



Minutes of January 12, 2021

A meeting of the Wausau Water Works Commission was called to order at 10:30 a.m. in City Hall on January 12, 2021. In compliance with Wisconsin Statutes, this meeting was posted and receipted for by the Wausau Daily Herald on January 8, 2021.

Members present: President Rosenberg, Commissioners Robinson, Herbst, Force, Gehin.

Others present: Eric Lindman, Dave Erickson, Scott Boers, Nathan Miller.

1) Approve Minutes of December 8, 2020 Meeting.

Robinson moved to approve the minutes of the December 8, 2020 meeting. Seconded by Gehin. Motion to approve the minutes carried 5-0.

2) Director's Report on Utility Operations.

Gehin asked if we've heard anything on Well 3. Lindman advised that there are no updates. Updates will be provided at a future meeting.

Robinson asked about the PFAS sampling on the effluent. If those come back elevated will we do some biosolids sampling? Erickson responded that the DNR collected one sample but he hasn't heard back on it yet. Robinson asked if he knows what they sample for. Erickson said he does not know specifically but he does have the contact information that he could forward if he was interested. Robinson pointed out that if the effluent is elevated, more than likely the biosolids are also elevated. There could be some potential liability issues if it is land spread. He thinks we may want to look at that and evaluate if some pretreatment requirements might be imposed on certain industries if it is an industrial source. Erickson advised that in the past when they asked for voluntary testing we were reluctant to do that because there are a lot of unanswered questions and he doesn't know that they've made a lot of progress on that. Certainly at some point we should be evaluating our biosolids. After we get the results back on this grab sample of our effluent, it may be a good time to have that discussion. Lindman commented that we would bring the results back but will also rely on the DNR for direction.

Force noticed that we've been testing for Covid in the wastewater. In the report, DHS is asking to increase the frequency of that testing. Is there any action that takes place after these samples are taken or are they just collecting numbers? Erickson responded that from his understanding this is just a research study to see what the numbers indicate based on test results and the prevalence of Covid in our community. Force asked if there is a cost to us. Erickson advised the cost is minimal, DHS pays for the testing and shipping.

Force asked about the regulatory advisory on lead and copper. The statement that utilities are required to replace the utility side of a lead service line when the customer elects to replace the customer owned portion of the line. Will that have any financial implications? Lindman responded if we have a homeowner that decides to replace their side of the line and our side is still lead, we have to replace the utility side and that will have a financial impact to the utility. Especially if we get more grant money that could have a significant impact on the utility.

Force inquired on any new information on the solar study. Lindman advised he had just met with

Clark Dietz, they've done some surveying and we have another area we'd like them to survey. The proposal was written to evaluate for 40%, 60% and 90% of the power load. To get to 90% they felt we would need approximately 11-12 acres. Clark Dietz intends to bring an update and provide a short presentation at the February commission meeting.

Robinson asked about the EPA lead rules going from the 1st to the 5th liter sample. Is that to try to get away from the bias that was there from the fixtures and focus more on lead pipes? Historically it was always the 1st liter draw, is this to try to balance that out? Boers advised that's correct. They are trying to move to all lead service lines. In the past there were tiers set up including copper lines with lead solder and they're moving away from that. So the 5th liter sample will be to get to the lead in the piping.

3) Discussion and Possible Action on the Private Lead Service Line Funding for 2021.

Lindman advised this is an update on the lead service line funding. Boers has been in contact with the DNR and they are tentatively committing to the \$450,000.00 that was requested for 2021. He doesn't think we will see that funding until late spring. In order for us to spend that much money for this program, we will have to start getting notices out.

Boers said that the DNR did question our confidence level in getting the \$450,000.00 in funds rolled out. We will have to replace just over 100 services this year and that will be difficult with the staffing and the plumbers. We will need to shorten the timeframe for responses from residents.

Gehin asked if we've spent all of the money that was allocated over the last few years. Boers advised that we are very close with funding left for a handful of replacements. Some of that is earmarked for projects in the spring and we also have a couple leaks right now. That money will be expended.

Lindman stated that there are also some closeout documents for the 2017 funding that need to be submitted in February. Boers confirmed those need to be in by February 12th.

No action needed.

4) Discussion and Possible Action on WAUter Savvy Decals for Utility Vehicles.

Force explained that the WAUter Savvy program will be launched when the newsletter comes out this month. We will also start inserting some bill stuffers, flyers will be available in the lobby as well as a large graphic on the WAUter Savvy program. He and Boers discussed the possibility of putting a WAUter Savvy decal on the water utility vehicles. Boers couldn't find a specific policy for decals being placed on vehicles. He received a quote for 20 decals and it came to approximately \$470.00.

Motion by Force to approve placing decals on the water utility vehicles to promote more credibility for the WAUter Savvy program. Seconded by Robinson.

Motion carried 5-0.

5) Discussion and Possible Action on Amendment of WMC Ch13 Related to Sewer Rates.

Lindman stated, at the last meeting, that all of our sewer rates are physically written in to the Wausau Municipal Code under chapter 13. Staff is proposing to pull all of those rates out of the code and put them in a fee schedule. Currently every time the commission approves the rates there has to be a full ordinance amendment. To eliminate this, all sewer rates would be on the fee schedule and we wouldn't have to continually update the municipal code whenever the sewer rates were addressed. This would be similar to how the water rates are done.

Robinson asked if this would require a resolution to adopt the schedule. Miller advised as of right now, adding something to the fee schedule does require a resolution so Lindman has asked if we could make that an exception as well. Since the commission already has the authority granted by the council to set the rates, there will basically be another exception that when the sewer rate changes the fee schedule will just be updated without a resolution. We would have to add some of the ordinance changes to the amendment that's included in the agenda. If this is approved, it will move on to council for approval.

Robinson noticed a typo relative to the Water Works commission, where Water Works is one word vs. two. He also questions Operation, Maintenance and Replacement costs. Shouldn't that be Operations, Maintenance and Capital costs? Both in the existing and new language. Replacement is

only good for replacement and really we're looking at trying to recover our capital costs. He's wondering if we should change the word "replacement" with the word "capital".

Lindman advised we can certainly do that to make it all encompassing, we will definitely want to be clear that revenues cover all expenses.

Force asked under this proposed change, are we losing any opportunity for public input, review or notice? Lindman advised no, we had also discussed the establishment of a policy manual and how we establish procedures. We'll be talking about how sewer rates are reviewed and established in the next agenda item. We can talk about those details as far as a public hearing or public outreach and how the commission wants to move forward. Right now, the city council has delegated the authority to the commission. By statute, the commission was also established to manage the utility and to be able to make these decisions. He's really just trying to establish in detail what the commission's authority is so it's done in accordance with the Wausau municipal code and state statute.

Gehin just wanted to clarify that we aren't changing any rates, this is just creating a policy and how we manage it. Lindman advised that is correct. This is just how we would handle changes to sewer rates in the future.

Robinson asked if the fee schedule would be included but not part of the ordinance. Miller advised that the fee schedule would be available online or at the clerk's desk and that is referenced in this amendment.

Lindman added that he thinks the fee schedule is much simpler for the public to interpret rather than reading through the municipal code.

Herbst brought up the question as to how she would know which wastewater user rate would be hers. Lindman advised it would be the meter size that's in your home and it is also established on past bills. Herbst also questioned the need for an irrigation meter. What would be the advantage to having a second meter? Lindman responded that if someone does a lot of irrigation at seasonal times, they are only charged for the water and will not be charged the sewer for that volume of water passing through the irrigation meter.

Force indicated that he thinks the general public ignores the measurements, etc. because they don't understand them. He is concerned that we put out information that is not understood by the users. Boers believes the bills were enhanced using gallons rather than metric units but he will check on that.

Motion by Robinson to approve the amendment of WMC Ch13 Related to Sewer Rates subject to the changes of Water Works being 2 words and changing the word "replacement" to "capital". Seconded by Herbst.

Motion carried 5-0.

6) Discussion and Possible Action on Implementation of a Policy Manual Outline and Policy 301 – Review and Establishment of Sewer Rates.

Lindman advised that in the packet he's outlined a general table of contents of what he envisions the policy manual to look like. This would be the first policy written under this manual. Staff would like to get a feel for how the commission is perceiving the outline or if there is something else they'd like to see as far as how things are formatted. Also on the policy itself, if there are any additions or edits.

Force asked where this would appear. Lindman advised it will be a manual on file and will contain procedures that we will follow, this will be an internal document.

Robinson asked about the simplified rate adjustment. If it's below 3%, who approves, does this commission still approve? Lindman responded yes. Robinson asked for clarification if it's 3%, how often can that be done? Is it 3%, one time and if no rate increases have been made for 3 years would it be up to 9%? Lindman advised it is not the intent to make it cumulative and he will look at some language to clarify. The intent of the simplified rate increase is to be limited to 3% and no more than 3% in any one calendar year as approved by the commission.

Motion by Herbst to approve the implementation of a Policy Manual Outline and Policy 301 – Review and Establishment of Sewer Rates. Seconded by Gehin.

Lindman commented that this is a document that the commission can edit as needed.

Motion carried 5-0.

7) Discussion and Possible Action Regarding Proposed Vergent Power Solutions Contract to Maintain Micro-turbines at Wastewater Plant.

Erickson explained that the Micro-turbines burn the gas that is generated on site in the digesters to generate electricity. He believes these were purchased in 2012 along with a service contract for parts only for \$2,600.00 per quarter. That contract is coming to an end this month. There are some options but he would suggest going with a 10 year. He would hope to keep them running for another 10 years and not have to make a big capital investment to replace them. We can go with parts only or go with parts and labor but that would be more money. For a 10 year parts only we're looking at \$3,500.00 per quarter and a parts and labor for \$5,000.00 per quarter. Gehin asked how much these would cost to replace. Erickson would estimate hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Motion by Force to approve the 10 year parts only contract for \$3,500.00 per quarter. Seconded by Herbst.

Gehin questioned how much of a payback we are receiving by producing this power. Erickson advised he didn't have exact numbers but does know that these need to be running efficiently to pay for themselves and that's been a problem over the past number of months

Robinson asked if we'd be better off with parts and labor if we want to optimize peak performance. Are there service expectations associated with the labor portion? If we have a failure do we have a timeframe for which they should respond and how does that compare if we only have a parts only contract. Erickson believes that if we have parts and labor they would be more reluctant to come as they aren't being paid anything extra.

Gehin asked beside the parts, how much have we spent on labor? Erickson estimated \$3,000.00 a year. He could do some research and have those numbers if they'd like to see them. Gehin would support going forward with the 10 year parts only.

Motion carried 5-0.

Force stated that he and Robinson will have an agenda item regarding rain barrels at the next meeting.

Adjourn.

There being no further business to discuss, motion was made by Robinson to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Gehin.