

**NEW RICHMOND UTILITY COMMISSION MINUTES**  
**March 6, 2019**

The regular meeting of the New Richmond Utility Commission was held on March 6, 2019 at 8:00 a.m. at the Civic Center.

Pat Becker called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.

Members Present: Bob Mullen, Mike Kastens, Gerry Warner, and Pat Becker. Dan Casey was present via telephone conference call.

A motion was made by Mike Kastens to approve the agenda, seconded by Gerry Warner, and carried.

A motion was made by Bob Mullen to approve the minutes of the January 9, 2019 meeting, seconded by Mike Kastens, and carried.

A motion was made by Gerry Warner to approve January and February 2019 bills and disbursements, seconded by Mike Kastens, and carried.

**Public Comment:**

None

**Investment Advisor Services:**

Rae Ann Ailts gave background information on why a new advisor was being sought. Pat Becker and Bob Mullen were involved with applicant interviews. Dana Investments was perceived to be the best choice. Matt Slowinski from Dana Investment Advisors was on teleconference during the utility commission meeting. The high trade fees were questioned by the Utility Commission. Matt explained the higher rates were due to the fact that it was an institutional account. Additionally, a custodial agent is required to facilitate sale or purchases of security. Previously Morgan Stanley provided custodial services for the City as well. Staff recommended Charles Schwab to serve as the custodian. Gerry Warner moved to approve Dana Investments Advisors to serve as Utilities Investment advisor, seconded by Bob Mullen, motion carried. Bob Mullen moved to approve establishing an account with Charles Schwab to serve as custodian for investments, managed by Dana Investment Advisors, seconded by Mike Kastens, and carried.

**Water and Sewer Rate Study:**

Eric Granum from Trilogy, the City's water and wastewater rate consultant, presented preliminary rate study findings and analysis.

- History of when the last rates occurred
- Objectives for 2019
- Financial Elevation criteria
- Steps in the rate study
- Financial Status of the Utility
- Future Capital Expenditures
- Financial Status of the Utility – key findings
- Next steps – executive summary to be reviewed by Utility Commission

**WPPI Shared Meter Technician:**

Weston Arndt gave background information on the Shared Meter Technician Service, offered to WPPI members. WPPI members primarily utilize the program for the thermal imaging service and for testing of commercial and industrial meters. Members subscribe to the desired percentage of a meter technician in 2.5% FTE segments under a five-year contract. Over the past three years, the electric department has averaged about \$9,400 in annual meter testing expenses paid to Chapman Metering. This has historically provided about two-week's worth of meter testing services. Thus, an apples-to-apples comparison of charges per week would be: Chapman Metering \$4700, and WPPI Shared Meter Tech \$2,625. Gerry Warner moved to recommend entering into a 5-year agreement with WPPI Energy for a 2.5% FTE participation in the Shared Meter Tech Service, seconded by Bob Mullen, and carried.

**Electric Operations Intern:**

The American Public Power Administration (APPA) offers its members scholarship, internship, and research grants through its Demonstration of Energy & Efficiency Developments (DEED) program. They offer two application periods, with due dates in October and February. The internship grants offer \$4,000 to fully-fund or to supplement a position, with no requirement for matching funds. APPA's goal for the internship is to provide a student valuable experience working with a public power utility, help attract new talent, and enhance our profile in the community. Bob Mullen moved to approve the posting for a limited term Electric Operations Intern position in an amount not to exceed \$6,000, seconded by Gerry Warner, and carried.

**Internet Access Pilot:**

We held internal meetings on the possible development of a pilot program to assist in improving Wi-Fi and broadband throughout the City. Over the next several months, we will be presenting ideas to various committees starting with the Utility Commission on the development of a proactive approach to internet service throughout the City of New Richmond. We will keep the Commission updated.

**Water Department Pickup Truck Bid:**

One of the vehicles in the Water Department's fleet is a 2008 Ford F-250 that has been slated for replacement due to its age and condition. As such, \$35,000 was budgeted in the 2019 Capital Budget for acquisition of a new pickup truck. Staff is proposing to solicit quotes for a new vehicle from the three local dealerships, and is requesting authorization from the Utility Commission to proceed.

Gerry Warner moved to authorize staff to solicit bids for a ¾-ton to 1-ton pickup truck with standard cab and 8-foot bed, seconded by Mike Kastens, and carried.

**Biosolids Facility Department of Transportation Permit Issues:**

Steve Skinner stated in early 2019, one of the trucks hauling biosolids and centrate to and from the West Central Wisconsin Biosolids Facility (WCWBF), of which the City is a founding member, was pulled over by the State Patrol. The State Patrol made the determination that the permit under which the WCWBF was hauling overweight loads was not valid. As a result, the WCWBF has been forced to haul 6,000 gallon loads instead of 8,000 gallon loads, which has a substantial effect on the cost to transport biosolids for the communities served. A memo was presented depicting multiple avenues the facility is pursuing to allow overweight loads to once again be permitted. Gerry Warner moved to approve the resolution as presented to support legislative action to expressly allow the DOT to issue permits allowing trucks to transport biosolids on State highways in excess of statutory height and weight limits, and authorizing City representatives to assist in the efforts to bring about that legislative action, seconded by Mike Kastens, and carried. This resolution will be brought to the City Council on March 11, 2019.

**Department Reports****Jeremiah Wendt, Director of Public Works:**

Jeremiah introduced Josh Buhr, who is the newest member of the Water Department.

February has been the snowiest month on record, and snow removal continues to keep staff busy.

Jeremiah explained each storm is a three day event, which begins by clearing the streets. The following morning the crew comes in to make sure everything is clear for the morning commute, and midnight after that, snow is hauled out. Staff also makes sure access is available to wells, hydrants, and towers.

**Steve Skinner, Lead Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator:**

Steve Skinner stated there was an ammonia spike at the WWTP, and staff is trying to locate the source. With the high ammonia reading the WWTP fails to meet permit limits. The ski trails are currently open at the golf course. Minor on-going repairs have taken place. Staff continues to work on the WWTP Facility Plan.

**Bob Meyer, Water Superintendent:**

Removing snow from multiple hydrants. First hydrant hit this year was located behind the street shop, and was hit by the grader. Water disconnects took place yesterday. Thawing of water services has taken place on Williamsburg Ave and E 2<sup>nd</sup> Street. Bob Meyer and Steve Skinner attended the Emergency Response and Preparedness Seminar in Plover, WI. DNR required installation of pre-lube meters to register water going back into the well. Working on completing the PSC report. Bob Meyer and Dave Pufall will be attending a water conference in Lacrosse, WI the end of March.

**Weston Arndt, Electric Superintendent:**

- With the snow levels, we've had multiple street light poles hit, some from vehicular accidents, others from plowing. We've also had a sectionalizer and pedestal damaged. We've placed over 100 temporary stakes where cabinets are buried in snow. Will install marker antennas in the spring/summer.
- Performed Substation Inspections in February. – Replacing an arrestor today at Highview.
- Knowles Substation Maintenance – Planned for spring/early summer.
- Tree Trimming – Tree Trimming about 2/3 complete.
- Mapping Updates are complete – Working with Kyle to purchase tablets with cloud based GIS software to utilize the technology in the field.
- MEUW – On site safety training scheduled for March 25.
- Working on specs and quotes for several items: – Digger Derrick which is in the 2020 CIP and a new ¾ ton pickup to replace Truck 36.
- We will plan to present on advanced metering infrastructure at the next meeting.

**Stacie Running, ESR:**

Stacie Running had the following updates:

- Focus on Energy
  - Incentives paid January-February, 2019 = \$5,712
  - 164 customers helped
    - 2 commercial/industrial
    - 157 residential
    - 5 school & government
  - Estimated contribution < \$40,000/year
- WPPI/New Richmond Utilities
  - Home & Business Energy Reports to be sent this month
  - Thank a Lineworker Coloring Contest for ages 4-12
    - March 18 through April 12
  - RFP for Energy Efficiency for our large power customers
    - Program Start Date – March 1
    - Applications Due – April 26
    - Awards Announcement – May 24

**Joel Enders, Management Analyst:**

Joel Enders is currently working on audit items.

**Rae Ann Ailts, Finance Director:**

February and March are training months for staff. Leigh Alexander and Diane Thielke are at WPPI for training on customer deposits. Susan Affeldt and Debbie Powers will be attending a collections seminar the end of March. Audit will be conducted the week of March 18, 2019.

**Mike Darrow, Utility Manager:**

Mike thanked the members for attending Roberts Rules of order training. Next year, New Richmond Utilities will be turning 130 years old. This year marks the 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the cyclone in New Richmond. A number of items are in the planning stages for each of these celebrations. The Library Board and City Council had a joint meeting, with more to follow.

There being no further business, Bob Mullen motioned to adjourn, seconded by Mike Kastens, and carried. The meeting adjourned at 9:25 a.m.

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Pat Becker, President

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Gerry Warner, Secretary