

MINUTES OF THE ALGOMA UTILITY COMMISSION MEETING
CITY HALL (COMMON COUNCIL CHAMBERS – 416 FREMONT STREET)
February 17, 2021

President Vlies called the meeting of the Algoma Utility Commission to order at 5:30 p.m. in compliance with the open meeting law.

Members present Robert Vlies, Guy Haasch, Mary Kay Bennett, Wayne Schmidt and Lee Dachelet. Others present: Bonnie Junio, Mary Haucke, Pete Haack and Nancy Johnson.

Members excused or absent: none.

Schmidt motioned, seconded by Haasch to adopt the agenda. Motion carried.

Bennett motioned, seconded by Schmidt to approve the previous meeting minutes. Motion carried.

Comments of Anyone Present:

None

Old Business:

a) No Planning Commission meeting last month.

New Business:

a) Electric vehicle (EV) charging stations were discussed. Information about costs and potential grants will be reviewed at future meetings.

Bennett motioned, seconded by Schmidt to approve payment of bills and payroll as presented. Roll call vote: all yes. Motion carried.

Concept Expectations/Goals will remain on the agenda for further review.

Manager's Report:

Manager's report was reviewed.

- The extreme cold weather has caused freezing problems in the privately owned mobile home parks.

Office Manager's Report:

Office Manager's report was reviewed.

- Schmidt inquired about how many private wells are in the city and if the current \$50 fee for renewing a private well permit could be increased. There are approximately 20 private wells. Dachelet inquired if the city could require property owners to abandon the wells upon the sale of property or connection to the municipal water.
- The search will begin for a Utility Clerk. The Commissioners received a copy of the recruitment announcement.

Agenda Items for Next Meeting:

- Nothing new was added.

Dachelet motioned, seconded by Haasch to adjourn. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 6:06 p.m.

The next regular Commission meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 17th at 5:30 p.m.

President

Director

Secretary

ALGOMA UTILITIES

To: Algoma Utility Commission
From: Pete Haack
Re: Manager Report Feb. 11, 2021

1. The crew dug up the water main and turned off both laterals feeding into the parking lot at the 400 block of Third St. The corporation stops were turned off so water can't leave the main, the laterals were severed to visually witness an absence of water. The hole was filled, and the following day pumping was higher than the previous days. The hunt started for another leak.
2. No leaks were identified after listening on all the hydrants and a majority of valves throughout town. However, listening on individual curb stops turned up a substantial leak at the RV Charters Condos within the work zone of last summer's Navarino St. Project. The noise appeared to be right at or just after the curb stop, which poses the question of Utility's side or customer's problem. Our crew broke through the 18" of frost and vacuumed a hole down to the curb stop. Video was taken of water clearly leaking from the curb stop nut on the customer's side. Being a new curb stop, within a year, it was easy to define whose problem it is, and that Peter's Concrete would be responsible for the warranty work. Coordinating with the property owner, who had customers staying for the month, the engineering firms and Peter's Concrete, a locate was called in and Peter's was in town to fix the issue within four days. The process went fairly well. The leak didn't prove to be as large as the amount of water we appeared to be losing.
3. The Public Works Dept. was having the river crossing sanitary sewer lined, which requires larger quantities of water throughout the process. They went to use the 2-year-old, 10 ft. bury hydrant at the Wastewater Treatment Facility and found the barrel to be full and frozen. About 8 hours of a torpedo heater in a tent, managed to thaw the ice and made the hydrant available for the installation and curing process of the liner. The hydrant was then pumped dry. There does appear to be an issue with that hydrant, as there was about 4 feet of water back in the barrel, within a week. This could be the height of the groundwater coming in through the drain hole or the stop on the hydrant may be nicked allowing water to enter the barrel. We have been monitoring the hydrant, to ensure the water level doesn't reach the frost line and a larger than normal amount of RV antifreeze has been added to avoid freezing solid again. During favorable weather conditions, the crew will dismantle the valve mechanism and shaft to find the root of the problem. The hydrant is fully functional.
4. Tuesday Feb. 9 about 9:45 AM, the office received a phone call stating water coming out of the tree lawn at the N. West corner of Washington and Division St. She was walking and didn't notice it on her way out, but it was very noticeable on the return trip. Scott was sent down to check it out and found the typical signs of a water main break. A garbage truck went past and immediately the water stopped flowing out the lawn and started flowing out of the road. An emergency locate was called in and Stoller was contacted for digging services. The crew handed out flyers informing 25 homes that would be temporarily without water while the project was going on. Stoller started digging at about 11:45 AM, the water was turned off at about 12:05, repair sleeve was installed, and the water was turned back on at 12:35. It was a 35-degree sunny day, there was about 18" of frost in the road, the leak surfaced at the tree lawn which had little to no frost and the entire process went about as textbook as possible. A typical main break that appeared as if it were sliced with a sawblade, with minimal water losses.
5. We had one electrical callout this past month and I called it in. Thursday night was a wet heavy snowstorm and as I was blowing snow, the carwash lights across the street started flickering, bright blue flashes of light lit up the top of the pole housing the three-phase carwash setting. With the gas station on a separate transformer, the attendant couldn't tell the car wash was having issues. I was hoping this was just some snow related shorting at the cutout, but at about 11:45 PM when the carwash went dark and the garage doors opened, it was apparent that this just became a real problem. Temps were falling to single digits, it was snowing, blowing, and both overhead doors of the carwash were open and I saw it all happen. I called in Chris T. (on call) and he showed up about midnight, our guess of a broken cutout was correct and he changed the center phase cutout, proceeded to reenergize

all three cutouts and the roadside phase porcelain broke on contact. Changed out the second cutout and reenergized all three, they held, and the lights came on and more importantly the overhead doors closed before anything froze. I called the station the following day and they reported that everything came back on fine and there were no known issues from the event.

6. With the cold weather, there are about nine house trailers that were not properly winterized or had some sort of equipment failure causing water lines to freeze. Some were quick fixes, most remain frozen. We generally do not assist in above ground thawing as that is the result of equipment failure or neglect rather than the depth of frost in the ground. We do receive calls from people hoping to avoid charges for running water to keep their lines from freezing. This is a practice that would only be considered when the frost penetrates the ground to the 5' or 6' depth which may jeopardize some of the shallower laterals in town.

7. Meter reading on the 29th of January proved to be the best indicator of the losses we were assuming to be leaks within our system over the past month. Unfortunately for a few customers, the leaks were within their unoccupied buildings and the losses were metered which technically means they are no longer losses. When a meter is read and has above average usage for a month, Mary creates a list of meters that need to be reread to follow up on the issue, eliminating the possibility of a misread or problems with a meter itself. This particular meter reading day turned up two substantial leaks, one of which we immediately turned the water lateral off at the curb stop before we could make contact with the owner, as substantial interior damage was visible outside and through the windows. The second leak had upstairs tenants, so all we could do was inform him of the extra usage gone through his meter. I can only assume both leaks were the result of frozen pipes that had burst within each building. Pumping quantities have since been near normal. It is always a good idea to have functioning water valves before and after a water meter and if possible, turn the water system off when leaving the property empty, winter or summer, for any period of time. One minute of valve turning can save thousands of dollars in losses and possible water damage.

ALGOMA UTILITIES OFFICE REPORT

To: ALGOMA UTILITY COMMISSION & GENERAL MANAGER

From: OFFICE MANAGER

Date: 2/09/2021

Re: OFFICE REPORT FOR 1/12/2021 – 2/8/2021 ACTIVITIES

Billing Clerk:

- Reviewed & reconciled meter reports from meter tech to Access and Northstar.
 - Prepared end of year meter reports for water and electric.
 - Installation costs for electric and water meters were added to the Access database.
 - Sewer rates effective 12/30/20 were implemented and tested.
 - Completed website updates.
 - Time of Day Annual Reviews were completed and mailed.
 - Solar rates effective 12/30/20 were implemented and tested.
 - Reviewed adjustments for year and submitted to office manager for annual PSC Report.
 - Updated deposit listing with current water/sewer dollar amount split.
 - Prepared the 2021 electric and water meter testing requirements list.
 - Filed customer service orders.
 - Provided customer service and assisted in covering customer service duties, entering payments, deposits, mailing service applications, etc.
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Utility Clerk:

- January collections from State Debt Collection (SDC) was \$250.00. Continued to make required notifications to customers to allow for addition of accounts to SDC and Tax Refund Intercept Program (TRIP). Updated such information as new debts are created and/or payments are made by customers or the programs.
- Completed yearly Systems for Award Management (SAMs) registration which allows for payment from the federal government.
- Updated Cross Connection Plan for review and forwarding to Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) after approval by the Water Department Operator.
- Reviewed information provided by HydroCorp for verification of the 2021-2022 Non-Residential Cross Connection Program.

- Prepared and mailed 1099-NEC form to vendors. Completed electronic filing of forms to the Wisconsin Department of Revenue (WDOR) and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).
 - Prepared and provided Form 1095-C reports to employees and the IRS as required by the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Prepared Form 1094-C and mailed to the IRS.
 - Prepared letters for customers that have regulated objects, as a reminder that yearly testing to obtain a Permit to Operate was nearing expiration.
 - Added transformer installation costs to Access database.
 - Inactivated work orders that were completed in 2020.
 - Prepared information to allow for penalty exclusion for the COVID-19 penalty suspension period.
 - Entered end dates to the customers who have depleted their Energy Assistance balance. Without an end date, all information that is returned on the report, is cumbersome to review and use.
 - Completed and submitted the Statement of Occupational Illnesses and Injuries(SOII) to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.
 - Participated in WPPI end of year Dynamics open mic.
 - Due to vacancy in Customer Service Clerk position continued to complete the following items: Prepared the monthly past due notices and commercial disconnect notices using Northstar mail merge. The documents were uploaded on InfoSend for printing and mailing. Also prepared deposits, applied Energy Assistance payments, processed truck hours, miscellaneous A/R invoices/statements/applied finance charges, prepared and distributed monthly calendar, provided on-call hours to Sheriff's Department, and other various tasks.
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Office Manager/Accountant:

- Completed the year-end payroll electronic filing of W-2s, W-3, Wt-7, 941, SUTA.
- Filed annual WI DSPS/OSHA report.
- Reconciled Northstar billed electric meter reports to Access meter databases and Meter Tech reports – **no variances**. Calculated installation costs for capitalization. Completed integrity checks and balanced updated Access databases to general ledger (G/L). Populated PSC report forms.
- Reviewed rural customer count for Public Service Commission (PSC) report.
- Reconciled Northstar billed water meter (and ERT) reports to Access meter databases and Meter Tech reports – **no variances**. Calculated installation costs for capitalization. Completed integrity checks and balanced updated Access databases to G/L. Populated PSC report forms.

- Updated water main history Excel workbook, it reflects activity by year and decade for the Public Service Commission (PSC) annual report.
- Completed year-end electric and water plant addition/retirement unitization and installation factors. Allocated contributions in aid of construction (CIAC) plant percentage to retirements. Calculated cost of removal and looked up retired costs. Categorized salvage and split CIAC portion. Ran and filed year-end Project Controller reports. Performed depreciation true ups including CIAC split.
- Reconciled projects to budget. Reviewed work orders to estimates, reconciled actual costs to advances.
- Closed and filed year end project files, set up new year construction work in progress (CWIP) work orders.
- Prepared for external audit and issued Wisconsin Retirement System (WRS) detail by function and fund for GASB J.E.
- Calculated joint metering fee and distributed memos. Fee matched the budgeted amount.
- Reconciled year-end vacation and earned benefit reserves.
- Trued-up special funds for bond reserves and other restricted funds.
- Calculated and posted year-end clearing entries.
- Completed year-end G/L reconciliation and documentation before audit. Performed internal audit.
- Created PSC year-end report files.
- Reviewed liability, property, auto, etc. policy binder and updated schedules for annual policies.
- American Transmission Company (ATC) investment true up to net book value (NBV), calculated retained earnings and dividend receivable recorded.
- Tree trimming costs report issued to the city.
- Providing monthly data for U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) reporting.
- Managing private well renewal permits, updated spreadsheet and receipted completed forms and permit fees.
- Working with Paymentus to provide automated dialing and messaging systems.
- Staff working with customers utilizing the new MyAccount system (replaced eCare online customer portal).
- Participating in the WPPI Energy Microsoft Dynamics SL Replacement Working Group via teleconference.
- Participated in WPPI year end Dynamics webinar.

- Attended online finance and personnel meeting.
- Assisted other WPPI, MEUW and WRWA utilities with questions and PSC issues.
- Assisted with customer service and front desk coverage as needed.

• **COVID-19 issues:**

- Reviewed PSC codes and state statutes for updates and suspensions issued per the Governor's executive emergency order and the PSC's Investigation Order.
- Responded to P.S.C. , MEUW and WPPI data inquiries and completed surveys. Compiling COVID-19 costs and lost revenue statistics. Filed quarterly arrears management plans.
- Staff prepared for the continued postponement of the April 15th winter moratorium ending. Now it will not end until 2021! PSC held disconnection suspension on July 25th and has now postponed it yet again until April 15th. Reviewing business practice changes to be in compliance with the current PSC orders. Staff discussion and implementation regarding non PSC regulated collection tools.
- Participating in COVID related webinars and conference calls.

Customer Service Clerk: vacant position