

REGULAR MEETING OF THE JEFFERSON UTILITIES COMMISSION, HELD DECEMBER 14, 2020

On call of the roll, commissioners present were: Adams, Brandel, Pieters, Ganser, Bristol, Oppermann (arrived at 5:33 p.m.) and Neils. Also present were: Utility Manager Adler, Office Manager Statz, City Attorney Rogers and Wastewater Treatment Plant Superintendent Todd Clark. The meeting began at 5:32 p.m.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None

Comm. Oppermann arrived.

MINUTES

It was moved by Comm. Brandel and seconded by Comm. Pieters to approve the minutes from the November 9, 2020 meeting. Motion carried on a voice vote.

EXPENDITURES

It was moved by Comm. Brandel and seconded by Comm. Neils to approve the payment of November's bills totaling \$1,010,144.08. On call of the roll, motion carried. (Pieters – Aye, Brandel – Aye, Ganser – Aye, Bristol – Aye, Adams – Aye, Neils – Aye, Oppermann - Aye)

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION – 2021 EMPLOYEE PAY COMPENSATION

Utility Manager Adler explained the Common Council has authorized a payment to city staff for \$1,500, in lieu of a wage increase in 2021. He explained that bonuses are not recoverable in our electric and water rates. In reaching out to the PSC, they define the lump sum payout authorized by the Common Council as a bonus and would not be eligible for recovery. He stated Office Manager Statz provided some calculations on wage increases for next year, as well as the cost for the \$1,500 pay out. He explained the \$1,500 pay out is the most expensive option for the utility.

Comm. Brandel stated the Police Department opted to receive a 1% wage increase in 2021, rather than a \$1,500 payout.

Comm. Bristol questioned the rationale behind the \$1,500 payout versus a percentage increase.

Comm. Brandel stated lower paid employees would receive the same amount of money as everyone else this way. In addition, the payout does not allow for base building, which will help the city's budgets in 2022.

Comm. Oppermann stated it was a tough year financially with the pandemic and the Common Council didn't want to raise taxes more than necessary. He hoped that next year would be a normal year and percent raises could continue.

Comm. Bristol stated the Utilities Commission has been consistent with following the PSCW's guidelines with rate recovery. He stated last meeting they voted down items because they were not recoverable in rates. He stated the percentage increase makes sense in keeping with prior decisions.

Comm. Oppermann stated he agreed with Comm. Bristol. He stated the next question was what the percentage should be, the same as the Police Department or something else.

Comm. Brandel stated a 1.5% wage increase would be cheaper than a \$1,500 payout. He agreed the utility should go with a percent increase so the cost could be recovered in rates.

Comm. Neils stated she liked the 1.5% wage increase as well.

It was moved by Comm. Pieters and seconded by Comm. Oppermann to approve option #2 for 2021 wages; slide the matrix 1.5%, employees in the steps will remain at their current step and employees in the merit section will receive 1.5%. On call of the roll, motion carried. (Pieters – Aye, Brandel – Aye, Ganser – Aye, Bristol – Aye, Adams – Aye, Neils – Aye, Oppermann - Aye)

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION – 2021 EMPLOYEE H S A CONTRIBUTION

Utility Manager Adler explained the Common Council approved a contribution to employees' health savings accounts in 2021 in the amounts of \$1,950 for an employee with family coverage and \$975 for an employee with single coverage. These amounts are reduced from the prior year, which was \$2,700 for family and \$1,350 for single.

Office Manager Statz stated the 2021 electric and water budgets put aside the same funding levels as 2020, so there are adequate funds for these contributions.

It was moved by Comm. Pieters and seconded by Comm. Ganser to approve 2021 H S A contributions for employees, \$1,950 for family coverage and \$975 for single coverage. On call of the roll, motion carried. (Pieters – Aye, Brandel – Aye, Ganser – Aye, Bristol – Aye, Adams – Aye, Neils – Aye, Oppermann - Aye)

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION – 2020 EMPLOYEE CHAMBER BUCKS \$50.00

It was moved by Comm. Oppermann and seconded by Comm. Brandel to approve a \$50.00 Chamber Bucks gift certificate for all staff. On call of the roll, motion carried. (Pieters – Aye, Brandel – Aye, Ganser – Aye, Bristol – Aye, Adams – Aye, Neils – Aye, Oppermann - Aye)

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION – BAKER TILLY US, LLP FOR FINANCIAL AUDIT SERVICES NOT TO EXCEED \$18,600

Utility Manager Adler explained it was time to renew our contract with Baker Tilly for audit services. He stated the utility has been happy with Baker Tilly and looked forward to working with them again.

Comm. Pieters asked if the audit services were for both electric and water and if it was an annual audit.

Utility Manager Adler stated it is an annual audit and the price reflected was for both utilities.

Comm. Oppermann stated he was happy with their work.

Office Manager Statz stated the cost used to be over \$20,000 per year, so the amounts reflected are lower than what we had paid past years. She stated the request for proposals we put out three years ago helped to keep these costs down.

It was moved by Comm. Bristol and seconded by Comm. Pieters to approve a contract with Baker Tilly for financial audit services, not to exceed \$18,600 in 2020. On call of the roll, motion carried. (Pieters – Aye, Brandel – Aye, Ganser – Aye, Bristol – Aye, Adams – Aye, Neils – Aye, Oppermann - Aye)

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION – HIRE WATER OPERATOR/SHARE POSITION WITH WWTP

Utility Manager Adler stated the water department will be short one operator in the coming months due to a scheduled surgery. He explained he would like to either hire someone or to share staff with the Wastewater Treatment Plant, on an as needed basis. He stressed that the water department needs help. He explained that the start of the year will bring water meter change outs, cross connection inspections and probably water main breaks. He stated he has met with Wastewater Treatment Plant Superintendent Todd Clark and City Administrator Tim Freitag to discuss a possible sharing of staff. They were willing to help out the water department for a few months and bill us accordingly.

Comm. Adams asked Wastewater Superintendent Todd Clark if he was okay with this and how it would work for him.

Wastewater Superintendent Clark stated their Lab Technician did not retire as planned, so staff have some available time. He explained the winter months are slower for them and it would be a good time to get staff cross trained. He believed it would work out well.

Comm. Neils asked if the staffing levels we have now are enough. She questioned if each department needed its own person.

Wastewater Superintendent Clark stated it would work out okay to share staff.

Comm. Ganser questioned why the treatment plant needed an additional employee.

Wastewater Superintendent Clark stated for the most part it would be okay.

Comm. Ganser reiterated that he didn't see the need for an additional wastewater treatment plant employee.

Comm. Oppermann stated a discussion will take place in the future about merging the water and wastewater departments.

Comm. Bristol stated he was in favor of trying out the two departments sharing staff.

Comm. Ganser asked if the shared person will have daily work at the water department.

Utility Manager Adler stated yes, they would, as the water department needs someone here.

Comm. Brandel asked Wastewater Superintendent Clark if he was comfortable with this.

Wastewater Superintendent Clark stated he was and wanted to get staff started on cross training.

Comm. Brandel questioned if the water department should hire a full-time person now.

Utility Manager Adler stated that would be best.

Comm. Brandel proposed we should hire for a shared position and get a person in now.

Comm. Neils agreed with Comm. Brandel.

Wastewater Superintendent Clark stated he wasn't sure how that would work financially with the PSC.

Office Manager Statz stated the water utility could bill the wastewater utility at the end of the year, just like we do with the joint metering allocation. She explained the water utility budgeted for the full time position in 2021.

Wastewater Superintendent Clark stated he did not have money in his budget for a half time person.

Comm. Adams questioned if the same wastewater treatment plant employee would work with the water department each time.

Wastewater Superintendent Clark stated he would like one to two employees trained for coverage.

Utility Manager Adler clarified the plan was for the water department to advertise for a full time water/sewer operator and lean on the wastewater treatment plant staff for help until the position is filled.

Comm. Ganser stated it was important for staff to be cross-trained. He stated our water operator needed someone with him all the time to gain necessary knowledge.

Comm. Brandel stated Wastewater Superintendent Clark and Chief Water Operator Curt Hebbe should be included in the interviews.

Comm. Bristol questioned how the wastewater treatment plant would pay for the shared position.

Comm. Brandel stated the position would be a water department employee. He stated it was important to get things going now.

Comm. Oppermann clarified the water department would have three full-time employees.

Utility Manager Adler stated that was correct.

Comm. Adams questioned what hourly rate the water utility would pay the wastewater treatment plant operator when they are assisting the water department.

Utility Manager Adler stated the water utility would be billed at the wastewater treatment plant operator's hourly rate, plus benefits.

It was moved by Comm. Pieters and seconded by Comm. Ganser to approve the advertisement for a full time water operator/sewer operator. The wastewater treatment plant will share staff with the water department until a full-time water operator is hired; to be paid for by the water utility. On call of the roll, motion carried. (Pieters – Aye, Brandel – Aye, Ganser – Aye, Bristol – Aye, Adams – Aye, Neils – Aye, Oppermann - Aye)

Wastewater Superintendent Clark left the meeting at 6:12 p.m.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION – ADDITIONAL FAULT INDICATOR WORK WITH FORSTER ENGINEERING NOT TO EXCEED \$9,140

Utility Manager Adler explained with the purchase of the electronic fault indicators, we now need to build an antenna system on the sheriff's tower. The price presented includes the equipment and engineering from Forester Engineering.

It was moved by Comm. Brandel and seconded by Comm. Neils to approve additional fault indicator work with Forster Engineering, Not to Exceed \$9,140. On call of the roll, motion carried. (Pieters – Aye, Brandel – Aye, Ganser – Aye, Bristol – Aye, Adams – Aye, Neils – Aye, Oppermann - Aye)

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION – ADDITIONAL RTAC EQUIPMENT FOR CRAWFISH SUBSTATION – FORSTER ENGINEERING NOT TO EXCEED \$20,000

Utility Manager Adler explained the proposal approved last month was for the engineering work only. It was his understanding at that time that the cost included the equipment as well. He has since received a proposal for the equipment itself.

City Attorney Rogers questioned if the work was put out for bid.

Utility Manager Adler explained he did not put the work out for bid because the work at the substation is highly specialized. Forster Engineering designed the substation when it was built and they understand the system very well.

Comm. Bristol stated he installed one during his career and the cost was double what the proposal is for. He believed the cost was reasonable.

Utility Manager Adler stated the utility scaled back projects in 2020 due to COVID and he would like to complete this work.

It was moved by Comm. Pieters and seconded by Comm. Bristol to approve additional RTAC Equipment for Crawfish Substation with Forster Engineering, Not to Exceed \$20,000. On call of the roll, motion carried. (Pieters – Aye, Brandel – Aye, Ganser – Aye, Bristol – Aye, Adams – Aye, Neils – Aye, Oppermann - Aye)

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION – COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTION – CHRISTMAS NEIGHBORS

Comm. Brandel stated this year Christmas Neighbors is helping about 550 families and 2,000 of them are children. Because of COVID there is even more need in the community. He stated the program serves all of Jefferson County, including Jefferson.

It was moved by Comm. Oppermann and seconded by Comm. Ganser to approve a donation of \$500.00 to Christmas Neighbors. On call of the roll, motion carried. (Pieters – Aye, Brandel – Aye, Ganser – Aye, Bristol – Aye, Adams – Aye, Neils – Aye, Oppermann - Aye)

It was moved by Comm. Bristol and seconded by Comm. Neils to adjourn. Motion carried on a voice vote. The meeting adjourned at 6:20 p.m.