

Minutes of the Public Works and Public Utilities Committee for Monday, November 4, 2013.

The meeting was called to order by Alderman Bormann at 7:00 p.m. Present were Mayor Grenke, Aldermen Magley, Simmons, and Angell. Also attending were Lynn Behrns, Phil Hoffman, Mark Mustain, Mike Forsee, Ralph Robertson, Randy Simmons, and James Smith.

Those in attendance recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Comments from Citizens

Robertson spoke to the Committee about his concern over “smart meters”. The term mostly refers to electric meters which can continually send data about a customer’s use of electricity and receive commands to turn power on and off. Robertson was worried that the electro-magnetic radiation from the radios within the meters. He also felt that it allowed government too much access to information about use of various powered appliances and household electronic devices. He had previously talked to most of the aldermen at their homes and had asked them to view a DVD produced by persons who feared smart meters. He offered to loan it to Behrns; but Behrns refused, saying he received sufficient information from trade magazines and journals. Behrns said that the City does not have true smart meters and has no intention to acquire them. The meters used by Centralia have radios with a range of about three blocks. They broadcast only the current measurement of cumulative electric use. They do not store any information. For a customer who needs that data, the City has one recording meter to track the pattern of use over time. Since the City buys power at a flat price and provides it to customers at a single unit price, there is no need for time-of-use information or more sophisticated meters. To change over to actual smart meters would be expensive; the Board of Aldermen would have to authorize an expenditure of hundreds of thousand of dollars.

Further, Behrns said the strength of the transpondit radios on the meters is very low. Behrns suspects that it is less than that of cell phones, televisions, and many other household fixtures. Robertson was not convinced. He asked if the City could change his meter back to an analog meter. Behrns said that such a meter would have to be manually read and that the City should institute a surcharge for such a service. Robertson said that was unfair. Some aldermen were skeptical about what one described as “junk science”. Others asked for further information. Staff will research the issue of relative strength of the radio transmissions, to better describe any health impact.

Randy Simmons said that he, too, worried about the extra radiation from the meters and other sources. He noted that he watches birds and that several species have disappeared from the area in recent years. Mustain said that Centralia’s meters have been in use since 2004.

Water and Sewer Department

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

Mayor Grenke inquired about progress on the GIS project. Forsee said that they are still locating some orphaned manholes and reviewing the draft field charts. He thinks the work needs about 5 or 6 more days. Mustain said much the same for the electric charts.

Commission again discussed disposition of the backhoe which will become surplus when the new backhoe is delivered. Hoffman has talked to a dealer and obtained estimates for what the old backhoe would bring as a trade-in or when sold on the open market. The numbers were shared with the Committee. In the end, Committee said that they would entertain direct sale of the backhoe to the

Centralia Special Road District, if the District would negotiate a price at the highest estimate from the dealer.

Streets and Sanitation

Committee reviewed the activity report and future work schedule for the Street and Sanitation Departments.

Committee reviewed a new draft of an ordinance which would require permits and set standards for excavations in City rights-of-way. Alderman found several new points in need of change or clarification; particularly whether any patch on an asphalt-surfaced street would have concrete to the top. Hoffman and Behrns will conduct more research and work on a further draft, to be considered at the December meeting.

Behrns said that he was having the Street Department paint a crosswalk across Jefferson Street at the new sidewalk on the north side of Switzler. Appropriate signs would also be installed. The crosswalk is a citizen request that seems to make sense.

Hoffman said that Switzler Street should be open on Tuesday, although further work on a punch list is needed.

Mayor Grenke said that he had noticed the change of signs on Remington Drive, to show a 15 mph limit. Staff has not yet determined whether there is any safety improvement.

Only one proposal was received for repairs to the street barn roof. A local contractor, DMB Construction quoted a price of \$5,430.00 for the work. The item will be put on the regular Board Agenda for approval.

Electric Department

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

Mayor Grenke asked about the location of LED street light installations. Mustain said that they were on Collier Street, next to the Chance Elementary School. They put out slightly less light than the sodium vapor style, but seem more "white" and pleasing in appearance. They should pay for themselves within five and one-half years through energy efficiency. However, Mustain is not yet recommending a replacement program. Piecemeal replacement would be disconcerting where the lights are in long strings that allow for direct comparison. More importantly, Mustain expects the price and reliability of the LED lights to become more favorable to the City in the next few years.

As May Arise

Behrns reminded the aldermen that the next Monday would be a holiday and that the meeting of the General Government and Public Safety Committee would be postponed to Tuesday night.

Mayor Grenke reminded aldermen of the CREDI Social scheduled for Tuesday at 5:30, at Forrest Chevrolet.

The Committee adjourned at about 8:10 p.m.