

Minutes of the Public Works and Public Utilities Committee for Monday, January 04, 2016.

The meeting was called to order by Alderman, Andrea Vollrath, Chairperson at 7:30 p.m. Present also were Mayor Tim Grenke, Aldermen Landon Magley, Dick Ward, Don Bormann and Jim Lee. Also attending were City Administrator, Matt Harline, Street & Sanitation Foreman, Phil Hoffman, Water & Wastewater Foreman, Mike Forsee, Electric Foreman, Mark Mustain City Clerk, Heather Russell, Russell Chick, Jessica Orsini and James Smith of the Fireside Guard. Police Chief Larry Dudgeon and City Attorney Merritt Beck attended the recessed meeting of the Board of Aldermen and was at the Committee meeting briefly.

Comments from Citizens.

None

Electric Department

Activity Report Vollrath asked for comments and questions on the Activity Report and there were none.

GENERATION

Purchased power agreement update – legal: Harline reported that Margaret McGoldrick of Spiegel and McDiarmid was at work reviewing the proposed contract from Constellation/Exelon, the firm that has submitted the best bid.

Discussion of the Utility Payment Policy: Vollrath noted that there was a memo in the packet on the Utility Payment Policy. Harline thanked City Clerk, Heather Russell who had remained from the recessed meeting to assist on this item. Harline explained that the original policy was established in 2008 and amended in 2010. The policy fills in the gaps left unclear by the City Code. Harline noted that current City Code prohibits accepting partial payments on utility bills. Harline said that we now accept on-line payments, and they go directly into the bank, and if it is a partial payment, this would be technically in violation of the City Code. Harline said that City staff assumes the prohibition on partial payments was due to the difficulty in tracking partial payments with the old written record. Russell added that we currently turn down partial payments in person or hold on to partial payments received in the mail. Grenke asked about penalties if the whole amount isn't paid. Russell said that the penalty would be applied only to the remaining balance. Harline added that the memo also notes that if we accept partial payments, we would need to determine at what percentage of payments would prevent the disconnection of service. Harline said he felt that 75% of the current bill and all of the balances of past bills.

Harline stated that current policy allows for only one extension for life. Russell replied to a question from Harline that in practice we did grant additional extensions. Russell added that the policy caused staff to go to the City Administrator with any extension. Harline said that the City would continue to allow partial payment when a charitable organization is picking up the balance. Grenke said he was in favor of taking partial payments. Lee asked how often we were asked to take partial payments and if she ever heard that other utilities take partial payments. Russell said that they did hear about others taking partial payment and it isn't that often we get requests for taking partial payments, but then the policy is known in town. Russell added that we take partial payments in Municipal Court and we allow two months to pay for a trash cart. Lee asked about budget billing. Russell said it required a year of billing history and fewer than three late payments in the previous year. Harline noted that you aren't doing people any favor by allowing people to carry a large balance they get buried in debt and the citizens have to eat the cost if they don't pay it. Grenke asked about how many shut offs we get per month. Russell and Mustain

replied about ten to 20. Bormann noted that we let people pay ahead. Harline noted that with so called “smart” meters you can pay as you go for utilities. Grenke noted that there are co-ops that you pay for what you use. Harline asked if that sounded good and there was a general consensus.

DISTRIBUTION

Mustain said that he wasn’t certain if the underground conduit boring project had been completed last time he addressed the Committee but the project is completely finished now and the conduit is accessible by the City. Grenke asked what the flagman ended up costing us. Harline said that he didn’t have that number yet.

OTHER

Harline noted that Kinkead’s Pharmacy was getting set to install our first solar project in town. Harline said that we simply let them generate as much as they can and they only pay us for the power above that they take from us. Harline said that it is possible, but not likely, that they could generate more power in a month than they use and the City is obligated to buy it back. Harline noted that the City will need to establish a policy that defines what is meant exactly by the words in Centralia City Code Section 26-39.2 subsection I (3) where it says the City will credit the customer-generator the, “net value of the energy delivered to the City (by) during the billing period, calculated using the City’s avoided cost...” Harline suggested that the staff should bring back a Policy Resolution that defines that avoided cost as equal to the energy cost that the City pays for energy on their existing and future full-requirements Purchased Power Agreement. Harline said that it would be easy to determine the value of the credit using this policy, it would be rather generous to the customer as compared to other cities and the policy would be easy to defend. Mustain agreed that it would be a sensible policy. Lee asked if that is the number we pay to buy electricity and Harline replied in the affirmative. Harline said that we have received a building permit application but not an Interconnection Agreement. Mustain noted that the City would install bi-directional meters, which the applicant has to pay for.

Water and Sewer Department

Activity Report Vollrath asked for comments and questions on the monthly report and there were none.

WATER

Vollrath asked for comments and questions. Bormann asked about infiltration. Forsee said that it is getting better due to the sewer main lining. Forsee added that he has a project lined up at Hubbell that will help improve it more. Bormann asked about the broken meter. Forsee said it was possibly a truck running over the lid or something like that. Bormann asked about the hammering sound in Well #3. Forsee said that they hear a loud hammer sound about 30 seconds after shutting off the pump. Forsee said that he thinks a water “surge protector” might fix the problem at a cost of about \$2,500. Forsee said that he would pass that on when he got it.

Air-scour underdrain system: Harline said that a vendor demonstrated a product that would clean the sand filters really well. Harline said that the cost was high (\$103,000) and so he was thinking maybe FY-2018. Harline said that the aerator was priority 1, getting the lime levels down in the plant was second, but then we could look at this system to clean the filters. Forsee said that the air scour worked great but he could fully replace the filter for \$8,000 and he took a long drill bit and got a lot of the caked stuff out. He said they were getting ideas on reducing the lime and they were doing more thorough backwashing of the sand filters. Harline said the Bormann asked if the lime was responsible for the caking in the filters and Forsee answered in the affirmative.

SEWER

Vollrath asked for comments and questions. Forsee added that they were looking at budget items including lining sewers. Bormann asked if the brick lined manholes were the big problem and Forsee said that they had more problems with the cast-in-place sections.

OTHER None.

Public Works

Activity Report Vollrath asked for comments and questions and there were none.

STREETS

Vollrath asked for comments and questions and there were none.

SANITATION

Vollrath asked for comments and questions. Hoffman said there was lots of trash. Harline noted that they were picking up about 5% more this year over last and the price per ton has gone up. Magley asked if both trucks were running and Hoffman said that the new truck (#89) had been in an incident at the Columbia landfill. Harline noted that MOPERM sent an adjuster and will be sending a check for the damage and looking to subrogate against the driver of the other car.

MMSWMD grant application Harline noted that there was a draft letter of support that he would like the Committee to officially endorse to improve our score in the grant process. **Lee made a motion to that the Committee approve and endorse the grant application that was seconded by Magley and approved by unanimous voice vote.** Harline noted that the City of Columbia has three split-hopper trucks for sale and we could possibly get two for \$100,000.

STORM SEWER

Vollrath asked for comments and questions and there were none. Hoffman noted that he had repaired a section of storm sewer on Bruton near Allen Street. Magley asked if he had looked at problem Columbia and Bruton. Hoffman said he had looked at it but they had not cleaned it out yet.

OTHER None.

Other

Vollrath asked for comments and questions and there were none.

As May Arise

Ward made a motion to adjourn the meeting that was seconded by Magley and approved by unanimous voice vote.

The Committee adjourned 8:06 p.m.