



Minutes of December 5, 2023

A meeting of the Wausau Water Works Commission was called to order at 1:30 p.m. in City Hall on Tuesday, December 5th, 2023. In compliance with Wisconsin Statutes, this meeting was posted and receipted for by the Wausau Daily Herald on December 4th, 2023.

Members Present: President Rosenberg, Commissioners Herbst, Robinson, Force, Gehin
Others Present: Eric Lindman, Ben Brooks, Tegan Troutner, James Henderson, Anne Jacobson, Teagan Troutner, Susan Wojtkiewicz/ Donohue, Tonia Westphal/ Clark-Dietz.

1) Approve Minutes of November 7th 2023 Meeting.

Herbst motioned to approve minutes. Seconded by Gehin.

Force questioned public engagement on the proposed LSL ordinance and if we could have updates monthly as we move forward?

Lindman replied under the contract with CIP, who drafted most of the community outreach, is heading to Council. Once signed, the information would go out to residents. CIP is going door to door communicating with homeowners directly.

Rosenberg shared CIP is working with H2N to make sure we are speaking in the language folks speak and understand.

Motion Carried 5-0.

2) Director's Report on Utility Operations.

Lindman began there are many things ongoing but one thing that has been completed is the dryer met Class A biosolids requirements so that's great news.

Force questioned the mechanical shape of the dryer because of operational issues?

Brooks replied there are still some issues but our team and supervisor Brad Wendtland has been a key player in keeping the dryer running while waiting for a new gear box to arrive and for replacement of some leaking seals by the contractors but it's operational and functioning.

Force questioned the retirement on the water report because the last sentence stating senior maintenance tech would have had only 1 year 27 days experience is concerning. Is there anything we could do to increase level of experience, are we looking to hire someone with more experience, or a training that could take place? This is very concerning.

Lindman replied we have concerns about the level of skills, we haven't had a lot of retention and had a lot of staff turnover. Tim is leaving and is our most experienced plant operator. He will be here for the next few months helping/training but he's just one individual and there's a lot going on. We are short staffed and looking at job descriptions to hire more skilled people but are not hopeful if we add a lot of additional skills with what we are paying but will try to balance that as we begin advertising these positions.

Gehin questioned if Kevin retired because that's another hole.

Lindman replied yes, he retired earlier this year.

Director's Report Placed on File.

3) Discussion on the Water Savvy Campaign and Water Conservation for Customer Outreach.

Force requested this item and began that 2 years ago we came up with this water savvy idea and developed this campaign. We can rejuvenate this for people looking to help with their water rates. What can we do that might be new or what could we do that worked in the past like rain barrels as our water usage goes up in the Summer with irrigation. He wanted to change the way the bill looks and the communications in the bill.

Herbst added there was a water savvy brochure with the initial introduction of the water savvy campaign back then, maybe something like that could go into the water bills going out quarterly. If you look at quarterly bill it's a shock but if you divide it by 3 months, it's workable.

Robinson brought up looking at means testing and going from quarterly to different frequencies of billing. There are several other elements and overall issues of affordability to look at and decreasing utilization is very important and reduces cost but are there other things we should discuss and evaluate.

Rosenberg requested we put a work group together to brainstorm concepts and topics.

Lindman stated people could pay monthly if they wanted to, we bill quarterly but we could communicate that better to the public that if they wanted to pay monthly, they could. We do have flexibility to make changes to how the bill looks that is mailed to customers.

No Action Taken.

4) Discussion on the Disposition of the Old Water Treatment Plant.

Lindman replied there is no plan for the disposition of the water plant but Economic Development had some interest to utilize the meter shop for a kayak business.

Robinson questioned if Commission or City owned the building? The County is trying to identify its surplus properties and have remnant parcels loss in surveys, tax delinquent properties, and properties not being used and trying to establish criteria. It might be good to look at if they are looking forward to developing this area. It can go on record if it doesn't have value to the Commission or Utility, we would support efforts to redevelop it.

Rosenberg sees nodding from the Attorney's office that it belongs to the city. We have this for discussion only but we could do that at a future meeting and work with economic development team to get more info and get something together for this body to weigh in formally and vote on next month.

Force questioned the taxation of Utility properties?

Lindman replied the City Council approved the Payment in Lieu of Tax (PILOT) to remain the same at \$1.59 million in total. The PSC didn't put a value at the old facility only the new water treatment facility.

No Action Taken.

5) Discussion on Staffing Demands for Upcoming Locates Beginning in 2024 for the Installation of City-wide Fiber Optic Cable by Multiple Providers.

Lindman began the utility had to put in a great amount of effort when TDS came with their fiber lines. This year Frontier, Bugtussle, and Charter will be doing this in large portions of the city. When a contractor calls in a locate, by law we have 3 days to complete the locate. If it's a relocate, then by law its 24 hrs to complete the relocate. When TDS was in, we had individuals on both the Water and Wastewater side doing locates for weeks from start to end of day and even staying overtime to complete these. We looked at contracting it out with USIC but it was over \$100k/ year so I'm not sure that's something we want to look at. There are only a couple of businesses that do that here but USIC told us they are short staffed too so it's a matter of whether they would take on that contract or not. When construction season starts, we could have more than one individual on each side just doing locates. We are doing our best to control that with our

permits issuance by reducing the areas of the permits but it's a balance. Permits issued are good for 30 days, if the contractor doesn't finish the work, they are required to request reissuance, then they get another 30 days. When locates come in, they get directed to Water and Wastewater.

Robinson questioned if there was a charge for the additional issuance of the permits? Frontier is looking to do about 10,600 sites in the County. We need to manage and make sure we are not creating double work for us.

Lindman replied yes. We sat down with Frontier, looking to bring in 6-7 crews for different construction areas and I don't know if we could keep up. We are working through it with them but it's a strain on the utility and the staff. The locates need to be done by law, and we would have to keep staff on until they are done. It's a lot of communications with the contractor on site.

Gehin questioned if we could charge for the locates?

Lindman replied, we can't. I don't know if we should reach out and contract this out and bring something back in January? I want the commission to be aware as I have concerns of trying to keep up with what's happening over the next couple of years. We've talked about adding staff from the Baker tilly study but I don't know what would be in place once this starts rolling out. Is this something the commission would consider? It's a heavy price tag to bring someone in and have them input into our GIS system, there's a lot of administrative things as well.

Force questioned if we recover costs or if this is something we could change?

Lindman replied its \$60 for each permit. We've already done the fee schedule but we could look at changing the fee. It's more of an excavation permit, we might need to separate that out for someone doing commercial driveway vs a residential area. I don't know what the balance would be but willing to have a conversation about that. There are other municipalities that struggle with this but the bigger ones have more staff and the smaller ones normally contract it out but they have less lines to locate.

Robinson questioned if contractors provide us their layouts? The County has a utility accommodation policy and some of the roads have fees based on the age of the road and could get that information to Lindman.

Lindman replied they provide us with drawings but we don't have all that information in our GIS. We don't keep outside entity in our information. I've spoken with Allen (City Engineer) and we have looked at that as well and spoken with some of the cities that have that and it may or may not be helpful. It is not our responsibility to keep track of others infrastructure, we rely on other entities to manage their own and locate their own utilities.

No Action Taken.

6) Discussion on Testing and Monitoring Wastewater for PFAS.

Brooks began we have results from the first round of testing performed October 24th, 2023, with Influent's PFOA 4.68 (ng/L) Nanograms per Liter PFOS 6.3 ng/L, Effluent's PFOA 5.86 ng/L PFOS 7.81 ng/L, and Biosolids below 8. DNR's guidance adds the PFOA/PFOS together to be 50 micrograms per kilograms, anything below 16- no action is required and our biosolids were at 7.804 so we are sitting good. Our second round of testing was sent out last Thursday.

Gehin replied our wastewater is seeing the value of the removal at the drinking water side so it saves money on one Utility. I keep going back to Well 3 that adds to our efforts in removing the level of PFAS. We should still visit this.

Lindman replied we are still having conversations with GHD (City Environmental Consultant for the Superfund Site) on their quarterly calls with the EPA/DNR that is continually brought up and no final decision yet. We do have another call with GHD and the city environmental engineer is pushing as hard as we can at this point. Our goal was to take that well offline and continue to pump well 3 as required for the superfund site requirements. We designed a discharge area but we haven't gotten the authorization to put that in place and discharge well 3 to this area and into the river. The other thing is that we've been doing minimal maintenance on the

well because we've been trying to take it offline. At some point we are going to have a sanitary survey with the DNR and we should be making improvements if its going to stay online but it's trying to get someone to decide.

Rosenberg replied because of the water issues we have here, the EPA is listening and I've been asked to join their local advisory committee so at least we will have a good seat to have these discussions and getting connected to the right people to make the best decisions.

Robinson questioned if we do any point source monitoring in the system? Maybe we can look to industries to connect and see if they can modify or change their behavior. There's recent legislation introduced requiring sampling of biosolids but on the State of Federal level, no one wants to jump onto biosolid regulation. Maine and Michigan took some leadership position but we don't want this to sneak up on us. We are getting kickback from farm groups and it's good that we are doing this. We maybe look upstream and see if it's an industrial source.

Lindman replied Brooks and I met with Schofield and talked about sampling of more industries and samples from lift stations in their collection system. Here in the city, we will be looking at certain areas to see if there are higher concentrations and focus on those areas instead of just citywide at this point. We've had those conversations but haven't acted on it yet but as we move forward, we should have more information on how that progresses.

Force questioned how much water we are pumping from Well 3 and if shutting it down would have an impact? There was news that 3M corporation contributed to the PFAS.

Lindman replied Boers has those numbers in his head but thinks its about 1,000-1,200 gallons per minute. It's not just 10%. It does impact if we shut down, but Well 3 and Well 6 is required to run because of the consent decree related to the Superfund Site.

Rosenberg replied yes, we are keeping an eye on that, 3M was required to test and came back at 520ppt. We are concerned but not sure what to do about it yet.

Robinson replied there are broader concerns not just the source but what's taken back to the quarry and coated. There may be ramifications throughout the city given the prevalence of 3M material over the years being used as fill material.

Gehin stated that Wausau paper pumped their waste into the ground that had sulfide and the concern was that it may migrate to our wells so there was a barrier put in place years ago, maybe there's a relationship there as well.

Brooks stated as far as source reduction, we plan on sending out letters through the pre-treatment program to the industrial users that gives them a chance to see if what they are using is PFAS free to eliminate some of that prior to any testing.

No Action Taken.

7) Discussion and Possible Action on Approving Contract between Wausau Water Works, City Works, and Axim Geospatial for Asset Management.

Rosenberg stated we are removing this item because we have an RFP out, more on that in the future, hopefully next month.

No Action Taken.

8) Adjourn.

Herbst motioned to adjourn. Seconded by Gehin.

Motion Carried 5-0.

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

Gina Vang, Recording Secretary

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