



Minutes of September 6th, 2022

A meeting of the Wausau Water Works Commission was called to order at 1:30 p.m. in City Hall on Tuesday, September 6th, 2022. In compliance with Wisconsin Statutes, this meeting was posted and receipted for by the Wausau Daily Herald on September 1, 2022.

Members Present: President Rosenberg, Commissioners Herbst, Force, Gehin, Robinson
Others Present: Eric Lindman, Scott Boers, Ben Brooks, Stephen Opatik/ Becher-Hoppe, Susan Wojtkiewicz/Donohue

Via WebEx: Mike Gerbitz/Donohue, Andrew Dow/Donohue, Tonia Westphal/Clark-Dietz

1) Approve Minutes of August 2nd 2022 Meeting.

Robinson motioned to approve minutes. Seconded by Gehin.

Motion carried 5-0.

2) Director's Report on Utility Operations.

Force questioned the Public Information Meeting update on the Solar Array scheduled for late September if it should include a 3rd meeting as the last meeting concluded residents didn't want anything done to the property. We should reflect on what we heard in terms of facts and answering questions or consider taking a different approach. As a Commissioner, I'm not ready to move forward from what I'm hearing.

Lindman stated neighbors adjacent to the property don't want the solar facility there but Public Information Meetings are Community wide for the entire City to attend. There's positive feedback regarding the City moving forward with Solar. We know that there's proof of concept with solar, benefits to the Users, we have indication there will be funding availability over the next 9-12 months along with America Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) that could be requested to offset those capital costs. If the Commission wishes to hold the project and pursue other communication, we could but I don't think we could change the aptitude for the handful of residents in that area.

Robinson reiterated the importance of taking a step back to update the renderings, develop frequently asked questions and look at inflation/reduction acts of some of the energy components that it may have such as the 30% tax credits which doesn't help the Utility. We haven't done a good job portraying the need for, the benefits of, or provide renderings that show the berm that would be more acceptable to the neighborhood. Until we do that, we are fighting an uphill battle and being interpreted as not listening. We need do a better job and maybe have this Commission take a larger role in presenting to the public in terms of looking to try to get more neighborhood input relative to advancing the Array. We are intrigued by it with the potential long-term savings and benefits to the rate payers but we need to take some pressure off Staff and go out engage the Community with concepts that are more acceptable to result in a gain for the Utility and the neighborhood.

Force stated that from our December meeting, we were going to have a work group with the neighbors and a berm should be considered but I haven't seen anything regarding that for a visual barrier for the folks. We missed an opportunity, but we shouldn't push ahead with the

concept we've presented because we know it won't be popular locally and we have no idea what the Council would do. Except for minutes, we've not shown any other information on Solar Array, we did a good job on PFAS but we don't show anything online regarding Solar Array information.

Lindman stated we could spend more money on some renderings, we could show things in greater detail, those plantings shown in the concepts were on a berm and maybe it was difficult to see. It would be a while before this comes back with everything that the Utility is working on, we can work with the Consultants and try to rescope the services that we have and the funding and will let the neighborhood group leader (Paul) know. We asked if we could do a working group at their neighborhood group, he said no and preferred that not happen, so trying to establish a group, rather than work in some formal context proved to be difficult, so it did not happen. We rely on the neighborhood group leaders to help us put those together and in that group, there was not a lot of buy-in to do that.

Robinson questioned the time frame relative to addressing the issue with hiring and training staff. In looking at wages, non-represented got 11% increase and union was considerably higher. He questioned if there was a way to accelerate and deal with the issues to make sure we are properly staffed when the new plant goes online?

Rosenberg stated that HR Committee approved a quick market study and a Request for Proposal (RFP) was sent out with results that should be discussed at the next HR Committee meeting next week along with the budget, wages, looking at Cost of Living (COLA) increases and other various things. I will talk with HR Director to make sure we prioritize this. Maybe we could have a report with what we have and what we've discussed, and agendaize this item to discuss this issue. We should have a timeline once the Committee selects who we go with for that study.

Boers questioned who is on the HR Committee for the selection of the RFP as the Utility is normally not very well represented.

Rosenberg stated the HR Committee Chair is McElhaney and included Alderperson Herbst. Director's Report Placed on File.

3) Presentation by Donohue on the Pilot Study Outcomes to Date.

Wojtkiewicz presented that the slides provide a briefing of the most up to date information regarding the Pilot Study.

Dow presented the slides- [See Packet.](#)

Robinson confirmed the interim PFAS removal in place was the regenerable Ion Exchange (IX) until we get the new plant up with the Granular Activated Carbon (GAC) filters. We would meet the State Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) of 70 Parts Per Trillion (ppt) on an interim basis but we would have difficulty complying with the Department of Health Services (DHS) recommended 20ppt threshold and you are giving us the breakthrough at approximately 125 days? Additional questions included: What is the cost to the resin at 125 days? If we move from lead to lag with GAC treatment, at what point would we have to recharge or redo the former lead when that lead becomes the lag, when do we see that breakthrough? Are we monitoring the influent or effluent coming out of the lag? What is the volume of water going through the lead before you have breakthrough because that's when we need to look at charge and what our cost would be? Is bed volume the driver? What does that translate to if we are looking at the design? We know the Pilot would give us additional information to save dollars but when would breakthrough occur in terms of gallons?

Dow confirmed the Pilot concentrations for the regenerable Ion Exchange increased to 20ppt and if that was the goal, then we would need to replace the resin to restart the clock until the GAC replaces it. Based on what we saw, that is correct, breakthrough is at 125 days. We estimated the replacement of the 6 vessels around \$800k for the whole system. We did see that on a simulated full scale, after 150 days, we saw the technical levels of PFOA appear on one of the

columns but that doesn't mean we have to change the lead at that time because the lag will continue to catch it. Minimizing the preload into the lag bed would be a good strategy so that we are not prematurely changing the bed, so when the lag becomes lead, there would still be some life in the bed. The breakthrough would allow us to estimate when the lead bed should be changed and help the utility plan for monitoring. We are simulating a lag vessel and have data summarized in the graph in terms of days but we could look at bed volumes. 150 days at 4.8mgd will equate to a total of 720 million gallons of volume that passes through the lead vessel but you could have more life in the lead because the lag vessel is going to catch it.

Force questioned if there was a new standard or value for the PFOA/PFOS and if any other wastes produced with the Ion Exchange system other than the liquid brine would go down into the Sewer system?

Wojtkiewicz replied those values went into effect August 1st 2022, no discussion on changes but its more for politics.

Dow replied the Ion Exchange system would produce liquid brine which would be made up of less than 1% of solid until the Resin is disposed of and replaced which would have to be disposed of by landfilling.

Robinson stated if we could accelerate the GAC, we could avoid the Ion Exchange change out at \$800k. We need to begin the evaluation of the influent/effluent and cost spreading on sludge. The pilot is effectively complete, we don't have the change out for the GAC but at what point does the lead vessel require replacement so that the lag would have a breakthrough. Are there any other studies on breakthrough, can we look at the media to see when the lag product is of concern? At what point would the lag become concern to public health. It would be helpful to get DNR to help us with the testing of the systems to provide insight and value to that.

Gehin stated we would still have operating costs, but anytime we could save money, truly this is like a pretreatment to the Wastewater plant, like a 2-fold, maybe we could apply the sludge or landfill it but look at the budget of Wastewater to help with that.

Dow replied, we could look at the breakthrough and ask what the optimal timing to avoid water quality issues. With GAC, it's harder to model breakthrough like Ion Exchange. We can hold the recommendation on the change out and get buy in from DNR.

No Action Taken.

4) Discussion and Possible Action Continuing the PFAS Treatment Pilot Study.

Robinson motioned that the Commission compose a letter to Department of Natural Resources (DNR) requesting financial assistance to the study of treatment options and approaches as it relates to PFAS in drinking water. Seconded by Herbst.

Force questioned the timeline of staff recommendation for the pilot study to go as long as possible. Would it be a days or months and the cost for continuing the pilot study?

Lindman replied until the new plant goes online before the end of the year.

Robinson questioned what the request is for the Commission. What other value or data are we collecting if we know the breakthrough and we won't get the second breakthrough?

Lindman replied we are asking to extend and continue collecting data from the pilot study as long as possible. We are starting to see breakthrough on the lead bed, more data would help establish the curve. The challenge is what suppliers have, they don't have our water, we have challenging water chemistry from one plant or organization is different to another community. It's been going on for 6 months and to continue collecting data is relevant to our process and to have a more accurate long term operational expense.

Dow replied if we continued for another 2 weeks, beyond any samples already collected to date would be another \$3,000 for the analytical cost. We can look at scaling back the number of

analyses run as the pilot continues, currently it is approximately \$7,000 a month at the pace we've been collecting samples. Depending on how much longer the pilot continues and staffing needs for engineering would also be an additional cost. Our initial contracted duration is 6 months, we understand there was a desire from the Commission to bring the study to a conclusion and that's where we came to the mid-September conclusion. The value of continuation would be to collect data in terms of managing the lead/lag for the system.

Wojtkiewicz clarified there was \$30,000 budgeted into engineering cost that were removed from the contract for the amendment removal of PFAS design. If you're thinking about the \$30,000 that's what we had and that was to continue the pilot study.

Force questioned if the cost was \$3,000 or \$7,000?

Wojtkiewicz stated if we are looking at the staffing cost, we would be looking at about \$5,000- \$6,000 for one month that equates to 4 weeks.

Robinson stated he was concerned because all of the projects cost money. Information is great, but at what cost and where can we go? Whether it be \$7,000 or \$13,000, we may not get that lag breakthrough, if you had to prioritize, where would you put the \$13,000? In wages?

Lindman stated he is not one for continuing the pilot just to get data. We have a seasoned pilot study in place and gathering more information to better understand the breakthrough curves for the new GAC system. We did talk with DNR if our pilot study would be used to dictate frequency of our required testing going forward once the new facility goes online. They didn't give us an answer but only replied that they will give the request consideration as we move forward. The data is worth from the pilot is worth pursuing.

Robinson moved to authorize the continuation of the pilot project with a net cost not to exceed \$15,000 with the intent to try and get DNR to step forward. Seconded by Force.

Motion carried 4-1.

5) Discussion and Possible Action on 2023-2027 Capital Improvement Projects.

Gehin questioned the 14" pipe on 17th Avenue under the general distribution projects because he thought that was replaced already.

Boers replied that it was lined from the Reservoir down to Elm Street and 17th Avenue. We would leave the lined portion, just the portion on 17th Ave would be fixed.

Force moved to approve the CIP Budget presented but would like to see a breakdown of the expenses for the list of current projects the utility is committed. An overall financial snapshot on operating capital including PFAS and different projects and what the potential impact would be for our ratepayers. We did that survey when we budgeted for the 2 new plants and saw the rate go to the upper rates compared to other Cities in the State that we accepted but would like to see more detail. Seconded by Gehin.

Rosenberg reiterated the motion to approve the 2023-2027 CIP and also a request for a financial snapshot with a financial exploration of what that would do to the future rates.

Lindman stated Ehlers would be making a presentation in October on funding/rates/and staffing but could also put something together.

Motion Carried 5-0.

6) Discussion and Possible Action on a 5-Year Sanitary Sewer Agreement with the Town of Stettin.

Lindman began that we redrafted the Sewer agreement with the Town of Stettin since we own, operate and maintain the main lines, this is to ensure that we still have authority with our pretreatment program if an industrial user, nonresidential user were to go into that area. Gehin brought to my attention a couple of items like paragraph 4 that still referenced Stettin's ability to expand the collection system and that isn't the intent of the agreement so will talk to Legal about

that before it goes to Council.

Gehin reiterated that he had a couple more items and recommends that we proceed with Staff working on this and will assist where clarification is needed.

Robinson questioned if we have perimeters for what we want for modifications and suggested a preliminary approval subject to final approval.

Lindman stated if the intent was to bring it back to the body in October after speaking with Legal and working on some final edits?

Rosenberg recapped the motion to table this item, instead to bring it back after seeking expertise.

Item Tabled.

7) Discussion and Possible Action Amending WMC 13.62.020 Definitions for Pretreatment Authorized Representative.

Lindman began this section was part of our pretreatment and it referenced Managers of Industrial sites and not the City, so it should not reference the Director of Public Works but Manager.

Robinson moved to accept the modifications to the Wausau Municipal Code. Seconded by Gehin.

Rosenberg recapped the motion to amend WMC 13.62.020 Definitions for Pretreatment Authorized Representative.

Motion Carried 5-0.

8) Discussion and Possible Action on Change in Scope and Costs with Wood's Professional Services Contract.

Lindman stated there was a discussion with Wood regarding their original scope of services for providing technical expertise in the pilot study and possible PFAS treatment options. The decision moving forward with the GAC treatment moved quicker than expected and the scope of services needed to be revisited. We kept money in the communication side with Wood as we felt it has been beneficial as they are working on timelines and other stuff for us. We wanted to make sure we finalize some of that with some review of the pilot study findings on the technical memorandum provided by Donohue's findings. The scope and cost were reduced from \$83,343 to \$49,013.

Robinson moved to accept the modifications and changes. Seconded by Herbst.

Force questioned if we knew what we spent so far?

Rosenberg stated it could be part of our financial snapshot.

Motion Carried 5-0.

9) Adjourn.

Motion to adjourn by Gehin. Seconded by Robinson.

Motion Carried 5-0.

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

Gina Vang, Recording Secretary

S:\WaterWorks\Common\WaterCommission\2022\October\WWWC_20220906_Minutes.doc.