

Minutes of the Public Works and Public Utilities Committee for Tuesday, September 3, 2013.

The meeting was called to order by Alderman Bormann at 7:00 p.m. Present were Mayor Grenke, Aldermen Simmons, Magley, Wilkins, Lee, and Angell. Also attending were Lynn Behrns, Phil Hoffman, Mark Mustain, Police Chief Larry Dudgeon, and James Smith.

Those in attendance recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Comments from Citizens

There were no comments

Electric Department

Committee reviewed the activity report and future work schedule for the Electric Department. Mayor Grenke noted the new format for the report. Committee had no questions.

Behrns said he has been visited by representatives from Ameren Missouri. They brought a new, revised contract for electric service over what they define as their "distribution system". These are the lines at 34.5 kV which connect our substations to their 63 kV substations. The rate for this service is a flat fee, which has not been changed since 1992, staying the same through two other master contracts. Behrns believes that, as a result of recent examinations by FERC and the Missouri Public Service Commission, Ameren Missouri reexamined and recalculated this rate. Ameren Missouri reports that during the two decades, Ameren installed much new equipment to the local 34.5 kV system, particularly service to the Wilson Street Substation. Additionally, the proportion of power delivered to the City has risen significantly compared to the overall 34.5 system. As a result, the monthly charge for this service is set to rise from \$8,458.00 to \$13,998.00. This extends out to an additional \$66,480 per year. The City really has no option. The method of calculation is set by the PSC and MISO. An ordinance will be needed to authorize the revised contract.

Mustain reported that he had conducted an inspection of all meter installations measuring power consumption for customers with three-phase service measured off a CT meter base. He has found three of the meters were improperly programmed. The physical reading was correct, but the "multiplier" programmed was different. This resulted in an incorrect bill. In one case, the customer noticed the change after a replacement installation of a new meter. The City has calculated correct bills, resulting in a credit against the bills of one customer for the next two months. One of the other customers was a newer customer with a large consumption. They had no history as a benchmark and did not notice that the bill was too high. The difference was only discovered by the City in the survey of all such meters. The customer was over-billed for four years. The City will prepare a rebate, as well as correcting the meter programming. Future meters will be double checked before being placed in service. Staff was asked if the City had recourse against the meter vender. Behrns said they would only have limited liability for the physical equipment. After discussion, the Committee agreed that the rebate was only for improper over-charges. There was no loss of payment for services actually provided.

Behrns also noted that the weather for the present year has been fair more mild through July. As a result, electric bills through August are about \$117,000 less than projected. August heat means that power usage billed last week will be more typical, but will not make up for the previous deficit. When this is coupled with the extra Ameren Missouri bills, the fiscal year will end with an undesignated balance of less than \$75,000. In fiscal year 2013-14, the undesignated fund balance would be in

deficit. Behrns has run rough calculations of the electric budget and thinks that a rate increase will be needed—perhaps as much as 8%, starting on January 1, 2014

Mustain said that when La Crosse Lumber relocates to Highway 22, the City will need a ten-foot utility easement from LaCrosse along their west side. When this is acquired, the City can vacate part of an easement acquired from the previous owner of the Prenger property. The vacation will take an ordinance, but will not need a hearing or recommendation of the Planning and Zoning Commission. Enough of the old easement will be retained to continue service to the adjacent property owned by Nancy Baca (formerly Cook's Auto Sales).

Mustain presented a quote for testing of the oil in the City's substations. S. D. Meyers submitted a quote of \$1,280 for the work, up slightly from last year and just a bit more than staff's purchasing limit. Wilkins moved that the City have the oil tested by S. D. Meyers for \$1,280. Simmons seconded the motion. On roll-call vote, all members present voted aye and the motion passed.

Streets and Sanitation

Committee reviewed the activity report and future work schedule for the Street and Sanitation Departments. Hoffman gave a more detailed explanation about remedial cleanup of a sidewalk replacement on S. Allen St. The resident's contractor did not clean up after himself. He will not in the future be allowed to work for any citizen under the City's sidewalk program.

Hoffman also said that, between the Street Department, the Park Department, and the COLT Railroad, we are catching up with another round of mowing rights-of-way.

Behrns presented a draft of an ordinance to require excavation permits and set standards for excavations in the City's right-of-way. Behrns asked Committee members to study the proposal and provide their opinions concerning the cost of permits, the need for a bond or guarantee for repairs, and whether the Street crew would do the asphalt resurfacing (with or without a charge). Behrns noted that there was little consistency from city to city in what they specify in their backfill materials requirements.

Bormann and Magley agreed that they would help formulate a standard for Centralia. The matter will be included again on the October Committee agenda.

Hoffman said he was making good time on installing/reinstalling stormsewers for the Switzler Street project.

Water and Sewer Department

Committee reviewed the activity report and future work schedule for the Water and Sewer Department.

Committee members had no questions.

Behrns reported on a problem faced frequently by the Water crew. The City does not want customers shutting water services on and off to work on their properties. Too often they use the wrong tools and break the line or cause leaks around the meter pit. We ask that they call the City to do this. However, several of the older apartments make a habit of doing their work in the evening and on weekends, forcing expensive overtime. The building codes now require separate shutoffs for each individual residence or customer, separate from the meter. That will cap the problem for new services. Staff is working on a policy for the Board to adopt that would encourage the old apartments to install their own shutoffs, or be loaned the proper wrenches and to acknowledge they will be responsible for any resulting leaks or breaks. This will be formally presented in the future.

As May Arise

Mayor Grenke noted that there will be a state-wide siren test at noon on Wednesday. Committee discussed, but declined to take a position concerning Governor Nixon's veto of a legislative tax measure. The governor will be in town this week for an address on this topic.

Committee discussed a citizen complaint about the large flocks of birds in some neighborhoods. Chief Dudgeon reviewed the steps the City has taken—with limited results. This is almost an overwhelming task. Short of cutting down the trees, we have not found an measure that provides consistent results. Ultimately, this is not a problem that government is able to effectively address. It may linger on until the first hard freeze.

Riders in the MS Bike-a-thon will be coming through Centralia on Saturday and Sunday. Police officers will be doing traffic control on Highway 22. There will be a rest station at the Lutheran Church.

The Committee adjourned at about 8:30 p.m.

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