



Minutes of July 12th, 2022

A meeting of the Wausau Water Works Commission was called to order at 1:30 p.m. in City Hall on Tuesday, July 12th, 2022. In compliance with Wisconsin Statutes, this meeting was posted and receipted for by the Wausau Daily Herald on July 11, 2022.

Members Present: President Rosenberg, Commissioners Herbst, Gehin, Force, Robinson
Others Present: Eric Lindman, Scott Boers, Ben Brooks, Valerie Swanborg, Thomas Niksich, Matt Frey/Miron, Tonia Westphal/ClarkDietz, Stephen Opatik/ Becher-Hoppe, Susan Wojtkiewicz/Donohue

Via WebEx: Evan Thomas/Wood, Andrew Dow/Donohue, Mike Gerbitz/Donohue

1) Approve Minutes of June 7th & 20th 2022 Meeting.

Herbst motioned to approve minutes from June 7th & 20th Commission Meeting. Seconded by Robinson.

Motion carried 5-0.

2) Director's Report on Utility Operations.

Robinson questioned if we could bring back retirees or limited term-based employees to assist the Utility Staff.

Lindman replied we have not looked at bringing back retired people, limited basis, or advertising for LTE's, other divisions have hired temporary employees such as clerical but it's harder to fill these labor positions with temporary staff.

Gehin questioned the operation of the liquid portion with Wastewater and the new units.

Brooks replied the selector zone is in service, some primary clarifiers are out of service for work on the gates, but we are at 80% operation without the primary in service.

Force questioned a power outage occurrence or any gas line interruption with the Water Plant construction.

Lindman replied there was an issue with a Wastewater Plant panel during the storm that was flooded out but nothing else that he was aware of.

Opatik stated he was not aware of anything at the Water Plant and stated we have generators at all of the wells, there were power outages due to the storms but the standby generators supplied power.

Director's Report Placed on File.

3) Discussion and Possible Action Awarding the Lead Service Line (LSL) Inventory Analysis to CDM Smith as was an Option in their Initial Proposal.

Lindman stated this would be additional \$20,120 to the contract and we would use the operating budget to fund it.

Herbst motioned to approve the additional \$20,120 that is needed for the material inventory and documentation. Seconded by Gehin.

Motion carried 5-0.

4) Discussion and Possible Action on Utility Staff Wages and Discussion on Options for Wage Adjustments.

Lindman stated this is strictly just for wages. I've been speaking with Finance and we did not have fiscal impact for each of these yet. We are at a critical situation in stabilizing the work force. We just hired someone in May and they have left, and we have a serious lag time with onboarding. If we continue to bleed people, we will continue to fall behind. Even if we were fully staffed, we need 18-24 months before they become fully operational and that's if we can keep those people.

Robinson requested the comparison with the approach of the City and if we would be treating employees differently and was concerned about the consistency as an entity.

Lindman replied the Council is looking at a 2% increase and we are not treating the employees differently. This would just move them up within their payscale not changing the pay structure. Lindman would like approval but if a fiscal impact is needed, we could bring it back in August. These proposed wage increases work within the pay structure and could be implemented quickly because it works in the pay structure. He questioned if the Commission would like a fiscal impact on different scenarios? We are not deviating from the City's pay structure we are proposing to increase utility wages within that pay structure. Something needs to be done with the Utility side, we are far below other Utilities and we are not even close to being competitive, something has to be done. Whatever you need I will prepare and bring it back. This is critical for both Water and Wastewater.

Boers added, we are down to just 2 techs and could be 6 months away from having no Technicians. I've been bringing this back since 2016 and if we don't do something, this ship will sink.

Force requested context for the positions being described and wanted to see it on paper for the next meeting. He asked if we had a coherent plan to address this issue and stated it was not a money issue and wanted to know more as to why or what was causing people to not accept positions or leave.

Boers replied that we operate on a reasonable pay scale, companies that come in at a fee will charge more, rates are much higher for Communities that do have Contracted Operators.

Lindman stated we are trying to take it in steps to allow time to come up with an overall plan. The intent is not to break away from the City and it's wages. The intent is to keep the Utility running properly and keep the employees that we currently have. We are trying to figure out what our path would be. The City is continuing to improve the benefits but one thing not addressed yet were the wages.

Gehin stated the importance of a good living wage and was hoping we could retain our existing core staff, we have to find a way not to lose them. I don't like working against other Departments and we don't need to do them together but we need to do something for the Utility- it can't be 2 years from now that would be too late.

Rosenberg stated some rural utilities are doing other work, we do need some context, we could bring this back and have a robust discussion or have a special meeting.

Robinson stated we need a summary of where we are at risk, where we are not or where we need to move. It's tough to hire someone at a higher rate vs someone who is working because this would breed resentment overtime. Where are we relative to the market and we need to know fiscal impact too. If we could pull that together it merits the focus and consideration and could have a special meeting if need.

No Action Taken.

5) Discussion and Possible Action on the Water & Wastewater 2023-2027 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).

Gehin would like to carry this over to the next meeting to discuss questions with staff.

Lindman requested the Commissioners reach out to him for more information or with any other questions they may have.

No Action taken.

6) Discussion and Possible Action on Contracting Water and Sewer Locates for Wausau Water Works.

Robinson moved to authorize staff to begin working on an RFP for contracting out Water and Sewer locates. Seconded by Gehin

Motion carried 5-0.

7) Discussion and Possible Action on Approving a Budget and Proposal with Donahue & Associates for the Engineering Design of a Granular Activated Carbon (GAC) Treatment Process for the Drinking Water Treatment Facility.

Gehin excused himself at 1410 for this discussion.

Lindman began with task order #3 from Donohue to get us started for the GAC design for PFAS. This brings us all the way through bidding.

Wojtkiewicz stated this included assistance with funding and Safe Drinking Water Loan Application and provided support for federal appropriation that the Utility applied for through Senator Baldwin's Office.

Robinson questioned the bench scale pilot study. He expressed concern for the need to continue the bench scale pilot.

Dow replied that the three objectives for continuation of the pilot study. 1) To continue to operate the regenerable anion exchange pilot column to study the performance and behavior and how it changes over time and if it does and does not continue to provide an efficient reduction of PFAS in water. 2) GAC column, adjustments to better simulate the breakthrough in that column, could get to a point where we could establish a breakthrough curve for the PFAS that would give reliable and the actual operating cost. This would include the Utility's long term operating costs with the media or treatment strategy which would effect the rate, revenue requirements, the user rates required for the GAC treatment. From the design standpoint perspective- philosophy for designing GAC treatment lead lag operation, is to give flexibility for a change out to other media that are available in the future if proven to offer beneficial cost savings and only if the GAC is not required to meet other treatment objectives but the focus would be on the GAC. 3) Was for an opportunity to collect data on the performance of flurosorb media, there was a supplier willing to provide a sample media to the City at no charge, the only cost would be the analytical fees for the monthly samples collected measured from the pilot column and there would be a discussion to see if there would be a desire to pursue that or not.

Boers stated DNR is requiring us to run that for an extended period of time before they approve the system that we add onto the Plant but he couldn't recall that time frame of that approval. He asked if Wojtkiewicz could look at that to bring it back to the Commission. DNR would want to look at how the extended GAC would be working with our water.

Wojtkiewicz stated they had a technical memorandum ready to go regarding the pilot study that Donoue drafted and Wood was given opportunity to provide input upon review that they would be bringing to the City. We could have that discussion with DNR and pull the pilot study piece out at this point and revisit it depending on the requirements of the DNR.

Robinson motioned to move ahead with approving the budget in the proposal with placing the pilot study on hold pending the discussion with DNR and others. Seconded by Herbst.

Rosenberg reiterated the motion to approve the budget and proposal with Donohue & Associates for the Engineering Design of a Granular Activated Carbon Treatment process for the

Drinking Water Treatment Facility with the understanding that we will put the Pilot Study on hold pending discussion with the DNR.

Motion carried 4-0.

Gehin returned to the Commission meeting 1425.

8) Discussion on the Drinking Water Treatment Facility Construction and Update on Testing/Start up.

Opatik presented the project started June 25th 2020, during the peak of Covid. Work has continued but the delay was that we couldn't start running water until the remediation of the ductile iron pipes were completed. As we got through June, it became apparent that we would probably fall 4-6 weeks behind the August 16th date and wanted to advise the Commission. The last scheduled start date could be September 21st.

Frey reiterated it's not working around the clock now but it's about working things through the systems and we are anticipating that something might just pop up and we would react to that but if there were any issues we will communicate that up the chain.

No Action Taken.

9) Discussion and Possible Action for Early Ordering of Piping and Appurtenance Materials for the 2023 Street Reconstruction Projects.

Niksich presented that there is currently a long lead time for piping and water main materials. We'd like approval to order the materials now so we can start on time. We've reached out to the 2 main suppliers in the area Ferguson and Core&Main.

Boers questioned Ferguson's service because there were non-domestic parts supplied. If we didn't get the parts from Core&Main, would we have been able to start any of our street reconstruction projects this year?

Niksich replied Ferguson gave us a nondomestic 18" cross that broke upon installation so Core&Main was able to get us some materials to help us through that issue.

Lindman stated we should get what we specify and that was a problem this year. Staff would like to go with Core&Main this year. Last year we went with Ferguson and we ordered pipe materials based on price given but when the pipe arrived, we had to pay a surcharge on that piping because they didn't guarantee prices so we paid more otherwise they would've sold it to other requesters.

Robinson moved to authorize staff to begin the process of obtaining material for the 2023 Street Reconstruction Seasons. Seconded by Force.

Niksich requested if that motion was to go with Core&Main?

Lindman clarified that would go to Board of Public Works for a decision on the supplier.

Rosenberg reiterated the motion to approve early ordering of piping for the 2023 Street Reconstruction Projects.

Motion carried 5-0.

10) Discussion and Update on a Proposed Solar Array for the Drinking Water Treatment Facility.

Lindman provided an update on the Solar project, noting the memo states prepared in consultation with Donohue but this is not with Donohue.

Robinson agreed that we should ask what the communities concerns were vs. what worked for them? He also urged caution while presenting this as we are still in the fact-finding phase or still in it's exploratory phase and not finalized yet, ultimately, the decision comes back here.

Lindman stated correct, we are still gathering information from costs to size and life cycle costs, we will work with those individuals that have presented and will have a public information meeting after that. He would speak with the individuals that live in the area to gather their input

before holding a full public information meeting.

No Action Taken

11) Discussion on the One-time Charge for a Connection Fee to the City's Wastewater Collection System.

Lindman began the Village of Maine asked for a connection fee if they were to bring their Wastewater to the City of Wausau. We typically establish connection fees and wanted to see if it's something we could address within the municipal code that would be specifically related to a municipality connection because we don't have that now and this could be followed for future requests as well.

Gehin brought up the example with the agreement that we had with Schofield because they contributed 50% of the cost to the replacement of the siphon that went across Memorial Park.

Force agreed that he didn't want to incur more costs but since we don't have a long history in this area of all Communities working together. This may be an opportunity to demonstrate that we could work together and would expand our ratepayer base. He'd like to see us come up with something that works so that we don't have to turn potential clients away.

No Action Taken.

12) Adjourn.

Motion to adjourn by Robinson. Seconded by Herbst.

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

Gina Vang, Recording Secretary

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