

## Minutes of the Public Works and Public Utilities Committee for Monday, February 3, 2014.

The meeting was called to order by Alderman Bormann at 7:00 p.m. Present were Mayor Grenke, Aldermen Simmons, Magley, Lee, and Wilkins. Also attending were Lynn Behrns, Phil Hoffman, Mark Mustain, Mike Forsee, Heather Lockett, Ryan Russell, and Phyllis Brown. James Smith arrived at about 7:10.

Those in attendance recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

### Comments from Citizens

None.

### Presentation on Utility Account Software

Lockett gave a presentation about a new software service available from CUSI, (the firm which furnishes our utility billing software). The proposal has two features: electronic bill payment and account access portal. The vender will provide both as a package at no cost to the City. Everything would be provided as a “turn-key” effort. The vender expects to recover its cost through a portion of a 3% convenience fee. The City has previously stayed away from third-party electronic payments because we would have had to pay for credit/debt card fees. Lockett thought that adoption would benefit office staff by having fewer bills to process and fewer delinquent accounts. Behrns thought it might reduce the number of shutoffs at the end of each month, but he worried that residents would be more tempted to get into debt trouble on their credit cards. Aldermen were concerned about future costs after the City was established in the software. Lockett said she had been assured that this would not happen. The vender estimates participation levels at about 10% of our customers.

The portal feature would allow any customer to access the usage and billing history for their accounts. The history could be viewed in tabular format or with analytical graphics. Wilkins was concerned about security from a CUSI “pipeline” to our records. Presently, they access the server for software maintenance through Lockett. Several other questions were brought forth dealing with log-ins, range of account history, and lockout at the payment deadlines. Lockett will write out the questions and relay them to the vender. Committee generally agrees that the service was worth exploring. More information will be presented at a future meeting.

### Water and Sewer Department

Committee reviewed the activity report and future work schedule for the Water and Sewer Department. Forsee reported that the one small water line had frozen. He has taken steps to deal with this situation in the future. Otherwise, the only cold-weather service problems have come from frozen meters.

Behrns distributed two draft ordinances dealing with utilities. They are the first of several ordinances intended to modernize or correct issues in the City Code. One of the ordinances instructs the City Clerk (rather than the City Administrator) to receive insurance certificates or bonds in order to issue a business license to a private trash collector. It also eliminates obsolete references to a collection area and fee for waste tires.

The other ordinance amends the Plumbing and Sewer chapter, mostly to repeal obsolete sections which duplicate standards in the International Plumbing Code—adopted in Chapter 5. Both ordinances can be on the regular February Board meeting agenda. Behrns anticipates other updates to be brought before the Board before summer.

Forsee reported that he will be ordering repair parts for a meter on the northeast wastewater pumps. The cost of \$2,200

is preferable to ordering a new meter assembly. He is also looking at most the economical way to measure water delivered to the farmers who irrigate with the treated wastewater. His department needs to validate the measurements we are providing to the Department of Natural Resources relating to our NPDES permit renewal. The equipment is needed quickly, because the measurements should be made when the farmers start filling their storage ponds.

#### Street and Sanitation Department

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

Hoffman said that he had the state bid price for a replacement pickup truck, but had not yet gotten one from Forrest Chevrolet. He should have a recommendation for the next meeting. The actual delivery is likely to be deferred to the next budget year.

Mayor Grenke relayed several thank-yous from citizens who were happy with the work which the Street Department performed over the weekend to deal with ice accumulations.

Hoffman said he was preparing for next round of snow, but one truck has problems and is in the Myers shop in Mexico. [The problem turned out to be a bad fuel pump.]

#### Electric Department

Committee reviewed the activity report and future work schedule for the Electric Department. Mustain told the Committee that the City had not yet experienced any general problems related to the ice and wind. A couple of service lines had needed emergency work.

#### Budget Discussions

Behrns presented draft summaries of the four public utility budgets. That for the Sanitation Fund lacked one column, which was distributed on Tuesday. The draft included the salary increases previously discussed and most of the special projects and purchases mentioned at the last Committee meeting. All of the budgets maintain previous reserves and show unencumbered fund balances. The tightest budget will be for the Electric Fund, but the recent rate increase should provide the needed revenue. Unless something unexpected happens in the next month, these draft budgets will be very close to the proposals fleshed out in fuller detail for the final budget.

#### As May Arise

Behrns distributed a letter from Jack Chance of behalf of the Friends of the Centralia Battlefield. The letter requests \$20,000, which would be used for advanced advertising of the reenactment scheduled for this fall. The advertising is needed now, but will allow the Friends to work on other fund raising to cover event expenses. Behrns said he could put that amount in the preliminary general fund budget, pending further work on that budget. Lee said that the re-enactors could the start of the advertising until April. Behrns said it would be desirable to have a contract in place before then. The funding would be pegged to economic development activities. Council will review the request in context of the entire budget when it is available.

The Committee adjourned at about 7:50 p.m.