pointed out they have had a joint agency meeting with Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Public Service Commission (PSC), DNR requires plan approval for any modification/improvements to water system that would affect quality/quantity of water delivered, including water treatment facilities, engineering reports, pilot study results, DNR worksheets, and plans and specs. Along with the need to secure a water utility certificate from the PSC if the costs for construction, purchasing, installing, modifying, or replacing exceeds \$432,000.

Dow presented 3 major responses 1) Rapid Response- which we could do right away 2)

Interim- what would work until the new drinking water treatment plant is up and running/temporary solution 3) Permanent- what may potentially be for many generations to come. He also presented with 4 mature technologies that could be utilized 1) Powdered Activated Carbon (PAC) 2) Nanofiltration/Reverse Osmosis (NF/RO) 3) Granular Activated Carbon (GAC) and 4) Ion Exchange (IX).

Herbst questioned if filtered systems were the best way to go and if so, who would install/maintain them, would residents know for sure it would reduce PFAS amount to under 20 parts per trillion (ppt), requested the service life of a filter and if there would be a removal process.

Dow replied stating just like a Brita water filter, the homeowner would be responsible for maintaining it but in answering the rest of the questions, the DNR/DHS has a website for approved/certified PFAS removal filters.

Robinson questioned if the state would consider funding engineering and approve in bringing someone in with PFAS removal experience or with innovative approaches or models.

Bauman replied that the idea makes a lot of sense but availability of funding is more of a question for DNR funding program but it doesn't mean we can't take it to the secretary's office or through state legislators' and governors as well as department to see if we can meet somewhere in the middle.

Force questioned the disposal of spent granular activated carbon (GAC).

Dow replied with the reactivation process, the high temperature thermal is more commonly used vs. incinerating.

Kilian questioned if we could indicate proximity of the source and long-term plan source identification or consider a new well. He spoke with a product manager regarding a filter and with Duke study that shown reductions, and the highest was 3ppt with filter life of 6 months.

Gerbitz replied that they design drinking water and wastewater systems and do not get involved in contaminant fate and transport but are open to supplement and work with others with this type of expertise.

Wojtkiewicz stated we could investigate digging of a new well but how far we need to move to get away from impacted groundwater, not knowing if the other side of Wisconsin River is impacted and supporting costs of wells could be significant because the further it is, there is more cost of water mains and infrastructure.

Opatik replied with additional well investigations a while back, East side was looked at, water quality there was higher in Manganese than other areas we've worked with. Treatability was challenging.

Ryan brought forth the importance of lead in our piping as ongoing issues with the importance of PFAS now too. She requested that both lead and PFAS require the need for action and to filter water before drinking.

Rosenberg commented that PFAS were everywhere, found in the firefighter foam and even in her ice cream cup.

No Action Taken.

4) Discussion and Possible Action to Approve Funding for a Pilot Study and Scope of Services for PFAS Removal at the new Drinking Water Treatment Facility with Donohue & Associates & Becher Hoppe.

Gehin excused himself from the meeting for this Agenda Item.

Force moved to approve funding for pilot study with Donohue not to exceed \$155 thousand with the task order of \$30,000. Seconded by Herbst.

Robinson questioned the expertise of PFAS removal.

Force reiterated there would be opportunity after the pilot study to include that but we

needed to take the first steps/action.

Rosenberg reiterated the motion to approve funding for pilot study and scope of services for PFAS removal at the new drinking water treatment facility with Donohue & Associates & Becher Hoppe including finding consultants/engineers with expertise of PFAS removal.

Seconded by Force.

Motion carried 4-0.

Gehin returned to the meeting after the motion made.

5) Discussion and Possible Action on Interim PFAS Remedial Options Including Funding Recommendations until the new Drinking Water Treatment Facility is Operational.

Robinson stated he would like to direct staff to prepare an RFQ.

Jacobson questioned if the motion on the floor felt germane to the body in order to take action on this item.

Rosenberg stated she finds it germane in her point of view because it's the same pilot project. She stated we could direct this to Council and wants to follow parliamentary sway unless she gets overridden.

Robinson moved to direct staff to provide qualifications for services to help evaluate pilot processes/options following engineering.

Robinson questioned timeline/outline of when alternatives would be.

Lindman replied Donohue is presenting to Council next week Tuesday.

Robinson questioned if this needed to be ran through Water Commission or would it be a joint meeting.

Lindman replied that a joint meeting could be set up but Council can make those decision and that's why they wanted those options put before them. An item they wanted was to take action on possible expenditure of funds. We could discuss possible dates/times.

Rosenberg stated Council can approve alternate funding sources that are not ratepayers or kick it back to this Commission. She stated there's a Finance Committee meeting ahead of Council Meeting and a County Human Resources Committee Meeting so it may make sense to have the joint committee meeting. The Finance Committee is at 5:15pm. Then the Council meeting follows at 6:30pm.

Rosenberg stated she would explore the joint meetings with the chair of the Finance Committee.

Robinson moved to direct staff to prepare an RFQ and advance rapid response short-term and interim basis. Seconded by Force.

Motion carried 4-1.

6) Discussion and Possible Action on Approving terms of Settlement Agreement between Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) and the City of Wausau, providing for dismissal of both Contested Case and Petition for Judicial Review (Marathon County Case No. 19CV32).

Lindman stated when the first permit came out there was no total maximum daily load (tmdl), we had a low phosphorous limit, so we contested the permit.

Jacobson stated we've been at this since 2019, challenging the discharge permit agency level before the DNR and at circuit court level. Nothing has happened at the circuit court level. We've petitioned for contested case hearing at DNR and they've accepted it and we kept negotiating on terms of permit and accepted staff's request for construction deadline to remain 6/30/2023 with the compliance date 6 months thereafter to 12/30/2023. There is a public comment/hearing of 70 days but as long as we don't have a third-party challenge, then the contested claim would be dismissed.

Gehin motioned to approve terms of settlement agreement between WDNR and City of Wausau, providing for dismissal of both contested case and petition for judicial review. Seconded by Herbst.

Motion carried 5-0.

7) Discussion and Possible Action on a Budget Modification for the Burek Ave/ Campus Drive Water Main Project.

Lindman stated the diameter of water main increased from 14” to 18” along with increased material costs put us over budget by \$400,000 and are looking for budget modification approval for this project in 2022.

Gehin moved to approve budget modification. Seconded by Herbst.

Motion carried 5-0.

8) Discussion and Possible Action on Utility Policy Addressing PFAS Issues in Water and Wastewater Treatment Systems.

Robinson proposed that we look at the health advisory levels and what other states were doing. We need to begin to monitor both influent and effluent at the Wastewater Treatment Plant to minimize exposure. Where are we in terms of sampling biosolids at the Wastewater Plant and looking holistically at the effects of PFAS in our utility system.

Lindman replied that we have not sampled any biosolids at the plant.

Force stated we have talked about it in our past minutes and questioned if Robinson’s holistic approach included source identification or source investigation.

Robinson replied there would be two sources, looking at the source of groundwater contamination/drinking water wells and the other is the source of potential dischargers into the systems. He stated he would move that we embrace health standards to address quality issue in drinking water and expand knowledge through influent/effluent biosolid testing. Seconded by Force.

Gehin wanted to bring to light that we have no approved methodology for the Wastewater; Biosolids testing yet so we need to be careful because we don’t want to go out on a limb and find out that we came out with bad information and committed to serious investments that our taxpayers would not appreciate.

Robinson questioned if there really were no approved methods to test biosolids.

Brooks stated there are costly methods.

Lindman replied there are no standardized testing methods yet for biosolids and would not recommend moving forward with testing. DNR established guidelines for some PFAS levels in biosolids but these are not enforceable standards only guidelines, these were presented at a previous meeting and we can bring them back for your review.

Rosenberg stated it is worth it to investigate because what goes in does come out.

Robinson requested a three-part motion, 1) adopt department of health recommendation for 20 ppt for water 2) evaluate wastewater influent/effluent biosolids 3) look for source identification for PFAS in both groundwater and effluent if we had any.

Rosenberg reiterated we have motion to adopt the department of health recommendation for 20 ppt in drinking, evaluate wastewater influent/effluent, and investigate source of PFAS.

Motion carried 5-0.

9) Discussion on Possible Steps Moving Forward on PFAS Removal in Water and Wastewater Treatment Systems.

Robinson stated we can go with the sampling and get out the timelines and expectations to everyone out there that are waiting.

Lindman replied we can do that on the website.

Force reiterated that we can be as transparent to the Public so they understand the issue and what we are doing about it.

Rosenberg stated she is working with a firm to communicate this out and in plain English.

No Action Taken.

10) Discussion on Future Meeting Dates and Times for Wausau Water Works Commission.

Robinson requested that the joint meeting mentioned be no earlier than 530pm.

Rosenberg stated she will send out a note to request that and stated we can align with evening times for future meeting times.

No Action Taken.

11) Adjourn.

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

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

Gina Vang, Recording Secretary

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