



Minutes of September 2, 2025

A meeting of the Wausau Water Works Commission was called to order at 11:03 a.m. in City Hall on Tuesday, September 2, 2025. In compliance with Wisconsin Statutes, this meeting was posted and receipted by the Wausau Daily Herald on August 29, 2025.

Members Present: President Diny, Commissioners Hadley, Gelhar, Force arrival 11:22am

Member Excused: Watson

Others Present: Eric Lindman, Scott Boers, Ben Brooks, MaryAnne Groat, Lisa Nowak, Carrie Edmondson, Mary Kluz/past Chair of SEEC, John Robinson, Tonia Westphal/ClarkDietz

1) Approve Minutes of August 5, 2025 Meetings.

Gelhar motioned to approve minutes. Seconded by Hadley.

Motion carried 3-0.

2) Director's Report on Utility Operations.

Lindman highlighted an editorial came out in Wausau Pilot about the sewer Penta study we did back in 2019-2020 attached and updates on the Washington Street siphon replacement, Headworks Screening project and Cherry Street lift station.

Hadley thanked Wausau Waterworks for both facility tours because a lot was learned.

Director's Report Placed on File.

3) Discussion and Update on Solar Array Project.

Kluz, who was the past Chair for Sustainable Energy & Environment Coalition (SEEC), summarized the importance and support of the Solar Array Project proposed at Wausau Waterworks. The Committee support letter & signed petition are enclosed showing full support from residents. She encouraged the commission to look at the financials because electricity will be much higher than was very conservatively estimated for this project. City council passed a greenhouse gas reduction resolution moving us toward energy independence. Strains are coming to our infrastructure that will demand more energy. New York Times quoted a June analysis from Carnegie Mellon University, NC State found that energy prices are likely to rise 8% nationwide by 2030 as much as 25% in other places. We don't know where we'll fall between those percentages.

Edmondson stated the sustainability committee is overwhelmingly supportive of the project, looking at different options, grants and funding and formerly recommends approval.

Diny questioned if this went to CIP?

Lindman replied yes and it will be going to Finance Committee for consideration, the proposed funding will be out of general obligation with the city and not the utility.

Groat clarified just the engineering part is funded in 2026 through CIP's recommendation, only \$150,000, not the project itself.

Lindman highlighted in his memo that recently came to light were the tax credits that were going to fade away from what they were before. What goes to Finance Committee might have to change once we start discussion, if they want the project to go and still earn tax credits, they'll have to fund design and construction for next year.

Groat added it would go through the budget process and if it's funded by the city, then it's funded by taxpayers and would be borrowed money. Regardless of who funds it, borrowed money or water utility would have opportunity to consider PFAS settlement for that funding source.

No Action Taken.

4) Discussion on Utility Financials Update through July 2025.

Groat added financials in the packet for both the water and sewer utility (page 77) explanation at 12:25 [video](#).

No Action Taken.

5) Discussion and Possible Action Approving Wage Recommendations.

Diny requested review of the recommendation brought forth.

Motioned to approve as recommended by Gelhar, Seconded by Hadley.

Lindman summarized this was discussed a few years ago and these numbers are updated with today's costs within the pay structure developed with the city. This doesn't put us in the lead but will make us competitive with recruitment, retention and improve culture of being fully staffed, it will help with training people from ground up and knowledge along with shorter on-call rotation. We invited Brian from Ehlers but he's not on the call, so in the packet is also the cash flow projections from Ehlers, it's a small impact to our overall annual budget.

Groat speaks about the uniqueness of the technicians but was surprised that the clerical administrative positions were included because those are generic positions found in every department because they are not unique and raised concern about internal equity.

Force is supportive of this but questioned the basis of where the increases came from and if it's just the pay grade change?

Lindman replied correct, these are pay grades based on our pay structure within the city. The pay grades are being reclassified in comparison to other utilities and AWWA comp surveys that span 3 different years.

Nowak advised she's been running analysis on existing Admin positions of level 2 that will be re-slotted to level 3 and the 3 to an analyst as in Groat's point of general catch-all term, secretary is a term I've removed from some of the job descriptions because what was once a secretary answering phones has morphed into analyzing data and in some instances filing federal reports with the data enclosed, it's not a secretary's or administrative's duty. When you look at the level of the position and semantics you also understand there's a lot of old antiquated terms. So, in doing an actual job evaluation, which is what needs to be done across the city, we'll be adjusting a lot of these admin positions and clarifying what they do vs what they did 10 years ago.

Gelhar motioned to amend the motion to accept recommendations as proposed except for the admins that will be brought back separately. Seconded from Hadley.

Force questioned overall impact to our budget. Lindman replied about 1% of our budget.

Motion carried 4-0.

6) Discussion and Possible Action Approving the Sole Source Purchase of Magnesium Hydroxide Chemical by Midwest Chemical and Equipment.

Brooks included memo, quotes for the Sole Source Purchase of Magnesium Hydroxide and recommended to stay with Midwest Chemical. It's a chemical that increases alkalinity, making wastewater more stable/treatable for biological phosphorous removal. They're holding their pricing firm, after the 1st year, it'll raise a penny per pound more. It's water soluble and works well with piping set up at the plant because we've had some clogging issues with other products and had to make piping modifications, it has a unique formulation.

Force motioned to approve the sole source purchase of Magnesium Hydroxide by Midwest

Chemical. Seconded by Gelhar.

Motion carried 4-0.

7) Discussion and Possible Action Approving the Purchase of a UTV and Golf Cart with Funds Received from the Sale of Three General Fixed Assets Sold at Integrity Auction.

Brooks' memo explained this would enable staff to travel over the top of the tunnels due to weight restrictions, we can't drive a pickup truck with fear the roof would collapse in the tunnels. Right now, they are dragging pumps, fire hoses out there by hand, this allows them to have access to vehicles readily to go. Bill's offered cooperative purchase pricing, there are no can-am dealerships in Wausau for the UTV. Brad is working on golf cart pricing so I've placed a "not to exceed" in the memo.

Gelhar questioned if it's normal process to get more than 1 quote.

Lindman reiterated procurement policy allows pricing through cooperative purchase but if the commission would like something different, we are open to that.

Diny requested to revisit in October so that we'll have the golf cart information as well.

No Action Taken.

8) Discussion and Possible Action Approving/ Setting PFAS Target Levels and GAC Replacement.

Diny began this was brought last month and had lively discussion but we are shooting at a moving target listing 70ppt, 20ppt and 4ppt.

Boers summarized the recommendations from different entities that either make suggestions or set standards. EPA-4ppt, not enforceable until 2031, WI-DNR-70ppt combined (PFOA/PFOS), WI-DHS 20ppt combined. This Spring DHS revised their advisory level to 4ppt shadowing EPA's recommendation. I don't know when DNR will start requiring public notification for 4ppt but they're still requiring it for the 20ppt.

Hadley questioned why we had to make this decision when nobody's decided; since we have a standard we are meeting.

Diny replied we have the GAC filter in place and over time loading and contamination of it will require a change out, we have the capacity to get under 4ppt but we know 70ppt is not where we want to push it to.

Boers reiterated that under state standards we wouldn't have to treat the water at all; we have combined between 30ppt and 40ppt from each of our wells in the groundwater. We have the system and we'll be meeting standards in the future but this allows us time to gather data to know when we will be required to meet that 4ppt, so that we have it correct and can meet the timing and economically run our system, stage our changeouts and our reactivations to meet that timeline and stay under our regulatory or in compliance of 4ppt and run it most cost effective.

Force questioned if 4ppt with EPA was current or past administration and if they were going to change that? Before the GAC, we had considerable public concern about the quality of our drinking water, in fact, city council authorized purchase of bottled water and filters, weren't we in the 20ppt range when that was going on with our conventional system? The community likes where we are, we should stay at 4ppt or below.

Boers replied the 4ppt was proposed under the past administration, current administration plans to keep it; they moved compliance date out because they figure most facilities wouldn't meet it by 2026. They're looking at adjusting the health index number that had combined numbers of different PFAS that

created a health index. They plan on moving forward with the 4ppt for the PFOA/PFOS. At the old plant, we were between 30ppt- 40ppt, when we moved to our new facility, our anion exchange process lowered it below 20ppt, so that's where this commission voted to stay under that 20ppt. The anion exchange is not designed for PFAS removal, it loads up, then sluffs off, after 9 months, we exceeded that 20ppt to about 22ppt range, we worked on getting that resin replaced. The life on that resin for TOC removal is 15-20 years.

Diny recapped we needed a trigger point but also time to collect data, we don't want to be doing this in February when it's cold but we need a little latitude.

Robinson summarized the EPA isn't changing the standards, the 4ppt has been embedded for PFOA/PFOS, they've delayed the effective date for parties that are non-compliant. These are forever chemicals, there's 12 plus thousands of them out there. There were six other ones that the EPA walked back, DNR is working on their groundwater standard and the drinking water standard tends to be tied into the federal standard. We currently have a lead/lag system of vessels at the water treatment plant, which means one removes most of the PFOA/PFOS, then goes into the other and comes out non-detect. When the lead becomes too saturated, you go to the lag and then look at changing out that lead or regenerating that carbon. As a member of DNR's external advisory group on PFAS, we're looking at different ways of controlling costs, in recent discussions with management departments expressing their willingness to look at different approaches relating to regeneration. I'd encourage not to change the standard because it would affect wastewater treatment plant with their effluent and PFAS levels in their biosolids. It's good to be ahead of the curve but not step back from that standard.

Diny replied operating at this range would allow flexibility to collect information and get the most useful life out of the carbon allowing for cost-effective GAC changeouts in the future. We should be operating this system efficiently and part of that calculation is that it's about \$1 million per changeout, don't want to change it out 3x a year if we could get by with 1x a year. Would entertain a motion to accept Boers' recommendation.

Hadley motioned to approve staff recommendation to run it to 4ppt. Seconded by Gelhar.

Force questioned clarification is it just 4ppt or 5ppt or 6ppt?

Boers recapped, it's for that trigger for our changeouts to see what that timeline would be because the changeouts can't happen immediately, might be month or so, we're testing monthly but without increasing that testing frequency, there may be a lag time in there. We're looking for some leeway on the timing and want to run at least 4ppt to get the information to that number. That's why the EPA set those numbers at 4ppt, because that's where they can maintain the accuracy.

Motion carried 4-0.

9) Adjourn.

Diny stated for the record, next meeting is October 7th at 11:00am here in the Council Chambers.

Hadley motioned to adjourn. Seconded by Force.

Motion carried 4-0.

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

Gina Vang, Recording Secretary

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