

**UTILITIES COMMISSION MEETING
November 30, 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 November 30, 2020 with the following persons present: Utilities Commission Chairman Kevin Siepker, Joe Marthaler, Sandy Phillips and Matt Madden. Also attending in-person were City Administrator Matt Skaret, Street Superintendent Phil Markman, Water/Wastewater Superintendent Tony Oxborough, City Finance Officer Deb Mitchell and Recording Secretary Dave Maschoff. Attending via Zoom were Utilities Commission member Mike Schwartz and MRES Jackson Distribution Maintenance Foreman Jeremy Boogerd. (Utilities Commission members Mike Thurmer and Jenna Schwartz were 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 SEPTEMBER 28, 2020 UTILITIES COMMISSION MEETING

Siepker asked if there were any additions or corrections to the minutes for the September 28, 2020 Utilities Commission meeting. Hearing none, Siepker said the minutes would be approved as mailed.

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS

Electric Department

MRES Jackson Distribution Maintenance Foreman Jeremy Boogerd said since the last Utilities Commission meeting, the Electric Department has been able to finish a lot of their fall underground, street lighting and electric wire removal jobs.

Boogerd said prior to Thanksgiving, he was able meet with the engineers from DGR for a few days. He said the downtown area, for the most part, is designed and ready to go out for bid for the underground electric conversion project. He said DGR Engineer Isaac Rinkenberger put the final touches on the major materials bids and they should be sent out in the next few weeks. Boogerd noted the construction bids probably won't go out until January and then be opened sometime in February.

Otherwise, Boogerd said the Electric Department has been staying busy with maintenance duties during some of the cold days like getting trucks ready and winterized and things like that. He said there hasn't been a tremendous amount of big projects but the Electric Department has been busy cleaning up a lot of small things.

Siepkner asked how the installation of the new AMI electric meters was progressing.

Boogerd said the Electric Department has fully deployed their first shipment of electric meters. He reported there are a total of 550 electric meters that have been installed. Boogerd said they are waiting for their next shipment of meters. He explained another 30 or 40 meters should be arriving soon. Boogerd said those meters have to be approved and then the rest of the shipment of about 800 meters will be sent.

Boogerd said those 800 meters will then be deployed over the winter. He said two-thirds of the new electric meters should be installed by spring which would amount to about 1,300 to 1,400 meters. Boogerd said things have been going pretty well. He noted one new meter operated like it was supposed to. Boogerd explained there was a loose connection and it overheated and the meter opened up before it burned all the wire down. He said the Electric Department went back the following day and repaired the wire and put the meter back in. Boogerd said the system actually did what it was suppose to.

Siepkner asked if the meter saved some trouble.

Boogerd said it did. He said it could otherwise have been a bigger power outage or more expensive one.

Marthaler asked if that occurred on a residential meter or large power meter. Boogerd said it was on a residential 2-S meter. He said the large power meters do not have the capability to open up, but will trip an alarm. Boogerd said just the residential 2-S meters have the capability to open up.

Siepkker thanked Boogerd for his report.

Water Department

Water/Wastewater Superintendent Tony Oxborough reported the west water tower was taken off-line, drained and cleaned a week ago. He said a cleaning crew power-washed the inside of the tower and cleaned all of the iron that was on the belly and floor of the water tower. Oxborough said the cleaning crews also did touch ups where there was exposed metal in the inside of the tower. He said the cleaning crew said the inside of the tower was in pretty good shape. Oxborough said he has been having the water tower cleaned every five years and they may be able to extend that time period further as the paint jobs in the inside of the tower have been holding up, at least for the west water tower.

Oxborough said the Water Department had the opportunity to try out some new controls at the Water Treatment Plant. He explained they basically had a pump just run all the time holding pressure on the west side of town. Oxborough said there were no complaint received about odd water pressures from the west side of town. He said the system worked as it was supposed to.

Oxborough reported more than half of the hydrants on the east side of Jackson have been flushed. He said there are two hydrants to be repaired and some more hydrant flushing to be done.

Oxborough said the Water Department is not installing new water meters in homes right now due to the Covid pandemic. He noted 150 new water meters have been installed. Oxborough said the Water Department may work on installing new meters in industrial and commercial buildings where they can be segregated from other people. He said as for now, the Water Department is not installing new meters in residential homes.

Oxborough noted a check-valve was installed during the North Highway reconstruction project. He said the hospital is served by high pressure water service. Oxborough said if the City has a water main break on Sherry Lane, Byron or Sayles Drive, basically the west water tower will take over and feed water to the hospital because of the check-valve.

Oxborough reported SEH, who did the engineering for the new water storage tank and pump room at the Water Plant, took core samples of the media, basically the rock and sand that's in the tank for the Water Plant's iron filter. He said SEH is sending the samples to a lab free of charge to basically understand how rough the material is. Oxborough explained that's how the City cleans their water with iron manganese removal. He said SEH will let the Water Department know what kind of condition the media is in. Oxborough said he would inform the Utilities Commission of the test results when they are completed.

Otherwise, Oxborough said the Water Department has been busy with various projects.

Skaret mentioned the new water storage tank and the benefit it provided during the night of the fire at Burger King on November 13th. He noted the new water storage tank was a very good investment on the part of the Utilities Commission and the City Council. Skaret said it was an expensive project and a difficult project to say the least, but it paid for itself on the night of the Burger King fire.

Oxborough explained the new water storage tank provided added extra storage so the City didn't have to tell residents to shut their water off. He noted the fire took place late in the night when no one else was using water.

Oxborough pointed out if the same fire would have occurred in the middle of the summer when everyone was using water, the race track was using water and businesses were using a lot of water, that's when the new storage tank really would have paid for itself. He said just knowing the fact that the new storage tank took care of the Burger King fire the way it did, it shows that it works well. Oxborough said over 200,000 gallons of water was used by firefighters in two hours. He said the new water storage tank was definitely a good investment.

Street Superintendent Phil Markman, who is also a member of the Jackson Fire Department, said when the Fire Department arrived on the scene, they knew they needed additional help. He said the Fire Department called for Fairmont and Spirit Lake Fire Department's aerial trucks. Markman noted it takes a lot of water to supply an aerial truck.

Markman said the fire hydrant located on Burger King's property was used to supply water to Spirit Lake's aerial truck. He said two drop tanks were used on the southeast side of Burger King to supply water to the Fairmont Fire Department's aerial truck.

Markman said two tankers from the Jackson Fire Department along with tankers from the Alpha, Sherburn and Lakefield Fire Departments were used. He said the five tankers being used were all 2,000-gallon tankers, so basically there was 10,000 gallons of water coming into the site.

Markman said the fire hydrant across from Burger King located at the southeast corner of the Econolodge was initially used to fill Jackson's two tankers. Markman noted as more water was being used, there was less pressure available on the hydrants at Econo Lodge and on Belmont Lane. He said the fire hydrant on Industrial Park was then also used to fill tankers. Markman said it's estimated 250,000 to 300,000 gallons of water was used that night.

Oxborough said normally there's 60 pounds of pressure at the fire hydrant at Burger King. He noted there's one water main that feeds everything north of the highway. Oxborough said it's not a loop system. He said basically multiple fire trucks were pulling off of one water main which was the 10-inch main that goes under the highway. Oxborough said the pressure got a little bit better when the tankers dispersed on where they were filling up. He said the tankers getting water from the hydrant near Fulda Area Credit Union were basically pulling water off the east water tower compared to the dedicated line that was feeding the fire hydrant at Burger King and basically taking ground storage water and pumping it up the hill.

Oxborough said one of the water pumps at the Water Plant pumps around 500 gallons a minute. He said two pumps running will maybe pump around 750 gallons to 800 gallons a minute. Oxborough said the night of the fire, two pumps peaked out at pumping 1,200 gallons a minute. He said the average was about 1,000 gallons per minute because the tankers were sucking on the hydrants so it was easier for the pumps to basically pump up the hill. Oxborough said it showed the new system can pump that much more water directly to where it needs to go at the same time.

Oxborough explained the negative water pressure at the fire hydrant was due to an alarm system at the Water Plant that's set to kick-in and shut everything off in case there's a water main break. He said when the second pump at the Water Plant was turned on, the water pressure went above the alarm setting and shut everything down. Oxborough said the alarm was immediately reset and the water pressure returned. He said the Water Department has spoken to the Fire Department and in the future the Water Department personnel will definitely come in to turn on the second pump if it's needed. Oxborough noted the pumps can also be operated remotely by phone.

Oxborough said it was a good experience and the Water Department personnel learned a lot.

Markman said all things considered, everything went very well. He said it was a good test of the system. Markman said it was an unfortunate outcome for Burger King. He said the fire had a pretty good head start before anyone noticed it.

Street Department

Street Superintendent Phil Markman reported he just returned to work on November 30th. He said he had tested positive for Covid-19 and had been quarantined.

Markman said with the nice weather, the Street Department has been working on the semi-annual flushing. He said there was one weather event that occurred on Veterans Day, November 11th. Markman said everything went really well on that snow event. He said a lot of maintenance had been done to the snowblower and that worked well.

Markman said maintenance has been completed and all of the Street Department's trucks are ready to go.

Markman said the contractor is basically done for the year on the North Highway project. He said the Street Department personnel did some work with the contractors on that project.

Markman said he was hoping to have the crushing crew come in this fall. He said the crushing crew was on another job and there was some maintenance they needed to do. Markman said the crusher is anticipated to come to Jackson before the road restrictions take effect in the spring.

Sieper asked who takes care of the skating rink.

Markman said the Street Department takes care of that. He noted the Electric Department erected the lights for the new ice-skating rink. Markman said the Street Department will start to get the ground saturated so when it freezes hard, they can flood the rink with water. He said the warming house has been set in place.

Skaret pointed out with the Governor's restrictions due to the Coronavirus, the warming house cannot be open at all right now. He said the ice-skating rink can be open but not the warming house.

Skaret said a few applications have been submitted from those interested in serving as ice skating rink attendants.

Otherwise, Markman said the Street Department has been working on small maintenance projects and cleaning things up.

Sieper thanked Markman for his report.

AMEND WATER SERVICE ORDINANCE TO CLARIFY END OF RESPONSIBILITY

Skaret said this agenda item was something that Water/Wastewater Superintendent Tony Oxborough brought to his attention.

Skaret explained there have been a couple of instances in the past where there's been some confusion on where exactly the City's responsibility ends and what the customer's responsibility is pertaining to the curb stops and water service lines and how far does the City's responsibility go.

Skaret said he handed out a copy of the current City ordinance regarding that to the Utilities Commission members.

Skaret referred to Ordinance Number 53.02. He read *The property owner is responsible for maintaining in good repair curb stops and service lines or pipes, including the corporation, from the water main to the point of connection to and into the owner's building.*

Skaret said one thing the City wanted to clarify is to replace the word "building" with the words "water meter". Skaret asked Oxborough if that was correct.

Oxborough said "just past the water meter". He explained what the Water Department is running into. Oxborough said, for example, when someone comes to Jackson and builds a house, the homeowner pays for the water meter which is \$125. He said the City hooks the homeowner up to water and after that the water meter becomes the City's water meter. Oxborough said then if the water meter ever breaks or stops working, the City will replace it. He said if it's tampered with or broken, then the customer will pay for it because it's a City water meter.

Oxborough explained what happens when the Water Department personnel go into a house to replace a water meter and nothing is leaking and they start touching valves and then they start leaking. He said the proposed changes in the ordinance covers the City saying that there needs to be working infrastructure when the Water Department comes into your house.

Oxborough said he was just asking that it basically reads that there be working infrastructure to the meter or just past the water meter. He suggested the ordinance state the Water Department will come in and replace a water meter and fix it, but the valve would be the responsibility of the homeowner. He said there's been instances where the valves won't turn back on or they have leaked. Oxborough said in some of those cases the homeowners asked the City to shut the water off and the homeowner was going to fix it themselves or hire a plumber. He noted homeowners they have dealt with so far have been really good about it. But, Oxborough said there's always that one person out there that's going to point their finger at the Water Department and say you broke this and you need to fix it. He said the infrastructure is the responsibility of the homeowner and the amendment to the ordinance spells that out.

Siepkner asked about the charge of \$125 for a water meter if you build a new house. He noted the homeowner buys the water meter, but then the water meter belongs to the City?

Oxborough said that's why people are not being charged for upgrading their meters with the new AMI meters. He explained the homeowners are not being charged anything because the City is updating their water meters. Oxborough said the homeowner pays for the water meter one time and then the City pays for the upkeep of that water meter.

Siepkner said to him, the \$125 charge would be more of an installation fee instead of the homeowner buying the water meter and then giving it back to the City.

Skaret said it's similar to a City street. He said the residents typically pay for the street upfront and then the City maintains it after that. Skaret said the City hasn't done special assessments on replacing old infrastructure, but assessments are charged on new infrastructure.

Oxborough said the Water Department has never run into an issue where anyone has complained about paying for the water meter up front. He said the only time when paying for the water meter comes up is when a brand-new house is being built.

City Finance Officer Deb Mitchell said there's always been a charge for the water meter when a new house is built.

Skaret said there can be discussion about who should be paying for the water meter itself, but that doesn't really have any bearing on the Ordinance that's being proposed.

Oxborough said that was correct.

Oxborough asked Utilities Commission members about amending the Ordinance regarding the maintenance of service lines and repair of leaks.

Madden asked if Oxborough was looking for wording in the ordinance regarding property owners maintaining the line from the water main to the point of metering.

Oxborough said that was correct.

Skaret said the wording could be changed from the last comma in Chapter 53.02, Section 1 (A)(1) to read *from the water main to the point of connection and into the owner's point of metering*.

Madden asked if the wording could just be *from the water main to the point of metering?*

Oxborough said everything else is pretty much included in the first sentence of Section 1 (A)(1).

Skaret noted deleting the connection part of the sentence.

Oxborough said the Water Department doesn't need to regulate the infrastructure past the water meter.

Skaret concurred with Oxborough.

MADDEN/MARTHALER moved and it was unanimously carried to recommend to the City Council to amend the Water Service Ordinance with the wording the property owner is responsible for maintaining in good repair, meters, curb stops, service lines, and corporation stop, from the water main to the point of metering.

SERVICE CHARGE FOR CUSTOMERS WHO DON'T WANT AMI WATER METERS INSTALLED

Skaret reported there are some people who don't want the AMI meters installed in their homes and want to continue with their old meter.

Siepkner said he has also heard similar comments.

Skaret said some people are worried about trust and the radio waves that will be emitted from the meter. Skaret noted there's probably a lot more radiation emitted from a cell phone than from the antenna on an AMI water or electric meter.

Siepkner asked if there's a display on the new water meters so people can view the numbers.

Oxborough said there is a display on the new meters.

Siepkner said that may calm some fears if people can still take their own readings and compare it to their bill.

Mitchell said some people are worried that the new meters will allow the City to see what's going in someone's house through the radio waves.

Oxborough said some people fear there's a microphone in the meter system so the City can listen to them in their home or they have concerns about the radiation coming from the antenna of the meter.

Oxborough explained the Water Department can install a water meter without an antenna but that means the readings will still have to be read manually and then entered into the system at City Hall manually. He said when the new metering system was first talked about, it was discussed about charging a \$50 monthly fee to someone who doesn't want the new meters installed. Oxborough said the Water Department will try and work with residents. He said the Water Department will try to mount the antenna for the meter on the outside of the house if someone would feel more comfortable with that instead of having the antenna in the basement.

Oxborough said the amount of the fee is up to the Utilities Commission.

Madden said now would be a good time to establish a policy before the meters are installed. He said a fee of \$50 is a good starting point.

Skaret asked Utilities Commission members to determine what the fee would be if a person wanted, for example, the AMI electric meter but not the AMI water meter.

Marthaler asked Boogerd if he's run into any situations so far where someone has said they don't want the new AMI electric meter installed.

Boogerd said he has not. He said people have thanked him for installing the new electric meters because they don't want to walk through the snow when their electric meter is located out on the lot line. Boogerd said he's had some people ask questions about the new meters, but no one has been upset.

Oxborough said the issue of someone not wanting a new water meter will eventually come up. He said the Water Department will talk with the resident and try to work with them to have a new AMI water meter installed.

MARTHALER/MADDEN moved and it was unanimously carried to recommend to the City Council that a fee of \$50 per month be added to a customer's utility bill for refusing to have either or both an AMI water or AMI electric meter installed.

Skaret said the \$50 fee would be added to the City's fee schedule ordinance for 2021.

MRES LETTER ON TIME OF USE ELECTRIC RATES

Skaret said the MRES Time of Use Electric Rates is one of the many reasons on why the City is transitioning to the AMI metering system. He said it's so the City has infrastructure in place in case the City wants to pass on the Time of Use Rates that Missouri River Energy is going to be starting to charge the City in 2023.

Skaret said the concept is to better help the City manage their electric load because the more load the City is using at one time, the higher the rate is. He said Missouri River Energy Services has been talking about Time of Use Electric Rates for quite a while. Skaret said the conversation about this started back in 2011. He said by 2023, MRES is planning on implementing Time of Use Rates to the City. Skaret said it will be up to the City on whether they will charge the City's customers. Nonetheless, Skaret said the City will be charged the Time of Use Rates. He said there will be times when the City will certainly be paying more for electricity than others.

Skaret said this agenda item was more of an informational item to bring the Utilities Commission up to date.

Siepkner asked if the City having the new AMI electric meters will be a benefit.

Skaret said the AMI meters will be a benefit. He said City staff just had the last of the formal training sessions on the AMI system on November 30th. Skaret said MRES is giving communities plenty of warning in case a City's infrastructure has to be updated before 2023 to pass those costs on.

Skaret said overall, based on the current usage, the net overall cost to the City isn't going to be a lot. He said it's going to be about a .3 percent increase for total power supply, or about \$6,800 a year. Skaret said that cost could change if a large industry came to Jackson.

Other:

Water and Sewer Rates

Skaret said several years ago, the City had a water and sewer rate study done. He said 2020 was year-three of the City's three-year rate increase implementation plan. Skaret said the water and sewer rates have been stepped up gradually.

Skaret said the City's Finance Committee is looking at implementing a two percent increase on water rates in 2021. He said basically that amounts to about 15 cents a month to the base charge and roughly 15 cents per thousand gallons of water. Skaret said if a person uses 2,000 gallons of water a month, it would cost about an extra 45 cents a month.

Skaret said the City has a lot of infrastructure needs, especially water. He said the City's water fund is doing OK, but it's taken a hit more so than the sewer especially with the ground water storage tank project.

Skaret said rather than keeping the water rates flat and then in a year or two implementing a 10 or 15 percent increase, the Finance Committee decided to implement a two percent increase in water rates in 2021. He said the Finance Committee is looking to hold the sewer rates flat in 2021. Skaret noted the Sewer Fund is a little healthier.

Siepkner asked about the electric rates.

Skaret said the electric rates are going to stay the same for the next several years.

Ownership of Service Lines

Oxborough said the topic regarding the ownership of service lines has come up.

Markman said there have also been questions in the past about ownership of the sewer line. He said the City will dig up and repave the street if a sewer or water line needs to be replaced and the property owner does not pay for the repaving.

Skaret noted there are some cities that charge customers for the replacement of the curb and pavement in addition to the line.

Oxborough asked about educating the public pertaining to the ownership of service lines. He wanted to make sure the Utilities Commission and the Water Department were on the same page as far as telling homeowners they are responsible for their sewer and water lines from the main all the way to their house. He said if the policy wasn't that way, then all homeowners in the City would pay for those costs through higher rates for water and sewer.

Madden suggested information about line ownership should be included in the City's utility bills.

Mitchell said when they run into a question about the ownership of service lines at City Hall, office staff just explains that the homeowner owns the water or sewer line from the house to the main. She said explaining the ownership of the line is about the best a person can do when asked about it.

Oxborough said he wanted to make sure he and the Utilities Commission members are all familiar with the same policy. He thanked Utilities Commission members for the discussion.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business, Siepker asked for a motion to adjourn.

MADDEN/MARTHALER moved and it was unanimously carried to adjourn the Utilities Commission meeting at 5:19 p.m.

David A. Maschoff, Recording Secretary

