

UTILITIES COMMISSION MEETING
July 27, 2020

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 July 27, 2020 with the following persons present: Utilities Commission members Vice-Chairman Kevin Siepker, Mike Schwartz, Matt Madden, Mike Thurmer and Jenna Schwartz. Also in attendance were MRES Jackson Distribution Maintenance Foreman Jeremy Boogerd, Street Superintendent Phil Markman, Water/Wastewater Superintendent Tony Oxborough, City Finance Officer Deb Mitchell and Recording Secretary Dave Maschoff. (Utilities Commission member Joe Marthaler and City Administrator Matt Skaret were absent.) (A quorum of the Utilities Commission was present.)

OPEN THE MEETING

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

ELECT NEW UTILITIES COMMISSION CHAIRPERSON

Siepker asked if there were any nominations for Utilities Commission Chairperson.

Thurmer asked if any of the Commission members wanted to serve as Chairperson.

Siepker said if no one else was interested, he would serve as Chairperson.

Madden asked two more times for nominations from the floor.

Hearing no more nominations, THURMER/JENNA SCHWARTZ moved and it was unanimously carried to elect Kevin Siepker as Utilities Commission Chairman by unanimous ballot.

Madden congratulated Siepker. Siepker received a round of applause from those attending the meeting.

Election of Vice-Chairperson

Siepkner asked if there were any volunteers among the Utilities Commission members to serve as Vice-Chairperson.

Thurmer asked Mike Schwartz if he would serve as Vice-Chairperson.

Schwartz said he would.

THURMER/MADDEN moved and it was unanimously carried to elect Mike Schwartz as Utilities Commission Vice-Chairperson by unanimous ballot.

Schwartz received a round of applause from those attending the meeting.

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS

Water Department

Water/Wastewater Superintendent Tony Oxborough reported the Water Department has 72 new AMI water meters installed. He said out of those 72 residences, only five had sump pumps. Oxborough said three out of those five sump pumps were in violation of not being properly installed.

Oxborough said the Water Department has been flushing dead-end hydrants. He said they have also been overflowing the east water tower to try and clear basically the top half of the tank.

Oxborough said things are basically wrapped up with the project at the Water Plant. He noted there are some issues with the controls regarding removing some things from the computer system. Oxborough said things have been cleaned up around the Water Plant and CenturyLink buried a wire that was above ground.

Oxborough said Minnesota Rural Water Association, which is a partnership between the State and the City, is going to study the City's lagoon ponds to determine how much sediment is in the ponds. He said it's a free service for members of the Association. Oxborough explained those doing the study will take a boat and measure the depth of the sediment compared to what the water level in the lagoons should be.

Oxborough reported the City just received a new permit for discharging from the lagoons from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency.

Otherwise, Oxborough said the Water Department has been working on normal maintenance items.

Siepkner asked if the new AMI water meters that have been installed are reporting readings.

Oxborough said the new AMI water meters are working and reporting readings. He said there's been good feedback from those that have the new meters. Oxborough said there have been people requesting to have the new AMI water meters installed in their houses.

Madden asked if customers still need to read the new AMI water meters.

Oxborough said the radios are installed to receive the readings, but they need to reach a certain level of reading information to make sure the readings are being transferred flawlessly before he feels comfortable enough in telling customers that they don't need to read their water meters anymore.

Madden asked Oxborough if he was pleased with how the meters are operating.

Oxborough said he's absolutely pleased with the meters. He pointed out an instance where they installed a new AMI water meter and within 24 hours it indicated the customer had a leak and was constantly using 10 gallons of water per hour every hour. Oxborough said it was super nice to get that information right away that the customer had a water leak.

Siepkner asked if the water leaks at the Jackson Livestock Exchange had been repaired.

Oxborough said the leaks at the sale barn have been repaired.

Siepkner thanked Oxborough for his update.

Electric Department

MRES Jackson Distribution Maintenance Foreman Jeremy Boogerd reported the Electric Department completed all the cutovers behind the Library and the former China restaurant as part of the underground conversion project. He said the overhead wires will probably be removed yet this week.

Boogerd said the Electric Department also completed the wreck-out along South Highway so all the electric utility poles are now removed and the holes filled in.

Boogerd said the Electric Department installed about 60 more new AMI Electric meters in July which was a little bit slower month for them. He noted they just received a shipment of AMI commercial meters. Boogerd said the replacement of commercial meters can begin in the downtown area.

Boogerd reported the Electric Department replaced four street light bulbs downtown. After receiving a report from the Sheriff's Department about some other downtown lights that weren't working, Boogerd said the Electric Department went through those street lights with a fine-toothed comb and have upgraded ten of them to LED's along with new wiring. He said there's still a few street lights that they are still working on in the downtown area.

Boogerd reported the Electric Department did oil testing on both substation transformers and LTC's. He said he received the testing information the other day. Boogerd said they also did the infrared scan of the City's large commercial transformers switchgear on Industrial Parkway and also downtown. Boogerd explained the Electric Department has received the information regarding the infrared scan and will compile a punch list of things that need to be repaired or to be modified.

Boogerd said he spoke with the engineer on July 27th and everything has been approved for the downtown electric conversion project, not to build it, but to engineer it. He said it sounds like if everything goes well, the engineer will be able to start coming over to Jackson in August to start designing the project, otherwise he'll begin designing it in September.

Siepkner asked Boogerd if the Electric Department had been notified of the bulb burned out on the traffic signal at the intersection of Highway 71 and Sherman Street. Siepkner said he knows at least the green light on the traffic signal that's above the sidewalk is burned-out as you face south.

Boogerd said he would have the Electric Department look at the traffic light on Tuesday, July 28th.

Boogerd added the Electric Department has installed approximately 115 new AMI Electric residential meters so far.

Siepkner thanked Boogerd for the update.

Street Department

Street Superintendent Phil Markman reported the Street Department has been having a few holes showing up in the streets around Jackson due to failing storm sewer infrastructure. He said one hole showed up at the bottom of Alice Street. Markman said he contacted the State because it was unknown if the storm sewer belonged to the City or the State. He explained the State found paperwork that showed the City had obtained a permit for the storm sewer back in 1982 which meant it obviously belongs to the City.

Markman said replacing the storm sewer at the bottom of Alice Street is too big a project for the Street Department to do. He said he's been in contact with Svoboda Excavating to get a quote to replace the storm sewer. Markman explained the current storm sewer is an old galvanized pipe. He said he would like to replace the entire storm sewer all the way across Alice Street with High-Q pipe or concrete in order to fix it correctly instead of putting a band-aid on it and having another hole show up elsewhere later on. Markman pointed out the bottom of the pipe has also rusted away at the bottom of the manhole.

Markman noted the same situation exists on the trail on the east side of the river east of City Hall. Markman said the Street Department repaired a hole that showed up there, but the pipe is rusted. He said he would like to piggyback those two projects to Svoboda's. Markman said it would take Svoboda's a day to make the repairs whereas it would take the Street Department a week to do the work. He pointed out Svoboda's has the bigger equipment and that's what they do for a living. Markman said he's spoken to City Administrator Matt Skaret about it. He said he's waiting on getting more finite details on making the repairs. Markman said they will also look at possibly replacing the manhole structures or intake structures at the same time if they are found to be failing. Markman said if the pipe is dug up, it would just make sense to replace everything.

Markman reported the Street Department is working with Engineer Greg Mitchell of Bolton and Menk and contractor Duininck Brothers. He explained that one division of Duininck's will be the contractor on the North Highway project. Markman said another division of Duininck's, hired by the hospital, will be redoing the hospital's parking lot to alleviate drainage problems in the lot between the hospital and The Pines.

Markman said they are working together with both entities of Duininck's to see if the work on the hospital's parking lot can be done at the same time as the work on North Highway. Markman said it was an addition to the City's project to add storm sewer on North Highway to take the water away that comes off of the parking lot between the Jackson Pines and the hospital.

Markman said it appears the North Highway project will begin in mid-August. He said plans are to complete the portion of the project from Sayles Drive to Dewey Street so it's done for those land-locked residents who live along North Highway and that access to the hospital, Good Samaritan Center and the Pines can be opened up as soon as possible.

Markman said the Street Department has been working on doing some other patching work around town. He said rain hasn't been an issue and the river has calmed down. Markman noted the river is still too high to do the river crossing for the sanitary sewer extension project.

Markman reported the resident at 712 South Highway is now hooked up to the City's sewer system and they no longer have raw sewage running out onto the ground. He said the sewer system is compliant and in place. Markman said the resident is now being assessed or charged for sewer service which they didn't have in the past because they had a septic system.

Markman said the work on South Highway is pretty much wrapped up. He said there's a little bit of a punch list to be completed on that project. Markman said the paving on South Highway is completed. He said the Street Department has pulled the barriers that keep out mud and debris during construction out of the in-takes along South Highway so the water can flow.

Mike Schwartz asked about what can be done about the metal plate on the sidewalk on the south side of the Exit Realty Building in Jackson. He said the metal is starting to get thin in the middle. Schwartz asked if a new metal plate needs to be installed.

Markman said that's up to the owner of the building on what they want to do. He explained that was the old freight elevator for the former Ben Franklin store. Markman said it's up to the owner to decide if they want to remove the elevator, or block it up and pour cement to fill-in the gap. He said someone with a portable welder could also stabilize the metal if it's real loose. Markman said his recommendation would be to tear out the elevator, fill-in the hole and put concrete there. He said that would probably be the safest and most inexpensive because then it's done. Otherwise, Markman said it will be a band-aid and the building's owner will just keep having problems. Markman said what to do with it is up to the building owner's discretion.

Siepkner thanked Markman for his report.

STREET LIGHT DECOMMISSIONING

Maschoff said there was a request from Jacob Henning who lives at 119 Center Street that the street lights be taken down. He said the Electric Department was on Center Street replacing burnt out street light bulbs. Henning approached the Electric Department employee and told him that the residents don't like the street lights and they will be even brighter with LED's. Maschoff said that's all the information he has.

Boogerd said he didn't have a chance to take a look at the issue on Center Street. He said he didn't get the email information about this until 2:30 or 3 p.m. today (July 27th).

Boogerd said the Electric Department had a work order to repair a burnt-out street light. He said while the repair was being made, Henning approached the Electric Department employee and said we don't want these lights up here and wanted him to take the light down. Boogerd said the Electric Department employee said he didn't have the authority to take the light down and Henning would need to go through the proper channels with his request.

Boogerd said approving a request to take down a street light can set a slippery precedent. He said if such a request was granted, there could be similar requests made elsewhere in town to take street lights down. Boogerd said then if someone new moves into a house, they could request that the street light be re-installed.

Boogerd said there may be a Minnesota Public Utilities requirement regarding lighting residential areas.

Boogerd said the new LED's installed nowadays don't shine out but shine straight down. He said he doesn't know if a new LED was installed on Center Street or if just an LED bulb was put in. Boogerd said he will visit with the Electric Department about what was done. He said if anything, the street light could be changed to a straight LED down fixture and go from there.

Boogerd said he would recommend not removing the street light because it would set a bad precedent. He said the decision would be up to the Utilities Commission.

City Finance Officer Deb Mitchell noted there have been similar requests in the past and they have been turned down.

Madden asked if Henning is the only person who has made the request to take the street light down.

Maschoff said Henning is the only email he's seen regarding a request to remove the street light. He said he hasn't heard or seen anything from anyone else.

Madden noted the street lights are a public safety issue. He said maybe the City could work with Henning as far as adjusting the light.

Boogerd said he could contact Henning and make an adjustment to the street light if they need to. He said he will find out what actually had to be repaired on the street light. Boogerd said he will follow-up with Henning about his request and also follow-up with City Administrator Skaret on what was done.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business, MADDEN/JENNA SCHWARTZ moved and it was unanimously carried to adjourn the Utilities Commission at 4:30 p.m.

David A. Maschoff, Recording Secretary

