

UTILITIES COMMISSION MEETING
February 22, 2021

A regular meeting of the City of Jackson Utilities Commission was held in the Council Chambers of City Hall at 4:00 p.m. on February 22, 2021 with the following persons present: Utilities Commission Chairman Kevin Siepker, Joe Marthaler, Nicole Hall, Jenna Schwartz and Matt Madden. Also attending in-person were City Administrator Matt Skaret, Street Superintendent Phil Markman, Water/Wastewater Superintendent Tony Oxborough, MRES Jackson Distribution Maintenance Foreman Jeremy Boogerd, Dave Schrader and Recording Secretary Dave Maschoff. Attending via Zoom was Utilities Commission member Mike Schwartz. (Utilities Commission member Sandy Phillips was absent.) (A quorum of the Utilities Commission was present.)

OPEN THE MEETING

Chairman Kevin Siepker called the regular monthly meeting of the Utilities Commission to order. Siepker noted a quorum of the Commission was present.

APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM THE NOVEMBER 30, 2021 UTILITIES COMMISSION MEETING

Siepker asked if there was any additions or corrections to the minutes for the November 30, 2020 Utilities Commission meeting. Hearing none, Siepker said the minutes would be approved as mailed.

WELCOME TO MATT MADDEN AND ALDERWOMAN NICOLE HALL TO THE UTILITIES COMMISSION

Siepker welcomed Matt Madden as a new member of the Utilities Commission. He also welcomed Alderwoman Nicole Hall as the City Council representative on the Utilities Commission.

206 SECOND STREET WATER SHUT OFF VALVE LEAK REPAIRS

City Administrator Matt Skaret said back in January, a leak was discovered in the alley behind Dave Schrader's business located at 206 Second Street.

Skaret explained that alley is a little bit unique in that the water shut-offs are in the alley itself unlike most areas of town where the water shut-offs are located in the yard.

Water/Wastewater Superintendent Tony Oxborough noted there are only two places in town where the water main is located in the alleys. He said one is in the alley behind Dave Schrader's business and the other is in the alley behind the former municipal liquor store location for one block. Oxborough said that's the only two areas in town where the water service shut-off is in the alley or in the roadway. He said otherwise the shut-offs are usually in the resident's or commercial property's yard.

Skaret said there was water leak in the alley behind 206 Second Street. He said the leak occurred right after a snowfall. Skaret said there was water bubbling to the surface. He noted it was cold outside at the time and was certainly a public safety concern with water freezing and turning to ice. Skaret said at the time, it wasn't known where the water was coming from. He said the City had Svoboda Excavating come and dig up the water line.

Oxborough said Svoboda Excavating repaired the water line. He said it turned out the broken line was a water service line to Schrader's building. Oxborough said it was a clean break of the line. He said there was no hole in the water service line but actually a snap where the water service shut off was located.

Skaret explained Svoboda's came to fix the water line and after the line was dug up it was determined that the water service line to Schrader's building was leaking.

Skaret said according to the City's policy, the property owner is responsible for the infrastructure from the house out to the main including the shut-off valve. He said Svoboda's made the repairs to the line. Skaret said he understands Schrader took some photographs of the repair work as well.

Skaret said, as per City policy, due to the urgency of the situation determined by Water Superintendent Tony Oxborough, the City ordered the leak to be fixed and the City ended up paying Svoboda's for making the repairs. He explained because of the City's ordinance, the utility customer is responsible for the service line and the City sent Schrader's a bill for the cost of repairing the line. He said the bill totaled \$1,080.47.

Skaret noted Dave Schrader was attending the Utilities Commission meeting to talk about the bill he received.

Schrader said he took some pictures when the water line was repaired. He explained the water shut-off valve was actually above the pavement in the alley. He said the blacktop had deteriorated enough so that the valve was actually above the pavement. Schrader said somebody with a snowplow or blade or something hit it hard enough to severely damage it and break the line to his building. Schrader asked if he's responsible for the alley itself and eventually the deterioration that caused the problem in the first place. He said he doesn't know why he has to pay for the repairs. Schrader asked who's supposed to be maintaining the alley?

Skaret said he talked with City Attorney Brad Anderson about the matter. He said it's kind of a unique circumstance. Skaret said the City Attorney's thought is that it's a shared responsibility with the City being responsible for maintaining the alley and then the customer, Schrader, being responsible for the infrastructure making the connection to the main.

Skaret said what the City Attorney recommended was a 50/50 split of the cost. He said in this case, instead of a \$1,080 bill, it would be a \$590 that Schrader would be responsible for.

Schrader said if that's the best we can do, that's the best we can do. He noted he wouldn't have had a problem with his water service line if the valve wouldn't have been above the ground. Schrader said what can he do about that? He said if his pipe had deteriorated in some way, there would be no question whatsoever and he would pay for it. But Schrader said it was the impact that caused the problem. He doesn't see where that's his fault. Schrader said his pipe broke as a result of whoever slammed into that valve. He said the problem with the valve is that it was above ground. Schrader said he just doesn't know why that's his liability and his responsibility to pay for.

Schrader said it seems to him whoever is suppose to maintain the alley should have recessed that valve enough so it wouldn't be struck. He noted the City drives snowplows through the alley. Schrader asked doesn't the City have to protect the valves against that or he is supposed to? Schrader said if he's supposed to, he could see where it would be his fault.

Oxborough said the reason for the compromise where the cost would be split 50/50 was with the idea that it's Schrader's infrastructure so it's up to Schrader to maintain it. Oxborough said it's tough because the valve is in the street so the City would have paid for 100 percent of the dig. He said in his opinion, if Schrader would have alerted the City about the valve sticking up, the City would have fixed the road. Oxborough said if the City would have known about the road being in bad condition beforehand, then the cost of the repair would have been 100 percent the City's responsibility. Oxborough said the City feels a 50/50 split of the cost would be a good way to mediate the situation.

Schrader said he didn't know he was supposed to report road infrastructure. He said he didn't even notice it otherwise he would have said something about it. Schrader said he doesn't use a blade or anything to clear snow behind his building.

Siepkner asked Oxborough where Schrader's water shut off value is located now. He asked how far down is the shut off value?

Oxborough said cold mix was used to make the repair in the alley because obviously it was in the middle of winter. He said the new shut-off is inside another shut-off value so it has an extra layer of protection on the outside of it now. Oxborough said the shut-off valve is pretty much in the exact same spot as it was before.

Siepkner asked if the same scenario can happen again?

Oxborough said no. He noted the valve shut-off has been lowered.

Madden asked Oxborough what if Schrader would have alerted the Water Department last summer to the fact that the shut-off valve was sticking above the ground in the alley, what would have been done to fix it, just lower it?

Oxborough said yes.

Madden asked what would that have entailed?

Oxborough said that would have basically entailed just cutting the valve down and lowering it at that point. He said the Water Department is supposed to charge the customer for doing that, but a lot of times the Water Department just goes out and does it to get it done with.

Madden asked if the asphalt has to be dug out and the pipe cut off.

Oxborough said there wasn't much for asphalt in the alley where the shut-off was located.

Marthaler asked if you have to dig down five feet to lower the shut-off valve.

Oxborough said you don't have to dig down five feet. He said, if anything, you take a chop saw and cut it off and put a new lid on it to lower it.

Hall asked if the shut off valve was protected now so it doesn't happen again?

Oxborough said the valve is now protected.

Oxborough explained everyone in town has a water shut-off where the City can come in and terminate someone's water supply. He said that shut-off is normally in someone's yard. Oxborough said if that shut-off was damaged in the yard it could be due to the actions of a contractor or some other circumstance. He said the idea of the shut-off getting run over or struck by a snowplow can only happen if the shut-off is out in the street.

Oxborough said Schrader's water shut-off is out in a City street. He asked if it's the City's responsibility to maintain the proper coverage of the shut-off so it doesn't get damaged? He said he doesn't think the shut-off raised itself up. Oxborough said there's a possibility frost could have changed that. He said it's Schrader's infrastructure out in the City's street. Oxborough said that's how the proposal of a 50/50 split of the cost between Schrader and the City came up.

Skaret said it's not known 100 percent who could have struck Schrader's water shut-off valve in the alley. He said it could have been the City's snowplow that ran over it, one of the City's trucks, a private snowplow or it could have been anyone driving over it.

Markman noted the Street Department's trucks don't go down that alley. He said the Street Department does not plow snow in the alleys with their trucks because they don't fit. Markman said the loader is used to clear the alleys. He said he doesn't think the loader driving over the shut-off valve would have damaged it because the tires on the loader are too big and spongy. Markman said it's hard to know if it was City equipment or a contractor's plow that may have struck the valve. He said without physically seeing it happen, nobody knows whose equipment hit it if that's what happened.

Jenna Schwartz asked about Schrader's being billed for the repair.

Skaret explained the City hired Svoboda Excavating to dig it up because it was unknown where the leaking water was coming from. He said with the safety aspect of it, it wasn't really feasible to listen and determine where the leak may be coming from. Skaret asked Oxborough if that was correct.

Oxborough said that was correct. He explained the ordinance reads that if the Water/Wastewater Superintendent deems it worthy, the City can basically dig up and fix a leak and assess who's it is after the fact.

Oxborough noted he was out of town when the water leak behind Schrader's business was discovered. He said at the time, the Water Department personnel figured it was a water main break and called Svoboda's to dig it up. Oxborough said his staff had everything arranged with Svoboda's by the time he returned back to Jackson and the thought was let's get it done. He noted it was the middle of winter so people can slip and fall if the water freezes. Oxborough explained that's why things ended up the way they did. He said if that same leak would have occurred in the summer, the Water Department would have tried to figure out what was actually leaking and then they would have figured out it was Schrader's water line. Oxborough said the Water Department would have alerted Schrader about the leaking line and informed him that he would have ten days to fix the leak or otherwise the Water Department would hire a contractor to come in and fix it and then send Schrader the bill.

Sieper asked Schrader if he lost water service due to the leak.

Schrader said he had water service the whole time.

Oxborough said there was no hole in the water line. He said where the connection was made to the shut-off was sheared off. Oxborough said it was lifted up by a plow or run over and was snapped.

Siepkner asked if there were any motions regarding what the Utilities Commission's recommendation should be.

Madden noted the water valve is located in the alley which is City controlled property and the valve was sticking up. He said whether a City snowplow or a private contractor drove over it, he's trying to put himself in Schrader's shoes. Madden commented if someone ran over the water shut-off in the alley behind his house and he would get a \$1,000 dollar bill for it, he would feel the same way as Schrader.

Madden said he just doesn't feel it's right that Schrader should have to pay. He noted Schrader said he didn't even know his water shut-off was located in the alley.

Schrader said he never noticed it.

Hall asked if it hadn't been winter, was the shut-off noticeable enough beforehand that it was sticking up in the alley and could be a hazard down the road? She also asked would Schrader have known that it was a hazard and should be covered? Hall said she agreed with Madden. She said she would also be upset.

Schrader said if a person was trained in what to look for, he would have probably noticed it.

Madden said he thinks the Water Department personnel did the right thing to fix the leak. He said he doesn't see how this should fall on Schrader's.

Hall agreed.

Siepkner asked if Schrader's water shut-off should be moved out of the alley.

Oxborough said there would be some expense to get the water line out of the roadway. He noted that John Olson's water shut-off is also located in the alley about five feet away from Schrader's and would be the same scenario. Oxborough said he doesn't think the curb stop was above the asphalt. He said he thinks it was below it but there wasn't a structure there anymore and then it got pushed down in his opinion.

Siepkner asked if something heavy went over it.

Oxborough said he thinks so, something large.

Markman said there are large trucks that use that alley. He said it's a public alley and you don't know who was the cause.

Skaret asked Oxborough what other parts of town does the City have the same situation similar to the alley behind Schrader's?

Oxborough said there's a similar situation in the alley that's between the Pizza Ranch and the former municipal liquor store from Bailey to White Streets in addition to the alley between White and Bailey behind Schrader's and Culligan. He said Culligan's water service line is also in the alley.

Jenna Schwartz asked if the water shut-offs in those other locations have been inspected since the incident occurred behind Schrader's.

Oxborough said he's aware of where the rest of the shut-offs are located and most of them are buried or up against a building. He noted John Olson's is low enough.

Skaret said what he would suggest if the Utilities Commission decides that Schrader is not responsible for the cost of repairing the shut-off, is that the ordinance be amended going forward with a stipulation that if there are water shut-offs in the alley, that it's the City's responsibility.

MADDEN/JENNA SCHWARTZ moved and it was unanimously carried for the Utilities Commission to recommend to the City Council to waive the repair bill of \$1,080.47 sent by the City to Dave Schrader and for the City to pay the cost to repair the broken water shut-off valve in the alley behind 206 Second Street.

MADDEN/JENNA SCHWARTZ moved and it was unanimously carried to recommend to the City Council to amend the City's ordinance going forward pertaining to water shut-offs located in City streets.

Skaret said the Utilities Commission can discuss the wording of the amended ordinance at their next meeting. He said an amended ordinance will be drafted and can be reviewed at the next Utilities Commission meeting.

Dave Schrader thanked the Utilities Commission.

Skaret said the Utilities Commission's recommendation will be forwarded to the City Council for their consideration. He said it will probably be on the City Council's consent agenda.

Siepkner thanked Schrader for attending the meeting.

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS

Water/Wastewater Department

Water/Wastewater Superintendent Tony Oxborough reported the frost in the ground is currently at 47 inches. He said the frost has froze one water service line to a house so far. Oxborough said that call came in around 3 o'clock before the Utilities Commission meeting.

Oxborough said Skaret did a good job on the radio broadcast (KKOJ) last week informing residents about what to look for and to test their water to avoid frozen lines. He explained the water leaves the Water Plant at 46 degrees. Oxborough said if residents test their water closest to their water meter or tap and the water is around 34 or 35 degrees, they need to start running their water at a quarter gallon per hour which amounts to a gallon every four hours. He noted running water at the right speed doesn't freeze.

Oxborough reported 210 new AMI residential water meters have been installed so far. He said 20 larger commercial meters, one-inch and three-inch, have been ordered.

Oxborough said the Water Department spent three weeks getting their shop all organized and cleaned up after the ground storage project and pump room addition were completed.

Oxborough said moving forward, it's going to be a busy year with the Water Department personnel installing new AMI water meters unless they get called away to other outdoor projects.

Siepkner thanked Oxborough for his report.

Street Department

Street Superintendent Phil Markman said the Street Department personnel came in at 4 a.m. on February 22nd to finish cleaning up the snow in the downtown area.

Markman said they have been doing a lot of maintenance on the Street Department trucks.

Markman said the City's new plow truck is in production at Crysteel in Lake Crystal, Minnesota. He said the production of the new truck is moving along faster than he thought it would.

Markman said there's an issue with a box culvert near Ashley Park on Riverside Drive. He said he's been working with a couple different contractors on that. Markman said a box culvert and end will need to be purchased. He noted the box culvert section weighs over 17,000 pounds so a crane will need to be used to set the culvert in place instead of an excavator. Markman said he contacted a company in Worthington and the quote came back at \$18,500. He said the City will supply all the clay, trucks and the rip-rap and any other labor needed. Markman said the company in Worthington will supply the equipment to get the culvert pieces set and connected.

Markman said he needs to get a hydrology study completed and obtain a permit through the Minnesota DNR because the repair is next to the river.

Markman said there will be an addition to the new box culvert structure and he is working with DNR Area Hydrologist Tom Kresko regarding that. He said they are working to get all the pieces in place since the water level in the river is down.

Markman explained the new box culvert is necessary because the bottom three feet of the old wing wall that was made of field stones and mortar has disintegrated and washed away with the high water. He said there's a hole on the edge of the mat on Riverside Drive that drops down 13 feet. Markman said it's right along the trail so it's a safety issue. He said instead of trying to build a 90 degree straight up and down wing wall and try to shore it up, it was suggested to extend it out and taper it. He said it will be a lot easier for maintenance. Markman said that's the plan they decided pursue.

Markman reported there are about half-a-dozen tree notices that people did not heed to so now that the weather has improved, the Street Department will trim the trees and bill the property owners accordingly. He said the property owners were sent two notices in order to give them plenty of time to trim their trees and they didn't get it done. Markman said the trees will be trimmed to the Street Department's specifications and the property owners will be sent a bill.

Sieper asked if the new ice-skating rink ever opened this season.

Markman said the Street Department is working on it. He explained there's been issues before the cold snap of the ice rink not freezing. Markman said there is now a pretty decent base but the snow removal in town has taken precedence over getting the ice rink going.

Skaret said the ice rink was technically open for the weekend. He said he doesn't know if anyone tried it out.

Markman said there was snow cover on the rink but the Street Department didn't have time sweep it off on February 22nd.

Markman noted another mile has been added to what the Street Department has to clear of snow. He said clearing the trail around the school has added extra time for the Street Department in clearing snow from sidewalks and other areas. Markman said there have been a lot of compliments from elderly citizens that walk on the trail. He said they have all thanked the Street Department for clearing the snow off the trail.

Markman said currently the Street Department clears the trails of snow from North Highway down Dewey Street to Springfield Parkway and then from Dewey all the way down to Park Street. He said the difficult part is there's no place to put the snow when the County plows Springfield Parkway. Markman noted Springfield Parkway is maintained by the County. He explained sometimes the Street Department has to pull the snow off the trail and load it and haul it away. Markman said starting March 1st, the Street Department will also clear snow off the trail from Dewey Street out to Hills Avenue.

Sieper thanked Markman for his report.

Electric Department

MRES Jackson Distribution Maintenance Foreman Jeremy Boogerd reported since December, the Electric Department upgraded 26 lights in the Industrial Park to LED lights. He said all the lights along Torgerson Lane and Industrial Parkway are now LED. Boogerd said parts out of those lights were used to convert some older street lights in the Hills, Louis and Sherry Lane areas to LED. He some street lights on Pond Drive were also converted to LED. Boogerd said the west end development along with Industrial Parkway and downtown Jackson street lights have been converted to LED's.

Boogerd reported he has sought quotes to replace the downtown decorative street light poles in order to have one or two poles in stock. He said currently there are none in stock. Boogerd explained the poles are occasionally struck by vehicles and he wants to have a couple poles readily available to replace damaged poles.

Boogerd said the Electric Department has been busy with some tree trimming and busy changing out old electric meters to the new AMI electric meters. He said as of now, 838 meters have been changed. Boogerd said there are about 500 meters on the shelf and later this week he plans to order the remaining 500 to 600 meters. Boogerd said once those meters arrive, which will be in about eight weeks, the Electric Department will have everything on hand to finish the entire town.

Boogerd reported the bids for materials have been received for the Downtown Underground Electric Conversion Project. He said the bids came in well and the City Council has approved the bids and those materials have been ordered.

Boogerd said this Wednesday, February 24th, construction bids will be opened for the Downtown Electric Conversion Project.

Siepkner thanked Boogerd for his report.

UPCOMING PROJECTS

Skaret presented the Utilities Commission with a list of projects. He explained the list is for informational purposes and for the Utilities Commission members to keep on their radar.

Skaret said one of the things the Finance Committee of the City Council has talked about is having an updated water and sewer rate study done. He said the last rate study was done in 2016-2017. Skaret said following that study, the City implemented a schedule in stepping the rates up gradually on water and sewer rates. He said that step schedule continued until 2020. Skaret said for 2021, the City increased the water rates by two percent but left the sewer rates the same. He said going forward, the City should have another rate study done. Skaret said the next water and sewer rate study is going to need to incorporate the projects the City is planning for in the next five years or so.

Skaret said another major project will be replacing the force main going out to the lagoon ponds from Lift Station Number 4. He explained most of that force main pipe was installed in 1959. Skaret said there's a lot of buildup on the inside of the pipe meaning there's a lot of head loss. He said the pipe has outlived its life expectancy by quite a bit. Skaret said just replacing the pipe could possibly be a \$1 million to \$1.5 million project.

Skaret said something will also probably have to be done with Lift Station Number 4 going forward. He noted Lift Station Number 4 is the lift station located at the intersection of County Road 51 and South Highway.

Skaret said the Downtown Underground Electric Conversion Project is a two year project. He said that project was included in the electric rate study that was conducted in 2019. Skaret said after the downtown electric project, the underground electric conversion will be done on the east side of Jackson, east of the river. He said the underground conversion on the east side of town can, for the most part, be done by the Electric Department.

Boogerd said work on Thomas Hill Road may take some outside contractor help.

Regarding the River Street Water Main Replacement in 2023, Skaret said the County is planning on redoing River Street. He said the County has the River Street project slated for reconstruction in 2024. Skaret said the County doesn't want to do another joint project with the City like was done with South Highway because of the complexities involved with the project. He said what the County is asking the City to do is to have the City's underground infrastructure replaced a year before the County repaves River Street. Skaret said there's a chance that maybe the infrastructure and road resurfacing work could be done as a joint City/County project. He said there still needs to be more discussion regarding that.

Siepkner asked where on River Street the project would be taking place.

Skaret said the River Street infrastructure and paving project would take place from Ashley Street to South Highway.

Skaret said there is also a need for some redundancy for the City's water system on the east side of Jackson. He said right now, there is basically only one water main crossing the river feeding the east side of town from the west. Skaret said it's strongly recommended, as was outlined in a Distribution System Report that SEH did for the City some years ago, that the City make it a priority to get some redundancy and provide a second water line underneath the river to feed the east side of Jackson.

Skaret said the Street Committee is going to be meeting in the near future to prioritize projects after the current projects are completed. He said this summer is going to be a big year finishing North Highway and then going on and reconstructing 11 blocks of South Street from Bailey to Dewey Street. Skaret said the alley and the parking lot behind the library will be paved. He said the City Hall and Water Plant parking lots are also going to be repaved. Skaret said that will take the City through 2022 by the time the second lift of asphalt is installed on everything.

Skaret said the City will then probably be potentially looking to replace the force main going out to the lagoon ponds in 2022.

Skaret said there's a lot coming up on the horizon within the next five years.

Sieper asked about the Water Plant Manganese Mitigation Study.

Oxborough explained back in 2002, the rocks and sand were replaced in the iron filter at the Water Plant. He said the Water Department had the rocks and sand tested to see what the life expectancy of it was. Oxborough said it was determined that it's overdue. He said what's being discussed now is doing a pilot study to basically redo the media or the materials inside the iron filter and also add greensand which basically can lower the amount of magnesium.

Oxborough said manganese is on the radar for the State of Minnesota because it's linked to stunting growth in children at high levels. He explained Southern Minnesota has deep well aquifers with higher levels of manganese.

Oxborough said it's actually a good time to replace the media in the Water Plant's iron filter and go after the manganese problem and also add more chemicals. He said at the end of this, the City will spend \$100,000 and have a better quality of water. Oxborough said after this process, Jackson would have better-quality water to drink. He said it would also cut down on the amount of scale and lime in the water system.

Oxborough said the City would work with SEH in the pilot study. He noted the pilot study would cost approximately \$50,000 and an estimated \$100,000 to replace all the media in the iron filter along with the addition of chemicals.

Marthaler said that would certainly help consumers with the scale problem.

Sieper noted appliances would not wear out so fast.

Skaret said it would benefit water heaters and water softeners.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business, JENNA SCHWARTZ/MADDEN moved and it was unanimously carried to adjourn the Utilities Commission meeting at 4:50 p.m.

David A. Maschoff, Recording Secretary

