

REGULAR MEETING OF THE JEFFERSON UTILITIES COMMISSION, HELD JUNE 11, 2018

On call of the roll, commissioners present were: Tinberg, Ristow, Adams, Brandel, Michaelis and Oppermann. Also present: Utility Manager Adler, Office Manager Statz and Water Quality Investigations, LLC representative Dr. Andrew Jacque, P.E. Absent was: Horn. The meeting began at 5:29 p.m.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None

MINUTES

Comm. Ristow proposed the following changes:

*She stated that when **she** sees utilities with a low amount of debt and sufficient cash on hand she gets worried that the utility is not investing in their infrastructure.*

*Comm. Brandel stated that utility business inserts should take ~~precedent~~ **precedence** over other city requests.*

It was moved by Comm. Ristow and seconded by Comm. Brandel to approve the minutes from the May 14, 2018 meeting with the noted corrections. Motion carried on a voice vote.

EXPENDITURES

It was moved by Comm. Brandel and seconded by Comm. Michaelis to approve the payment of May's bills totaling \$1,060,719.61. On call of the roll, motion carried unanimously. (Oppermann – Aye, Ristow – Aye, Adams – Aye, Tinberg – Aye, Michaelis – Aye, Brandel - Aye)

WELL #5 UPDATE AND PRESENTATION

Dr. Andrew Jacque from Water Quality Investigations, LLC discussed the condition of well #5 with the commission. There has been a growth of biofilm in the well, which has caused water quality issues. To remedy the situation, an inflatable packer was placed in the well to alleviate the inflow of water through the casing. After this was placed, we began to pull water from the bottom of the bore hole. This caused radium levels to spike because the bottom of the bore hole contains stagnant water. The well then needed to be shut down for further investigation to determine water quality throughout the entire depth of the bore hole. After more investigative work, it was determined that the well has downward flow.

Dr. Jacque stated that we are seeing positive change with a lower microbial count, but it is a slow process. It will take about a year or two to fully remove the biofilm growth. Dr. Jacque stated that the bacteria in the well are not harmful to humans. He stated that the well can be saved. We will continue to chlorinate the well every six months, but hopefully we can stretch that out to every 12 months as time goes on.

His recommendation was to abandon the well at 800'. This will cause the well to lose capacity, but we would then be able to control the radium levels.

Comm. Ristow questioned if we would know within the next year or two if the methods we are using are working.

Dr. Jacque stated that we will see in the next six months how well this method is working, but better water quality has been achieved already following the three chlorination procedures. The goal is to get it under control so that staff can maintain it going forward. He stated that the commission needs to decide at which point to abandon the well. His recommendation was to abandon it at least at 800'. The well is drilled to a depth of 924', but is plugged to a depth of 878' below ground level now.

He stated that a recirculation line was added to refresh the water between the casing and the pump piping. The 1" line down to the bottom to the bore hole was inserted to disinfect on an as needed basis and air could also be pushed through the line to remove the bacteria. He stated that if this works, we may not need to abandon the bottom of the well any further.

Comm. Ristow stated that the cost to abandon the well at 800' was cheaper than \$2.5 million to construct a new well.

Utility Manager Adler stated that the goal was not to have to put in a radium filter like we had to do at well #2.

Dr. Jacque stated that he recommended putting in a recycle line at all wells to improve water quality.

Comm. Ristow questioned if we should shut down the well.

Dr. Jacque stated that it was a good well and he recommended doing the abandonment up to 800' below ground level. If the commission went this route, he recommended doing so in the middle of winter when demand is lower.

Utility Manager Adler asked Dr. Jacque if we plugged the bottom, can it be undone if need be in the future. Dr. Jacque stated that the cap could be taken out.

Dr. Jacque left the meeting at 6:10 p.m.

DISCUSSION AND ACTION ON TEMPORARY OFFICE HELP

Utility Manager Adler stated that the office is still feeling short-handed with the vacant position. He was asking for approval to hire temporary help until the Common Council and Utilities Commission can meet to discuss the efficiency study.

Comm. Oppermann questioned what kind of work the office position was responsible for.

Utility Manager Adler stated that the position was the first point of contact for the customer and was back up for other positions in the office.

Comm. Brandel questioned why staff was asking for two positions, when there was only one position vacant. He said that staff was now being added.

Utility Manager Adler stated that the request tonight was for one part time office position and one part time meter reader. This is the equivalent to what is vacant. Prior to the split position, there was a full time office position and two part time meter readers. When a part time meter reader left in 2015 the vacancy was not filled.

Comm. Brandel questioned why more help was needed in the office. He stated that just because our customer base has grown 20%, it didn't justify another position. He felt that both the part time office position and part time meter reader was connected and a decision on one effected the decision on the other.

Office Manager Statz responded to Comm. Brandel's statement about why more help was needed. She stated that any time you have new staff, there is an inherent drive to question how and why things are done the way they are. When this happens, you begin to discover new ways of doing things and uncovering that some things are no longer in compliance with state law. This is what has occurred in the office over the last five years. She stated that she was very proud of all of the accomplishments and changes that the office has been able to make over the last five years since she has been Office Manager. With the staff turnover that has taken place, there has been discovery of some things that were not addressed prior. She stated that one example would be the written application for service. She stated that the reason the office went to this was to address a federal mandate that the utility needs to be confirming the customer's identity to comply with the identity theft prevention law. She went on to explain that discoveries like this are able to be addressed because of the additional position. Without that help, those issues cannot be corrected, as staff does not have additional time to take on new projects. In addition, the utility is able to provide our customers with other services like the State Debt Collection program, which goes after tenants for their past due balances instead of relying entirely on the tax roll for collecting delinquencies. Also, the office has been aggressive in implementing new rules that force customers to pay their bills. She stated that these changes take staff to oversee. She felt strongly that the office was taking a huge step backward by not filling the vacant position.

Utility Manager Adler stated that he was requesting part time help in the office and part time help for meter reading. The thought was that would be two people. The City of Fort Atkinson uses high school students to read meters, which is where he got the idea. They operate around the student's schedule for when they read, it could be nights or weekends, depending on when the staff is available.

Comm. Ristow questioned if the proposed sewer fixed rate would have an impact on the office.

Office Manager Statz stated that at this time, she is unsure if the billing software would be able to bill the proposed fixed rate. She was working with WPPI to see if it is possible. She stated that if the billing software cannot do the work automatically, staff would have to manually adjust bill codes each year on every residential account in order to make it work. She stated that with the current staff size, this would not be possible.

Office Manager Statz stated that she has thought of working with the high school's COOP program for part time office help.

Comm. Brandel and Comm. Oppermann both stated that they would support a COOP student working in the office.

Comm. Ristow questioned how that would work.

Office Manager Statz stated that she would need to reach out to the high school to get the details and see if a student was available and what hours they could work. She stated that when she was a COOP student working at City Hall, she would leave school in the afternoon and work from 1:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Office Manager Statz stated that a schedule like this would be beneficial to the utility office as the afternoons tend to be busier.

Comm. Ristow questioned if there are any long term scheduled absences in the office.

Office Manager Statz stated that so far there is nothing too long on the calendar, but it will occur as staff uses their PTO time.

Comm. Ristow stated that he would like to see staff come up with a staffing solution, either a COOP student or a worker from a temp agency, with costs associated and bring back the information to the commission for a decision.

Office Manager Statz stated that she will reach out to the high school to inquire about placing a COOP student.

Comm. Ristow, seconded by Comm. Tinberg moved to table action on temporary office help until further information about a temporary worker can be gathered. On call of the roll, motion carried unanimously. (Oppermann – Aye, Ristow – Aye, Adams – Aye, Tinberg – Aye, Michaelis – Aye, Brandel - Aye)

DISCUSSION AND ACTION ON TEMPORARY HIGH SCHOOL METER READER

Utility Manager Adler stated that staff has recently discovered that the utility cannot disconnect a customer for not paying an estimated bill. Because of this, we have had to pull other field staff to help read meters. He stated that this was not ideal and will increase the joint costs for the sewer utility, as wages for field staff are higher.

Utility Manager Adler suggested reaching out to a high school student that job shadowed the line crew. The high school student is looking into a career in line work. Utility Manager Adler suggested that being a meter reader on the candidate's resume may help in his future job search.

Comm. Oppermann and Comm. Brandel thought that was a good idea.

Comm. Brandel questioned how much money we would pay a high school student to read meters.

Office Manager Statz provided the wage matrix showing the pay scale for a Meter Reader. The starting wage is \$15.99.

Comm. Brandel stated that he didn't feel the matrix addressed a part time high school student.

Utility Manager Adler stated that he would reach out to the City of Fort Atkinson to see what they pay their part time meter reading staff.

Comm. Brandel, seconded by Comm. Oppermann moved to authorize the Utility Manager to hire a part time meter reader for up to 20 hours a week at an hourly rate not to exceed \$15.99 per hour. On call of the roll, motion carried unanimously. (Oppermann – Aye, Ristow – Aye, Adams – Aye, Tinberg – Aye, Michaelis – Aye, Brandel - Aye)

It was moved by Comm. Brandel, seconded by Comm. Michaelis to adjourn. Motion carried on a voice vote. The meeting was adjourned at 6:50 p.m.