

**REGULAR MEETING OF THE JEFFERSON UTILITIES COMMISSION, HELD SEPTEMBER 13, 2021**

On call of the roll, commissioners present were: Oppermann, Brandel, Adams, Bristol, Ganser, Pieters and Neils. Also present were: Utility Manager Adler, Office Manager Statz, Energy Services Representative Greg Hoffmann and City Attorney Rogers. The meeting began at 5:30 p.m.

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Utility Manager Adler offered to take commission members on tours of the Riverside Alley project.

**MINUTES**

It was moved by Comm. Brandel and seconded by Comm. Neils to approve the minutes from the August 9, 2021 meeting. Motion carried on a voice vote.

**EXPENDITURES**

It was moved by Comm. Pieters and seconded by Comm. Ganser to approve the payment of August 2021 bills totaling \$1,340,890.44. On call of the roll, motion carried. (Neils – Aye, Oppermann – Aye, Brandel – Aye, Adams – Aye, Ganser – Aye, Bristol – Aye, Pieters - Aye)

**DISCUSSION – SOLAR COMPANIES SOLICITATION IN JEFFERSON – GREG HOFFMANN  
WPPI ENERGY SERVICES REPRESENTATIVE**

Utility Manager Adler recalled the solar company that went door to door soliciting customers to purchase solar panels. The utility received a lot of customer complaints about the company's behavior/demeanor. In addition to providing customers with incorrect information, the door to door salespersons used the Jefferson Utilities (JU) logo and presented themselves as being affiliated with our utility.

Energy Services Representative Greg Hoffmann stated he had the unfortunate job of speaking with a Jefferson Utilities customer that signed a contract with said solar company. After signing the contract, the customer decided to look at other options and wished to back out of the contract. However, they were informed by the solar company that they would have to pay a \$1,700 cancellation fee, which they were not told about when they signed the contract.

Mr. Hoffmann stated the going rate for a solar installation is between \$1.50 and \$2.00 per watt of generation. The cost for this solar company's installation is \$4.50 to \$6.75 per watt of generation. He explained that he has received two to three applications from customers to install solar with this company.

Mr. Hoffmann stated he was pleased that so many customers contacted our office to inform us of the company going door to door. He stated that was a sign that our customers trust and support our utility.

Mr. Hoffmann stated the utility should not recommend solar vendors for customers to partner with. He said the best practice is to point customers to the Focus on Energy Trade Allies page of their website. Unfortunately, the solar company going door to door was listed on their website. He stated he then reached out to Focus on Energy and informed them about what was occurring in our community. Focus on Energy immediately removed the company as a trade ally on their website.

Utility Manager Adler stated he contacted Chief Pileggi once he learned that the salespersons were impersonating JU staff. Chief Pileggi contacted the supervisor of the salespersons and stressed that those sales tactics would not be tolerated.

Office Manager Statz was asked how customers were informed to be wary of the company.

Office Manager Statz stated the office mailed out a letter and flyer to all customers, placed ads in the newspaper, posted a notice on Facebook and placed ads on the radio.

Comm. Neils stated we should continue to push the message for customers to be cautious before signing a contract with any company.

Comm. Pieters stated with the announcements of coal plants shutting down, it has pushed the sales of solar panels. He stated this would probably occur more and more as we move forward. He felt it was a good idea to place an article in the newspaper.

Comm. Bristol suggested we advertise the renewable energy program to our customers that want to invest in distributed generation.

Office Manager Statz stated WPPI is rebranding the program and it is now called Choose Renewable. WPPI will mail out letters to customers currently participating, to advertise the price drop we recently had approved by the Public Service Commission. In the future, all customers will be contacted to push the program.

Comm. Oppermann questioned how many customers participate in the renewable energy program.

Office Manager Statz explained there are not a lot of customers that participate. She stated that the City of Jefferson is by far the largest supporter of the program. She explained that with the drop in price, the City of Jefferson increased the number of blocks they purchase. They are the only customer that is over 20 blocks, most purchase two to three per month.

Comm. Bristol stated the City of Jefferson should showcase their investment in renewable energy.

#### **DISCUSSION – UPDATE ON ELECTRIC AND WATER UTILITY SEPARATION PROCESS**

Office Manager Statz explained that Baker Tilly has completed their separation of the electric and water utilities' cash. She explained that the analysis determined the cash in the bank should be split about 53% to electric and 47% to water. She stated this is very close to the analysis she performed herself. Therefore, she was in agreement with what Baker Tilly has completed. Office Manager Statz explained that City Administrator Tim Freitag told her the City would probably agree to the analysis as well. At this point, she sees that issue to be resolved.

Office Manager Statz explained the second piece to be completed is a cost allocation between the water and electric utilities. She stated the electric utility and the City have come to a tentative agreement on an annual allocation between the two. Office Manager Statz has reached out to the Public Service Commission (PSC) for feedback on the allocation. The goal is to work out any issues now, so that when one of the utilities goes in for a rate case in the future, there is not a surprise that holds up the process. Office Manager Statz stated she did not anticipate hearing back from the PSC until later this week, early next week. Either way, she planned to have a budget ready for approval at next month's meeting. She warned the commission that the electric budget would not look good for 2022.

Comm. Pieters questioned what the 2022 water budget looked like.

Office Manager Statz stated she has not been a part of the water budget process, so she was unaware.

Comm. Bristol stated he would like to see the 2022 water budget to see if the increase in income offsets the electric loss.

Comm. Oppermann stated commission members were welcome to attend the Common Council meeting to see the water budget when it is approved.

**DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION – COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTIONS – JEFFERSON FIRE DEPARTMENT COLORING BOOK**

It was moved by Comm. Brandel and seconded by Comm. Neils to approve a 4” x 4” ad in the Jefferson Fire Department coloring book at a cost of \$200.00. On call of the roll, motion carried unanimously. (Neils – Aye, Oppermann – Aye, Brandel – Aye, Adams – Aye, Ganser – Aye, Bristol – Aye, Pieters - Aye)

**DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION – COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTIONS – GEMUETLICHKEIT DAYS**

It was moved by Comm. Pieters and seconded by Comm. Brandel to approve a \$1,000.00 donation to Gemuetlichkeit Days for their parade. On call of the roll, motion carried unanimously. (Neils – Aye, Oppermann – Aye, Brandel – Aye, Adams – Aye, Ganser – Aye, Bristol – Aye, Pieters - Aye)

It was moved by Comm. Pieters and seconded by Comm. Brandel to adjourn. Motion carried on a voice vote. The meeting adjourned at 6:19 p.m.

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PRESIDENT

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SECRETARY