



Minutes of March 3, 2020

A meeting of the Wausau Water Works Commission was called to order at 2:30 p.m. in City Hall on March 3, 2020. In compliance with Wisconsin Statutes, this meeting was posted and receipted for by the Wausau Daily Herald on February 28, 2020.

Members present: President Mielke, Commissioners Force, Miller, Herbst, Gehin.
Others present: Eric Lindman, Dave Erickson, Scott Boers, Valerie Swanborg, Ric Mohelnitzky, Toni Vanderboom, Meleesa Johnson/Director of the Marathon County Solid Waste Department, Steve Opatik/Becher Hoppe, Tonia Westphal/Clark Dietz, Mike Gerbitz/Donohue, Diane Thounne/Clark Dietz.

1) Approve Minutes of the February 4, 2020 Meeting.

Herbst moved to approve the minutes of the February 4, 2020 meeting. Seconded by Gehin and the motion carried 5-0.

2) Director's Report on Utility Operations.

Gehin advised he was at the bid opening and he thinks they came out exceptionally. Force asked exceptional compared to what? Gehin responded that there were things budgeted that we didn't think we'd be able to cover, we'll get a report in April. Force asked if there were expectations going in and if these were favorable to that. Lindman advised he didn't know the exact number of the engineer estimate of the base bid offhand but the low base bid did come in under the estimate. There are alternates that are now required based on the DNR letter regarding groundwater under the direct influence. The engineers are looking at all of the bid tabs. The low bidder looks to be Miron.

Force asked about the Aspirus Clinic utilities, is that project our cost. Lindman advised the utility is paying for that project. Force asked what the cost is. Lindman advised it's out for bid right now but can bring that back in April.

Director's Report placed on file.

3) Discussion and Possible Action to Hold a Household Hazardous Waste Cleanup Event. Presentation by Meleesa Johnson, Director of the Marathon County Solid Waste Department.

Johnson – Director of the Marathon County Solid Waste Department in the Town of Ringle:
She was contacted by Mohelnitzky about the commission's interest in potentially having a clean sweep with the spring cleanup event. She isn't sure the city wants to take that on due to the considerable cost and the fact that Marathon County provides this service 250 days out of

the year free of charge to Marathon County Residents. They allocate \$175,000.00/year for this service. This is a priority program and they will continue to provide this service without charge to Marathon County residents. She explained that Wausau can certainly have an event however, trying to secure a hazardous waste transporter in short order would be very difficult. Those are booked for communities that don't have a hazardous waste program and do hold events. By her estimation, it would probably cost Wausau approximately \$50,000.00-\$75,000.00 for this event and they can provide the service without charge.

Mielke stated that we do want to be as helpful as possible to our residents however the cost involved would be a lot of money for a one-time event. Johnson explained that we could manage costs by having staff sort, identify and contain however there will still be a need for containment vessels, safety protocols, respirators and training for preliminary identification.

Force asked how much volume of household hazardous waste they receive at the landfill. Johnson advised last year they had approximately 60,000 pounds. Force asked how many individual residents used the service. Johnson advised about 1,000. Force voiced his concern regarding convenience as Ringle is far for some residents and a lot of people probably aren't aware of this service.

Johnson explained that since they moved this service to Ringle, the people using it has tripled. If the city were to conduct a clean sweep event such as this, they would not be able to handle the volume as they have a fairly small storage area. Wausau would need to hire a hazardous waste company. They contract with Veolia Technical Solutions.

Force asked about just doing neighborhood clean ups. For instance, his block. Johnson advised that notice would be required as she needs the staff available to handle it. Force asked Mielke if the neighborhood groups would be a good way to get groups together to collect and haul to Ringle. Johnson advised if we went with that type of model, we would want a safety protocol in place for whomever is collecting and hauling the hazardous waste.

Mohelnitzky came forward and stated this opened his eyes in regards to cost and logistics. He also advised that they would offer to hand out hazardous waste flyers during the large item drop off events and maybe some additional advertising on our webpage. He doesn't think that everyone knows that this is a free service and Ringle is not that far to go.

Miller advised along the lines of getting information out, maybe a PSA would be applicable in the future.

4) Discussion and Possible Action on Accepting Leachate from the Landfill.

Lindman advised we've had previous discussions about accepting leachate from the landfill and being a solution for that moving forward. Erickson has been working with Johnson and Donohue has prepared some information regarding the BOD's and what we can expect. We would like to move forward with accepting that leachate based on the parameters we have outlined.

Force asked if we've determined what we are being paid for this and any revenue stream. Erickson advised that there is a spreadsheet in the packet that outlines the costs. We will basically be charging them according to our municipal code. There are rates set for pounds of BOD, TSS, aluminum, etc. We will be doing some ongoing testing and have some initial testing completed. Based on initial testing at the fees set in the municipal code, we would be charging \$15.43 per 1000 gallons. Concentrations can be changed once the ongoing testing results come in. If we have problems and it seems to be causing trouble with our disinfection system needing to be cleaned more often, then that's something we need to talk about.

Force asked if \$15.43 would cover our costs and maybe provide a little revenue. Erickson advised he believes the accountants have said this will cover the cost. He would propose we start with this and see how it goes. Force stated he's not against making a little money on this

as it is a service. Erickson advised there may be regulations and is not sure if we can profit on this.

Lindman advised we could start at this initial cost. If we are not having issues with the plant and get some historical data on the consistency that we're going to see, we can always bring this back to the commission and take a look at the rates. We could set a 6 month time frame so we can take a look at those concentrations.

Gehin asked how much we would be taking. Johnson advised they have about 12-17 million gallons/year. She's worked out agreements with Wolf River, Stevens Point and Plover so they don't overburden one system. She is also meeting with engineering firms on doing their own on site wastewater treatment. She is hoping to be able to work with partners for at least the next year as they need to evaluate which technology is going to be the best and create a sustainable solution for them.

Force suggested we move to approve this under the provisions of the 6 month time frame. Seconded by Gehin. Motion carried 5-0.

5) Discussion and Possible Action on Revisions to the Mechanic/Technician Incentive Pay for Wausau Waterworks Employees.

Lindman explained that the handbook had the old version of the incentive pay which was very restrictive. The mechanics and technicians really only had one path to get the incentive pay and required an estimated 2,000 hours/year for ongoing electrical work. Erickson advised it was really set up for someone that would be a fulltime electrician or mechanic. Lindman advised education is what our technicians need to properly maintain our facilities. This gives them a couple different options and is not so constrained that they need so many hours every year to maintain that the certification. What we paid initially was \$1.00/hour and that hasn't been changed for a significant number of years. We've raised that to \$1.50/hour. So at 50% they get \$.75/hour and at the 100% qualification they get another \$.75/hour.

Mielke advised this is just another way of recognizing our employees and what they do.

Gehin asked if this is only for those under the program at the Technical College. He's also curious as to how this salary compares to the salary of the city electricians or the folks that perform those duties. Lindman advised it is still under those salaries as the electricians are Master Electricians and fully qualified to work on live power. We do need our technicians at the plant to be able to work on the electrical and control panels, etc.

Force stated this also serves as an incentive to obtain additional education. Lindman advised that is correct and he wants to recognize that.

Miller stated he is all in favor of incentives, education and training. The direction he hopes it would take us is retention of employees. He's been talking with some city leaders, where there used to be 200 applicants for a position there are now only a handful. If anything we do along this line leads to retention, he's all in favor. Force advised that's a good point. Finding people to work in this field is becoming more and more difficult.

Vanderboom wanted to add that she hears about the reduction in applicants a lot and there's a large number of things that come into play, not to downplay the importance of incentive programs such as this or to indicate that she's not supportive of it because she absolutely is. Things such as unemployment rates and a lot of other things play into the smaller number of applicants. She does not want to feed into the implication that the only reason for the decreased number of applicants is strictly a pay issue.

Motion by Miller to approve the incentive pay revisions. Seconded by Herbst. Motion carried 5-0.

6) Discussion on the Water/Sewer Rates and Cost Share for Residential Versus Commercial.

Lindman reached out to Brian Roemer/Ehler's, he was putting together the rate case for both water and wastewater proposed rate increases. There is an email included in the packet where he has outlined some things and gave us an example using Eau Claire. If the commissioner's still want more information or detail he is willing to come and speak with the commission. We can try to schedule that for April. The water rate structure is set by the PSC. They set the rates, the tariffs and the structure.

Force stated he has an abiding concern about our rate structure going forward and the impact particularly on our aging population who are living at or below the poverty level and have a fixed income. That is why he's asking these questions. Are our customer's being charged fairly based on usage. He looked at the numbers and observed that 62% of our revenue comes from residents and 46% of usage goes to residents. That may be right and fair, he didn't know and that is why he asked.

Lindman advised that's a valid concern and it surprised him as well. He doesn't have all of the details on how the structure is set up but would be more than happy to have Ehler's come and speak to this in more detail.

Gehin asked if we were in the midst of a rate review or is that anticipated. Lindman advised the PSC is working on rates right now and will be setting the structure. Gehin stated to maybe raise this point with them as we normally don't go to an accountant for rates. The PSC sets the rates and we accept what they give us. Lindman advised he can certainly bring this up with the PSC as well.

7) Discussion on the Sewer Interceptor I/I Report near the Thomas Street Corridor.

Lindman advised we had some grab samples and we were seeing Penta in our sanitary sewer at higher amounts than what we were discharging. We've had conversations with the DNR and TRC who is the environmental consultant for Wauleco. We had come up with some testing locations where the grab samples should be taken. With all of that data, we hired Clark Dietz to put a report together based on that information and potentially where that Penta contaminated groundwater was entering the sanitary sewer. We will be setting up a meeting with the DNR and will be isolating that area where we think the Penta may be coming in from the groundwater through cracks in our pipe. The DNR is concerned because that is a conduit for that Penta to come away from that contaminated site. The idea would be to identify and isolate that exact area and then request Wauleco to do those repairs. We may have to do some additional viewing of that pipe cleaning/televising and maybe taking more samples. We will have that conversation with TRC and the DNR moving forward. Since the report was completed he wanted to present this to the commission.

Gehin asked if we have the data on the monitoring wells. He sees the levels in the report but do we have any numbers that reflect the concentration in those monitoring wells. Lindman didn't think we had requested those but does know that they are available. Gehin asked about the fate of the Penta once it passes through the plant. Erickson advised most of it must go through the effluent based on the levels of discharge.

Force asked if this is a cost the city has to bear. Lindman responded he believes the investigation portion is but the actual fix for the sections in the groundwater we would push Wauleco to pay for and he thinks the DNR would support that as well. Force asked if that includes the sewer rehabilitation. Lindman advised that is correct. The report says 4900 feet but we would only be focusing on areas where we see that penta could be coming in through the cracks in the pipe. Force asked by televising, all you can see is groundwater, how can you tell that it's Penta coming in? Lindman advised you really can't, you just assume because of the higher concentrations in the pipe.

8) Discussion and Update on Relocating the Discharge of CW3 and EPA's Response Moving Forward.

Lindman stated there are 2 emails included in the packet from Charles Ahern with GHD. He has had 2 separate conversations with the EPA as well as the DNR. He thinks there is potential to remove this well from our stream. It may be a lengthy process but we are on the right path.

9) Discussion on the DWTF & WWTF PIM's.

Lindman advised they set up 2 additional public information meetings. One was held February 26th, it went well and he has a list of questions that he's still putting together which will be put out on the website as well. A lot of the questions were similar to those at the previous meetings. A lot of the people that attended were residents around the area of where the new facility will be placed. Lindman advised they went over the rate structures and the rate increases that were proposed. People aren't happy with the rates increases but they seem to understand the need for the projects. There will be another PIM on March 18th in the Council Chambers of City Hall.

10) Discussion and Possible Action on Reclassifying Sr. Sewer Maintainer Position to the Collection System Supervisor.

Lindman advised we had brought the proposed organizational chart to the commission a while back and that was approved. Ken Rye who was our Sr. Sewer Maintainer finished his last day on March 2nd. We do have that position vacant and the revised org chart does lay out the fact that this position will be a supervisory position. In working with HR, Vanderboom had our consultant reclassify this position based on the duties that were proposed. This would approve the reclassification for that position so we can put the new job duties out for advertisement to fill that position. Vanderboom clarified that they had provided some additional information and had just received notification that the reclassification for this position had changed by 1 and will be classified the same as our Public Works supervisor's as a grade 16.

Gehin asked what the previous salary range was. Toni responded that the Sr. Sewer Maintainer is currently grade 18 which is \$21.02-\$29.44/hour. Salary grade 16 would bring them to \$24.75-\$34.65/hour. Herbst questioned the paperwork in the packet putting this at a salary grade 17, was that a mistake? Vanderboom stated that was the original recommendation before additional job duties were provided to the vendor and they came back with a modified recommendation.

Motion by Force to approve the reclassification. Seconded by Herbst. Motion carried 5-0.

11) Discussion and Possible Action on Bottling Water for 2020 and Continuing Donations for Non-Profit Special Events.

Lindman said our reserve of bottled water is coming to an end and Boers has had some requests already for special events. Do we want to continue to have the city water bottled to donate to nonprofit events through 2020? Mielke asked if this would be for events as of right now or through 2020. Boers advised we are getting requests for events into summer already. We're to the point where we'd need to bottle more or start denying requests. There was talk in the past that being that they are plastic bottles it wasn't such a good to keep bottling it.

Mielke asked how many cases the average request is for. Boers responded that the last time this topic was brought up, the commission put a limit on each request for a maximum of 10 cases. Force asked what we do with the empty bottles. Boers stated that once it is picked up for events, that's the last we see of it. Force stated that the recycling of these bottles is a concern.

Mielke asked how much we average per year given the 10 case limit per event. Boers

responded that typically we donate about 150 cases per year, 24 bottles per case.

Gehin suggests that we continue this until our new facility is in place. Everyone has to assume the responsibility of proper disposal. Force asked if there is a way to reinforce the ethic that we need to recycle plastics and not just leave them on the ground. He likes the idea of donating water, he's been at events where they've used it. Mielke asked if we make it 5 cases rather than 10. Boers advised that it used to be unlimited but the commission capped it to 10 cases. If we reduce that limit, he believes that will cause issues for these events. Force agrees that we can't require a behavior but we could certainly encourage it by including a written request that they properly recycle the empty bottles, how to do it and request a report back from the organizations. Lindman suggested that if anyone is at an event and sees that these bottles are not being recycled properly, then that organization be put on notice that without proper disposal of the bottle, we will not donate to them in the future.

Motion by Gehin to approve for the next 2 years and hopefully working out a system for people to properly dispose and recycle the plastic bottles. Seconded by Miller. Motion carried 5-0.

12) Approve Payment to Haas and Sons Inc. for Work Done on the Water Main, on the East Side of the Thomas St. Bridge.

Boers explained for the last phase on the Thomas Street project on the west side of the river it was required that the water main serving that side of the bridge be shut down. This connected to the east side of the bridge and runs underneath the bridge. There was some work that we were going to do on the east side of the bridge, the piping, the hangers and some of the pipe connections were rotted. We knew they needed to be replaced. When we turned the water off for that, a lot of the pipes started leaking. Being a larger pipe and the risk associated with just repairing it, we opted to just replace that section of pipe. Haas was on site and had the equipment to do it so we hired them to replace that portion of the pipe. This was supposed to be added to the project and through oversight it never was. This is a request to pay for that project that has already been completed at a cost of \$18,500.00.

Motion by Force to approve payment. Seconded by Herbst. Motion carried 5-0.

Force spoke about an email he sent out in view of the pending rate increases and the impact on our population. He would like to see a discussion of water reuse and water conservation methods that we might start publicizing within the community. He realizes the risk to the utility as consumption could come down reducing revenue but at the same time he thinks it's only fair that we promote water conservation among our customers. This is just a way to show that there are ways to reduce your water usage and water rate if you need to do so. He'd like something put together whether it's on the website or in our newsletter.

Herbst requested the household hazardous waste information be put in the newsletter as well. That reaches a lot of people. Mielke advised that can be done.

13) Adjourn.

There being no further business to discuss, motion was made by Herbst to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Miller. Motion carried 5-0.