

MINUTES OF THE ALGOMA UTILITY COMMISSION MEETING
1407 Flora Avenue
November 18, 2020

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: Pete Haack, Scott Wiese, Nancy Johnson, Matthew Liebeck and Nathan Petersilka.

Members excused or absent: none.

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

Dachelet motioned, seconded by Haasch to approve the previous meeting minutes. Motion carried.

Comments of Anyone Present:

None.

Old Business:

a) Planning Commission update: no utility projects.

New Business:

a) Employee Matthew Liebeck addressed the commissioners about competitive wages and benefits in the utility industry, as it relates to journey line workers.

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

Haasch motioned, seconded by Bennett to approve the monthly financial reports as presented. Roll call vote: all yes. Motion carried.

No discussion about the Concept Expectations/Goals. This topic will remain on the agenda for further review.

Manager's Report:

Manager's report was reviewed.

- The solar system at the Algoma High School was discussed.

Office Manager's Report:

Office Manager's report was reviewed.

- Johnson encouraged customers to visit the utility website at www.algomautilities.com and sign up for the new MyAccount online portal.

At 6:18 p.m. Schmidt motioned, seconded by Dachelet to go into closed session as provided by State Statute 19.85 (1) (c). Roll call vote: all yes. Motion carried.

At 7:22 p.m. Schmidt motioned, seconded by Haasch to resume to open session as provided by State Statute 19.85 (2). Roll call vote: all yes. Motion carried.

No action taken.

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

Meeting adjourned at 7:23 p.m.

The next regular Commission meeting will be held on Wednesday, December 16th at 5:30 p.m.

President

Director

Secretary

To: Algoma Utility Commission
From: Pete Haack
Re: Manager Report Nov. 12 2020

1. Our temporary and seasonal water meters have all been collected or returned to the office in preparation of winter. Winterizing of all fire hydrants has been completed. Due to the drier fall season, we went through about half of the amount of RV antifreeze as we did last year. The water table is much lower this year and the groundwater, filling the hydrant barrels through the drain holes, is sitting much lower than last year. The caps are all greased, (food grade safe) and ready for the coming winter.
2. The higher water losses last month had the crew completing a round of listening on hydrants for a leak. The whole round was completed with no sign of a leak. I received a phone call from a resident on the 800 block of Frank Ave. stating that he had a sink hole in the lot next to his home near an unused curb stop. We went immediately with the listening device and quickly identified a pretty loud leak on that lateral. This copper lateral and PVC main were installed in 2008 (relatively new) and this is the second unused lateral, of three total laterals installed, which decayed enough from the outside in, to develop leaks. Because of the PVC main, vibration is not amplified down the plastic pipe and there is no way to hear the leak at the two adjacent fire hydrants. No water had ever surfaced, we were lucky a sink hole formed, and the property owner called to question the situation. The crew dug up the road, turned off the corporation stop at the water main and eliminated the leak. We did not remove or replace the lateral, as the customer owns half of the previous full lot and another use for that lateral is unlikely. It will be maintained in our records with issues noted, in case the lateral were ever needed in the future. We would pull in a new lateral at the time of private installation. The following week of normal pumping revealed the leak in the neighborhood of 28,000 gal. per day. Our crew prepped the road patch, delivered, and applied the hot mix asphalt to complete the job. The crew also cut the sod, filled in the sink hole, and replaced the sod.
3. The crew trenched in a secondary service for the new home on Carrie Lynn Ave. and installed the electric meter. The Bell Harbour project took a little twist from the original electrical conversation and will end up costing us about 50 feet of 2 1/2" petroflex (conduit). The service entrances were moved from the North side to the South side of the last two buildings. The crew dug and buried 100 feet of petroflex to the second building and will be coordinating with the electrician to install the service wire and plug in the meter within the week. A few permanent electric and water meters have also been added in the two trailer parks.
4. Two customers have chosen to remove their overhead electric lines and replace them with underground lines. Both customers chose to save a few dollars and dig their own trenches. We require a conduit for pulling our service wire through. In both cases, the conduit is purchased from Algoma Utilities, our crew pulls in the new service conductors and hooks them in the meter base and on the pole. New service entrances are always appreciated, we have many in town seventy plus years old and have an unsafe appearance. I have no problem allowing a customer to dig their own trench as long as they follow our instruction. Trenching is certainly a substantial financial savings for the job, which can be the determining factor of whether or not to complete an upgrade.
5. GIS mapping for the water system continues as a fill in job. The crew is finding and repairing many curb stop boxes that were inaccessible.
6. The crew replaced a secondary pole, in need of attention, and down guy on a property out on Cty. Rd. K, just south of town.
7. Well #1 has been completely rebuilt including column pipe, submersible pump, #4 submersible wire and airlines. This comes as a result of our 10 year inspection which actually was done at eleven years, with DNR permission, due to the fact that #3 well needed to be pulled last year and then would have required two wells to be gone through within the same year in 2029. A safe sample was acquired, and the pump was put back online. The new pump has been functioning as it should.

8. The generator at Well #1 received its annual inspection, along with a four-hour load bank test that is performed every five years. All functions graded out well.
9. The billing of the High School's electricity required a lot of communication and effort by our office personnel. We are lucky to have such a conscientious group of ladies to be running our system behind the scenes. Any errors in setting up a new billing procedure, such as the large solar installation (185 KW), at the High School, can result in a major compounding overbilling or underbilling error to our customer. Billing has to be correct the first time. WPPI had no Utilities with a similar size Solar Unit which we could compare or model our billing after. Several days of phone conversations and meetings led to the consensus of proper billing. Thank you to all involved. Being a rate-based entity means proper billing is really the heart of our business.
10. The crew performed the annual Electric meter visual to ERT comparison. Each meter has to be visited, receive a visual inspection, and a comparison of the visible numeric reading on the meter, as compared to the reading which appears on the electronic handheld unit that we use for reading meters. This procedure ensures proper billing, provides customer peace of mind, and gives us an opportunity to inspect meters, meter bases, and power lines and backyard poles in many areas that we only see two or three times a year. The other opportunity we get is during the winter months while trimming trees. We have about 2025 meters that were visited. There are generally minimal discrepancies throughout the system. Meter display (fading) issues are a common find. Any issues are noted and prioritized for repair.
11. AT&T and Charter were contacted to advise of the poles they have infrastructure on, waiting to be transferred to our new pole or underground in order for us to remove our old poles. This is an ongoing communication that does not always provide results. We have seen some recent improvement in completion of these requests. We have also waited three to four years to get an attachment transferred or adjusted to our needs.
12. Our crew diagnosed the reason for a new yard light and the sign light at the medical center not functioning. Wire connections were attached at the first light pole and all lights are now functioning. NEW Lighting asked the Utility to install two lights at the East end of Perry Field because of proximity to power lines. We have been back twice to adjust the lights, but they are still too bright for the immediate neighborhood. Sara is working on a solution, with the light supplier.
13. The crew has removed and replaced the light pole and fixture involved in the car accident on Steele St. Point. The city owned pole and fixture were replaced with a spare set that we were housing. A replacement pole and fixture were ordered, and all expenses will be billed to the city for insurance reimbursement.
14. With the electric meter test bench being recently calibrated, and the software updated, Christopher has been busy testing larger single-phase electric meters that are scheduled for 2020 testing. These meters are on a 12-year testing schedule. There are also 3-phase meters being tested within the 2020 schedule.

ALGOMA UTILITIES OFFICE REPORT

To: ALGOMA UTILITY COMMISSION & GENERAL MANAGER

From: OFFICE MANAGER

Date: 11/10/2020

Re: OFFICE REPORT FOR 10/12/2020 – 11/9/2020 ACTIVITIES

Billing Clerk:

- Made updates to website.
 - Participated in WPPI's Open Mic Hour.
 - Participated in WPPI's MyAccount webinar.
 - Annual Electronic Radio Transmitter (ERT) to Visual process began.
 - Participated in discussions regarding set up of Solar Net Metering. Worked with WPPI and member utility on setup of Solar Net Metering for large power customer.
 - Continued with 2020 Lien Processing.
 - Provided customer service and assisted in covering customer service duties, entering payments, deposits, etc.
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Utility Clerk:

- October collections from State Debt Collection (SDC) was \$250.00.
- Updated services screens in Northstar and removed accounts from Tax Refund Intercept (TRIP) and SDC as needed to allow for tax roll.
- Participated in WPPI's TRIP/SDC and MyAccount webinars.
- Reviewed set up of solar billing in the test database to verify accuracy with Billing Clerk.
- Closed Energy Assistance (EA) screen for customers that depleted their benefit to prevent zero balance accounts to appear on reports.
- Completed and verified monthly project controller activity to work orders.
- Prepared count sheets for electric and water inventory and stock transformers.
- Prepared Certification to the Department of Natural Resources for lead and copper lead water testing.
- Prepared the monthly past due notices and commercial disconnect notices using Northstar mail merge. These documents were then uploaded to InfoSend for printing and mailing.

- Due to vacancy in Customer Service Clerk position the following items were also completed: 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.

Office Manager/Accountant:

- Distributed the approved electric and water operating and maintenance and capital budgets.
- Filed annual Public Service Commission (PSC) Cold Weather Disconnection report.
- Exported and imported valve turning activity to Wachs valve turner handheld and saved to server.
- Filed online quarterly payroll reports in Green Shades software.
- Providing monthly data for U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) reporting.
- Reviewed and approved final tax role lists, prepared by Billing Clerk.
- Managing private well renewal permits, updated spreadsheet and receipted completed forms and permit fees.
- Staff working with customers utilizing the new MyAccount system (replaced eCare online customer portal).
- Reviewed parallel generation language in PSC authorized tariffs. Researched the PSC required reporting for customer owned distributed energy resources for systems over 20 kilowatts. Set up new general ledger accounts to segregate credits. Office worked with WPPI to complete the first Solar Net Metering billing set up for a large power customer.
- Met with insurance representatives to obtain a proposal for 2021 property, auto and liability policies.
- Assembled and issued employee paid, voluntary benefit info.
- Participating in the WPPI Energy Microsoft Dynamics SL Replacement Working Group via teleconference.
- Completed WPPI Energy member services survey.
- Participated in WPPI's MyAccount webinar. Attended the WPPI Energy Microsoft Dynamics SL current release via teleconference.
- 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.
- 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 regarding non PSC regulated collection tools.
- Participating in webinars and conference calls.

Customer Service Clerk: vacant position