

Minutes of the Board of Water Commissioners' Meeting

Monday, October 18, 2010

Present: Commissioners G. Van De Kreeke, R. Haen, A. Stewart, and J. Trueblood, Superintendent.

The meeting was called to order by G. Van De Kreeke, President, at 4:03 P.M.

Minutes of Previous Meeting

Motion by Commissioner Van de Kreeke, seconded by Commissioner Haen, that the minutes of the September 2010 meeting be approved as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Election of Officers

Commissioner Haen made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Stewart, that the commissioners maintain their previous offices, with Commissioner Van de Kreeke as President, Commissioner Haen as Secretary, and Commissioner Stewart as Member. Commissioner Stewart seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Financial Reports

Financial Reports for September 2010 were reviewed. Commissioner Haen motioned, with a second by Commissioner Stewart, that the financials be approved as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Superintendent's Report

Operations' Department Report

Superintendent reported that September pumpage had increased slightly over September 2009. The Operations Report was accepted as presented.

Construction Maintenance Department Report

Superintendent advised the Board of ongoing work including the installation of water main on Wisconsin and Center Avenue. Other routine seasonal work was also completed. The Construction-Maintenance Department Report was accepted as presented.

Superintendent informed the Board of a natural gas leak at the Erie Avenue booster station. Two Utility employees had opened the service door and discovered a high level of odorant inside the station. WPS responded within half an hour and isolated a large leak on a coupling supplying gas to the back-up generator. Leaks were also discovered in a gas line feeding one of the heaters. WPS made repair to the coupling on the generator, and proceeded to isolate the other line until those leaks could be repaired. Superintendent advised the general contractor, who then notified the mechanical subcontractor. Repairs were made by the sub, at no cost to the Utility. There was discussion on the need for natural gas detectors in remote stations. Superintendent advised he had directed the Operations Supervisor to look into such devices.

Old Business

Old Business Presented By Commissioners

Commissioner Stewart expressed that only 30-40% of the "water bill" is typically for water charges: the other sanitary sewer portion is usually more than the water portion. Also, if the Utility performs billing for other municipal services in the future, the bottom line will increase and customers will perceive large increases in their water charges. He recommended that the Utility look at the bill received by customers in order to clarify the different charges. Superintendent responded that it is an ongoing challenge for customers to understand that the Utility's rates are extremely low: currently third lowest of about 75 class AB utilities in the state. Superintendent stated that he will follow-up on clarifying the bill.

Commissioner Van de Kreeke expressed interest in the status of video showing the construction of the Taylor Hill reservoir in the early 1930's. Superintendent stated that he knew a film existed and possibly it had been transferred to VHS; he knew it was not available on DVD. Commissioner Van de Kreeke felt it might be worthwhile to make a DVD version.

Other Old Business

Update Board on Taylor Hill valve replacement

Superintendent reported that as of the previous Friday, the Utility C-M crew had successfully removed the eighty year old altitude valve and a large reducer, and installed a new valve and actuator. The Utility had engaged Liquid Engineering Company to dive into the reservoir and install a cap on the riser pipe; this allowed the operation to take place without draining water from the reservoir. The cap was installed by 9:00 A.M. The crew utilized a plasma cutter in removing portions of the large cast iron appurtenances; however, due to the thickness, in excess of an inch, the cutter was not entirely successful. Diamond-bladed cutoff saws also had to be used. Once removed, these large appurtenances then had to be hoisted out of a pit. Given their large size and weight, these were delicate maneuvers. The reducer alone weighed 2,700 pounds. The crew members performed their work admirably and safely. Fresh air was blown into the pit space, and the operation was treated as a confined space entry. By 2:00 P.M, the new reducer and valve assembly were in place. By 3:00 P.M., the reservoir was back in service. Superintendent praised all involved in the planning of this project, which again demonstrated the high level of skill among Utility staff. Numerous meetings and discussions were held to determine the optimal plan, and the execution was nearly flawless. One of the Liquid Engineer divers related they had been on a similar project for the US Navy, and the valve removal took two days rather than 8 hours. All of the Commissioners joined in stating their public appreciation and thanks for the difficult work done on this project.

New Business

Business to be presented by Commissioners

There was none.

Other New Business

Discuss and ask Board approval of 2011 Utility budget

Superintendent presented his proposed 2011 budget. He reviewed several important factors affecting revenues during 2010: first, the Utility had implemented a rate increase; second, water usage had increased from 2009; and third, the Utility had delayed certain capital projects. In addition, the Superintendent pointed out that the Utility does not receive any tax or other monies from the City; the Utility operates entirely on its water revenues.

Commissioner Stewart asked about line 196, which exceeded the budgeted amount for 2010. After review, Superintendent informed that asbestos removal had been treated as a capital item in the 2010 budget, but had, in fact, been expensed. Also the repair of damaged glass block in the high lift station windows had also been expensed in this line item. Commissioner Van de Kreeke asked about line 452, a capital outlay item, for financial software upgrade. Superintendent advised the financial software package has been in place for eight years. It has served well and been quite stable, but the time is approaching for an upgrade, which, among other advantages, will allow customers to access their accounts on-line. As with all software, upgrades cannot be delayed indefinitely. There was discussion on certain other capital items, including monies for land acquisition at Taylor Hill. Superintendent pointed out the biggest change in the

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proposed budget is a return to a higher level of capital investment, primarily in water main installation. The project at Weeden Creek Road, at South Business Drive, had been postponed for a year due to timing issues with the WIDOT and County. In addition, the Utility needs to begin addressing main improvements to improve pressure stability on the far southside of the City. There is a backlog of water main projects that will all need to be completed eventually. Superintendent advised that line #384, for replacement of high lift pump #3, could potentially wait; however, the pump is fifty years old and needs replacement. We have prudently upgraded or replaced the other high lift pumps already; #3 is the remaining one. Superintendent also advised that line #388, for design of a new washwater pump system, has been discussed internally for several years. The pump used to wash filter beds is also fifty years old; we have no backup. Without that pump, our only means of washing filters is to use water directly from the wash tank, which does not provide a sufficient filter wash. The washwater pump is located in a tight area in the pipe gallery. It might be possible to retain the existing pump as a backup, but various options must be evaluated. Superintendent stated this was definitely a high priority project. Superintendent reminded the Board that capital investment is an ongoing necessity. As the City returns to more capital investment in street projects, the Utility will have additional water main projects, too.

Commissioner Van de Kreeke stated that the budget is a planning document. Approval of the budget does not mean approval of each capital item; these must be considered separately throughout the year. Generally he agreed that the need for capital investment is ongoing, and that the level of proposed spending was reasonable.

After some further discussion, Commissioner Stewart made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Haen, to approve the proposed 2011 Water Utility budget and to send the budget, by way of record, to the Finance Committee as per their 1991 request. Motion carried unanimously.

Discuss and ask Board approval for purchase of additional Orion transmitters

Commissioner Van de Kreeke made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Stewart, for the purchase of 48 additional Orion transmitters from Badger Meter, at \$110 per, for a total of \$5,280. Motion carried unanimously.

Correspondence

There was no correspondence.

Approve Vouchers

Motion by Commissioner Van de Kreeke, seconded by Commissioner Haen, that the general vouchers for September 2010 of \$172,324.56 be allowed and ordered paid. Motion passed unanimously. Gross payroll of \$130,778.79 was also allowed and ordered paid.

The Commissioners also signed the R.O. directing the Utility's third quarter report to Council.

Personnel

Update Board on vacant positions

Superintendent advised that many applications had been received for the account clerk position. A candidate has now accepted an offer for employment and will be starting in the position on October 28, 2010.

Applications are now being received for the Engineer Technician position. As with the account clerk position, Superintendent is utilizing the services of an HR consultant to help screen applicants.

Inform Board of longevity step

Superintendent advised Board that Jim Paulow has reached his 15 year longevity step in accord with the labor agreement.

Other Matters

There were no other matters discussed.

October Board Meeting

The next Board Meeting will be on Monday, November 29, 2010, at 4:00 p.m. in the Utility conference room.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:30 PM on a motion by Commissioner Haen, seconded by Commissioner Van de Kreeke. Motion carried unanimously.

Minutes taken by:
Superintendent
Joe R. Trueblood

Raymond W. Haen, Secretary