

UTILITIES COMMISSION MINUTES
November 25, 2019

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 November 25, 2019 with the following persons present: Utilities Commission Chairperson Gayl Berkner, Vice-Chairperson Kevin Siepker, Matt Madden, Joe Marthaler and Jenna Schwartz. Also in attendance were City Administrator Matt Skaret, MRES Jackson Distribution Maintenance Foreman Jeremy Boogerd, Water/Wastewater Superintendent Tony Oxborough, Street Superintendent Phil Markman, City Finance Officer Deb Mitchell and Recording Secretary Dave Maschoff. (Utilities Commission members Mike Thurmer and Mike Schwartz were absent.) (A quorum of the Utilities Commission was present.)

CALL THE MEETING TO ORDER

Chairperson Gayl Berkner called the Utilities Commission meeting to order and noted there was a quorum present.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FROM THE OCTOBER 28, 2019 MEETING

Consideration was given to the minutes from the October 28, 2019 Utilities Commission meeting. Hearing no additions or corrections, Chairperson Berkner declared the minutes approved as mailed.

Berkner thanked Siepker for chairing the October 28th meeting in her absence.

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS

Street Department

Street Superintendent Phil Markman reported the Street Department is wrapping up a few things before the snow arrives. He noted they are getting ready to plow snow sometime late Tuesday, November 26th or early Wednesday, November 27th.

Skaret said the City has already declared a Snow Emergency due to the forecasted snow.

With the early declaration of a Snow Emergency, Siepker said people will know to get their vehicles off the street.

Markman noted the National Weather Service has now put the Jackson area in a Winter Storm Warning instead of a Winter Storm Watch. He said the Street Department is ready for it.

Markman reported a sewer line was struck in front of Jay and Rhonda Moore's house and has been repaired.

Skaret noted the sewer line was struck due to the work being done for the underground electric conversion project.

Markman said the area was mis-marked. He said he was gone from work that day and the sewer line wasn't marked properly. Markman said the contractor didn't know the sewer line was there and it was struck. He said the City crews got the Moore's back on the line.

Electric Department

MRES Jackson Distribution Maintenance Foreman Jeremy Boogerd reported that Castrejon finished up their work with the underground electric conversion project. He said all the ducts and wires have been pulled and transformers have been set. Boogered said that completes the five years' worth of the underground electric conversion project. Boogerd noted they still have 11 transformers to terminate and probably eight blocks of residents to switch over to the new underground system. He said they will start the switchover after the Thanksgiving break.

Boogerd said the Electric Department has all the old street banners taken down and all the new brackets put up so they can install the Christmas decoration snowflakes. He said they will probably install the snowflakes downtown on November 26th and then the holiday banner decorations will be installed over Highway 71.

Boogerd explained he compiled a breakdown regarding the five year underground electric conversion project. He said as far as the five-year project, there was 33,651 feet of 4/0 mainline installed, 88,343 feet of 1/0 Main Line, 46,499 feet of Secondary Tri-plex and set seven Pad-Mount Switches. Boogerd also they also installed six three-phase transformers, 130 single-phase transformers, 22 primary junction boxes, 173 secondary junction pedestals and 176 secondary riser poles. Boogerd said that's what was accomplished in five years and they are just about done. He said he would hope to have the remaining residents switched over to the underground electric system by Christmas if the weather cooperates.

Skaret noted this year's underground electric conversion project was very difficult. He explained when the City does these projects, they're based on estimates based on quantities when the bids are submitted. Skaret said because of all the extra time Castrejon spent in Jackson, the project ended up going over what was estimated.

Boogerd said because of all the rock, the unit price was doubled for the boring so the price went from \$7 a foot to \$14 a foot. He said the other alternative was to pay to backhoe and pay the rock-shale price which is over \$20 a foot. Boogerd said that would have been a third higher compared to just doubling the boring price. He explained it's all based on whatever the contractor has as a unit for their rock price. Boogerd said some contractors will charge 50 cents a foot for pulling wire but they will have \$80 per foot as their rock price. Boogerd said some contractors will charge \$30 a foot as their rock price and will charge \$15 a foot for pulling wire. He said it's all in how they make the math work.

Boogerd explained it took twice as long to bore everything. He said Castrejon went through four or five heads and a whole set of pipes. Boogerd noted pipes are \$500 a-piece and there's 140 feet of pipe. He said it's basically \$20,000 for new pipe.

Boogerd said it's got a little bit of sticker shock to it, but if you break it all down and you look at the whole thing, the City still got a really good price for all the work that was done.

Oxborough noted during the next ice storm, it will be worth it.

In other activity, Boogerd said equipment is being put in the shed for the winter. He said the Electric Department will probably begin trimming trees in the next week.

Water Department

Water/Wastewater Superintendent Tony Oxborough reported the new ground storage water tank is being used. He said there are new controls at the water plant which allows him to operate the plant from his cell phone. Oxborough said with the new controls, he has tripled the amount of alarms and is still going back and forth to the Water Plant to program the new system. Regarding the new controls, he said so far so good.

Oxborough said the City is on the second discharge for the ponds and will probably have that wrapped up before Thanksgiving.

Oxborough said he and City Administrator Matt Skaret attended a meeting in Worthington with the MPCA regarding new regulations and new limits. He noted the amount of phosphorous being discharged into the Des Moines River is one of the items that has been highlighted by the MPCA.

Oxborough reported the equipment has arrived for the new water and electric meters. He said the equipment won't be installed until after the first of the year.

Oxborough said the work on Lift Station No. 4 at the corner South Highway and County Road 51 has been completed. He noted it's the last Lift Station before the ponds. Boogerd said the contractor will come back next spring and seed around the Lift Station. He said any settling of the soil will be taken care of by the Water Department.

Chairperson Gayl Berkner – Letter to the Editor

Berkner noted Carol Achterkirch did a nice thing by writing a letter to the editor in the Jackson County Pilot commending the County Highway Department and the City Street Department, especially Neal Johnson and Phil Markman, for all of the care and concern shown to the residents of South Highway in Jackson during the road and utility reconstruction project.

Berkner asked if everyone had seen the letter. She noted it was a positive for the City of Jackson.

Chairperson Gayl Berkner – South Highway Project

Berkner said she drove on South Highway today before the Utilities Commission meeting. She asked Markman if the condition of South Highway would be that way all winter.

Markman said it would be. He noted there are a couple of manholes that are high. Markman said it's the County's road. He said supposedly the contractor is coming on November 26th to take care of the high spots around the manholes.

AMI METERING CUSTOMER PORTAL OPTION

Skaret said the AMI equipment is starting to arrive. He said one thing that was not in the initial quote from Core and Main was the customer portal. Skaret said the customer portal is where the customer can log-in on their own and look up their own water and electric usage, see the colorful graphs, see their peak times of usage along with other information. He said the customer portal was not included in the proposal.

Skaret said he received a quote from Core and Main for a customer portal. He explained if the City wanted to have that as an available feature for their customers, the price to install it for the first year would be \$29,125. Skaret pointed out there is also an annual user fee after that for years two, three, four and five starting at \$8,368.75 and going up each year to \$9,145 on year five.

Skaret said the question is does the City want to offer this feature and have it available to their customers. He pointed out the City will have the customer usage information available at City Hall if anyone wants to stop by and look at it or call and have the office staff pull the information up. Without the Customer Portal, Skaret said the information wouldn't be available on the customer's home computer or device.

Skaret said he wanted to bring this feature before the Utilities Commission to see whether it's something they thought the City should have or pass on it.

Berkner asked what the City staff's recommendation was.

Siepkner asked how many meters are in the City.

Boogerd said there's roughly 1,700 electric meters and about 1,500 or 1,600 water meters.

Siepkner noted there's not even 2,000 meters each for electric and water.

Boogerd said they will not reach 2,000 meters for each when they are done installing the AMI system.

Siepkner noted it will cost the City \$8,000 to \$9,000 yearly.

Berkner pointed out the customer information will be available at City Hall.

Boogerd said he and Oxborough have spoke with Skaret about getting tablets to have in the City's Electric and Water Department trucks so they will be able to access all the customer's information. He said that way they would have the information available out in the field if a customer came up to them and inquired about their electric or water usage.

Berkner and Siepkner agreed that would be good.

Madden noted the customer portal can always be added later. He said it's not like it's now or never.

Boogerd said he definitely wouldn't add a customer portal until all the meters are installed.

Madden said maybe in a couple of years, a survey could be sent out to see if customers are interested in having the customer portal feature. He said it wouldn't make much sense to spend \$30,000 on it plus \$10,000 a year if nobody even uses it.

Boogerd said there may be some businesses that may be interested in the information available on a customer portal, but as far as residential, he can't see an exorbitant amount of people using it, not enough to justify spending \$30,000 and an \$8,000 annual fee to do it.

Berkner asked Skaret if the Utilities Commission needed to take a vote on the AMI Metering Customer Portal Option.

Skaret said the Utilities Commission doesn't have to take a vote on the matter. He suggested the Utilities Commission could table it and revisit the matter in a couple of years.

SIEPKNER/MADDEN moved and it was unanimously carried to table action on the AMI Metering Customer Portal Option and revisit the issue in a couple of years.

Other:

MRES Jackson Distribution Maintenance Foreman Jeremy Boogerd

Boogerd said at the beginning of the summer, the Electric Department installed new service for Rowe Industries. He explained Rowe Industries doesn't use a lot of electricity during the year until September and October. Boogerd said Rowe Industries uses a lot of electricity during those two months.

Boogerd said prior to September, Rowe Industries was not on the demand charge. Boogerd said when he read their meter he didn't know if Rowe Industries should be put on demand or not for September and October. He said a whole year's worth of information will be gathered and then it will be decided if Rowe Industries will need to be on demand for just two months or not at all. Boogerd said he figured out the bill for Rowe Industries for October and if they had been on demand, they would have saved about \$3,000. He noted they used just over 100,000 kilowatts.

Boogerd said he wanted to provide the information to the Utilities Commission as food for thought. He said a full year of power usage data will be gathered to make sure September and October are the peak months for Rowe Industries before it's brought forth again for discussion.

Berkner said the issue can be revisited when more information is available.

City Administrator Matt Skaret

Skaret said he and Finance Officer Deb Mitchell sat in on a webinar hosted by Bright Energy Solutions through Missouri River Energy Services. He said Bright Energy Solutions is the energy rebate program for Energy Star. Skaret said there are some changes coming up for 2020. He explained they are doing away with basically all the HVAC rebates because of the mandates that all of the new equipment that's available out there is already Energy Star rated. Because the Energy Star rating has become so common, Skaret said there's not really another choice that people have in choosing equipment.

Skaret said another key thing is Bright Energy Solutions will be doing rebates for certain electric car chargers. He said Missouri River Energy Solutions is really expecting an increase in electric vehicles in this part of the country in the next few years. Skaret explained we're lagging behind the rest of the nation and Bright Energy Solutions thinks that will change.

Next Meeting Date

Skaret asked the Utilities Commission members if meeting on Monday, December 30th for their regular monthly meeting will work for everyone.

It was the consensus of the Utilities Commission members present to hold their next regular monthly meeting on Monday, December 30th.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business, the Utilities Commission meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

David A. Maschoff, Recording Secretary

