



Minutes of August 5, 2014

A meeting of the Wausau Water Works Commission was called to order at 1:30 p.m. in City Hall on August 5, 2014. In compliance with Wisconsin Statutes, this meeting was posted and receipted for by the Wausau Daily Herald on July 29, 2014.

1) **Roll Call**

Members present: President Tipple, Commissioners Gehin, Otto, Rebman, and Winters.

Others present: Dave Erickson; Dick Boers; Deb Geier; Valeria Swanborg; Tonia Speener, Clark Dietz, Inc.

2) **Approve Minutes of July 1, 2014**

Motion by Mr. Rebman to approve the minutes of the July 1, 2014 meeting. Seconded by Mr. Winters. Motion carried unanimously 5-0.

3) **Staff Report on Utility Operations.**

- Well No. 11 has been chlorinated three times. It will be sampled today and two safe samples are needed before it can be brought back online. If two safe samples are not obtained, Boers has received quotations to have the well acidized. The lowest quote was \$11,500. About 5 years ago there was a problem with the same well and the bacteria could not be identified. If chlorinating the well does not work, there is no choice but to acidize the well. It was noted that the well was taken off line as soon as it was found to be unsafe. The DNR was also informed.
- The tank for hauling water to be bottled was received. We hope to have bottled water by the end of the month.
- Contractors are in town working on two different projects. One is repairing watermain issues from the winter that staff was unable to complete due to the scope of the projects. The other contractor is repairing some of the small patches where roads needed to be opened up for utility repairs.
- Marathon County Emergency Government had advised that Governor Walker has requested a federal disaster declaration associated with the past winter. There were a number of counties included. It appeared we would qualify for assistance; however, FEMA has since denied the request. The State is looking to appeal this decision.
- The Village of Brokaw has requested a billing adjustment for the water they used over the winter to keep their system from freezing. This will be discussed as an agenda item.
- Todd Utecht is unable to attend the meeting today, so he has asked that his request be postponed until September.
- We are in the process of completing the required lead and copper testing. This needs to be done every three years. The first group has been completed and we are waiting for the results before contacting the second group.
- Joe Gehin had requested the City Attorney to review his eligibility to remain a Commissioner. The City Attorney did forward the information to the State of Wisconsin Government Accountability Board. They have determined that no

conflict exists. However, if there are any votes concerning the firm he works for it was recommended that he abstain.

- The water rate application has been submitted to the PSC. It is expected to take about six to nine months to turn around. A public hearing is anticipated after the first of the year. Rates would most likely go into effect late first quarter or early second quarter.
- The Wastewater Plant is on track to meet permit limits for July.
- Ahern Construction is planning to start the rehab of final clarifier #3 during the week of August 25th. They originally planned on starting earlier but some parts will not be available until October and staff did not want the clarifier down that long.
- Visu Sewer has completed the sewer lining project for 2014.
- The City closed on the purchase of the property at Cleveland and Joyce Streets on July 18, 2014.
- The new air handling unit has been delivered to the Wastewater Plant. They are still waiting to hear back on a construction schedule from the contractor.

Motion by Mr. Otto to accept the Staff Report as presented and place on file. Seconded by Mr. Rebman. Motion carried unanimously 5-0.

4) **Consider request for billing adjustment – Village of Brokaw**

Geier stated the Village of Brokaw has requested a billing adjustment for the water that was used to keep their system from freezing. Geier checked with the Public Service Commission and their determination was that Brokaw was responsible for the water that they used. Boers stated 27 homes left their water run constantly for a couple of months, which amounted to approximately 4 million gallons of water for about \$7,800. Winters questioned if the water was ran to avoid homes from freezing or because of the water tower. Boers stated according to the Village it was because of the homes running water, but they did drain the water tower as well to avoid freezing. Winters stated it is not a lot of money but wondered what type of precedent it would set. Otto said we are running at a deficit and asking for a rate increase to offset that, this may be a small amount but \$7,800 would cover a lot of monthly water bills in Wausau. Rebman asked how much water was drained from the tower and Boers replied approximately one quarter. The tower is a 200,000 gallon tower and the Village uses about 6,000 gallons a day on a normal basis. During the winter time, they have to flush the tower so it does not freeze. They also flush in the summer to avoid bacteria problems.

Mr. Otto moved to deny the request for the billing adjustment for the Village of Brokaw based upon the recommendation of the Public Service Commission. Seconded by Mr. Rebman. Motion carried unanimously 5-0.

5) **Consider request for billing adjustment – Todd Utecht**

This item was pulled from the agenda.

6) **Discuss and make recommendation regarding the sole source document for the Gateway Project**

Geier stated a few months ago a representative from Ferguson Water Works came before the Commission to explain the Gateway Project. It is an upgrade to our current meter reading system that would allow us to do more on-demand type readings. This would allow the billing clerk to be able to read the meters for the quarter without having to send a meter reader to the property. There are some areas that would still have to be read onsite because there are not enough collectors to cover the entire City. Approximately 75% of the City should be covered. This is a Neptune System and would not require any additional meters or change of radio boxes. Because it is a Neptune product, there is only one vendor for our territory, which is Ferguson Water Works. There are other vendors that offer a similar system; however, they would not necessarily be compatible with our system and would likely require us to change out the boxes, which would be quite costly. The anticipated cost for the first phase, which is the installation of 6 collectors, is approximately \$78,144. Mayor Tipple asked about the second phase. Geier stated depending on how well this works, the hope is to install additional collectors throughout the City and eventually obtain 100% of the City. With the current proposed locations, readings would not be obtained in the Industrial Park, the Riverview area, and the southeast end. The area targeted is along the river corridor where the greatest share

of rental properties are located.

Otto questioned the anticipated savings. Geier stated the meter reader is anticipating retiring in February. That position would not be filled in the same capacity. It will not be a tremendous amount of cost savings, but it will provide more efficiency and provide better customer service. Winters asked what the position pays. Geier stated the position will not be filled in the same capacity, but will be filled as a water operations position, which is about \$40,000 in wages. Boers stated the position will need to be filled as they still need someone to exchange meters, do some meter reading, complete locates, etc. Boers added it would save time because if there is a large turnover of renters, currently someone has to go to the property for the reading. With this system, the reading can be done by the billing clerk. Geier noted that because of the winter operations, staff is still behind on items that are supposed to be done this year. Meter change outs have not been started yet this year. Boers added that there are yearly routine duties required by the DNR. Mayor Tipple questioned the number of employees on staff when Mr. Gehin was the director. Gehin replied there were four meter readers. When equipment changed to receptacles on the outside of the house, staff was reduced to two meter readers. Winters stated he understands that this will save time but it is actually not a savings of money. Otto asked if the person who is retiring is at the top of his pay scale. Geier confirmed and indicated the person hired to fill the position would start at the bottom of the scale. The position would most likely be filled as a Distribution Maintainer rather than a Meter Reader with the understanding that duties would be shared. Mayor Tipple indicated there may not be any cost savings but there would be a reorganization of the department to make it more efficient. Geier explained this upgrade will allow for greater customer service. Winters stated if positions are going to be changed it should go through the Human Resources Committee. Geier stated it would and added that this is being done in conjunction with the meter reader retirement but has been looked at for some time as a means to improve customer service. Otto questioned if this was budgeted for and Geier confirmed. Gehin asked if the remote sites would communicate directly with City Hall and Geier replied yes.

Winters questioned if a RFP could be completed indicating the system needs to be compatible with the current system. Geier stated it has to work with the Neptune system and Ferguson is the only vendor in this territory. Winters understands that there may not be a competitor, but with a RFP the City at least looked to ensure there are no other vendors. Mayor Tipple suggested having a short window for the RFP so the project can move forward.

The Commission directed staff to prepare a RFP and have replies back so it can be discussed at the September meeting.

Erickson noted he had a discussion with Ken Johnson of Rib Mountain. A joint meeting may be held with the Rib Mountain Metro Sewage District in the near future to discuss the possibility of consolidation.

7) **Adjourn**

There being no further business to discuss, motion was made by Mr. Winters to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Mr. Gehin. Motion carried unanimously 5-0. Meeting adjourned at approximately 2:00 p.m.

/s/ Keene Winters

Secretary