

The Owatonna Public Utilities Commission met in regular session in the Morehouse Conference Room at the Owatonna Public Utilities. Present were Commissioners Rossi, Vetter and Doyal via phone. Absent were Commissioners Zirngible and Johnson. Also present were Director, Finance & Administration Olson; City Administrator Busse; Director, Information Technology & Metering Baum; Manager, Facilities, Gas & Water Engineering & Operations Prokopec; Supervisor, Accounting Linders; Executive, Communications & Administration Coordinator Schmoll; Energy Conservation & Key Accounts Officer Hendricks; OPU employees Lori Jerpbak, Deb Anderson, and Shanda Meier. Other guests included City Council member, Dan Boeke.

Commissioner Rossi called the meeting to order and led the Pledge of Allegiance. He then asked for approval of the agenda and the consent agenda. The consent agenda items included the revised minutes from the December 20, 2023 meeting, the minutes from the January 23, 2024 meeting and the contributed services from January 31, 2024. Commissioner Vetter moved to approve the agenda and consent agenda items. Commissioner Doyal seconded the motion. All members voting Aye, the motion passed.

Committee Reports

Finance Committee – Commissioner Rossi noted the Finance Committee didn't meet due to the absence of two commissioners. He asked for the Commission to review disbursements report and noted vouchers for January totaled \$8,519,100.08. Commissioner Vetter moved to approve the vouchers. Commissioner Doyal seconded the motion. All Commissioners voting Aye, the motion passed. Mr. Rossi then presented a work order request to the Commission. He noted the work order is for a booster pump in Central Water Works that is beginning to fail. The pump needs to be rebuilt before the summer high pumping season. The pump can be rebuilt for \$30,000. The last time it was rebuilt was in 2006. After discussion, Commissioner Rossi moved to approve the work order as presented for \$30,000. Commissioner Vetter seconded the motion. All Commissioners voting Aye, the motion passed.

Personnel Committee - Commissioner Rossi reported the Personnel Committee met and received a staffing report. It was noted recruitment continues for an open position in the Information Technology department. The Committee looked at OPU's Succession planning program for 2024 as well as General Manager Warehime noted union negotiations will be starting soon with the current contract expiring on May 31, 2024.

City Administrator's Report

City Administrator Busse gave the State of the City report to the Commission. She noted who the City leaders and staff are and discussed such things as Key Focus areas, a review of 2023, a look forward to 2024 including the City budget and levy. She noted, the key focus areas include Economic Vitality, Infrastructure, Quality of Life, and Efficient Effective Government.

Key accomplishments for 2023 included a record-breaking year for building permit evaluations. She noted 1,761 permits were issued resulting in valuation of \$110,530,779. She discussed accomplishments in other city departments, as well. Looking forward 2024 projects include the Ascend & Westlake Meadows projects, renovations to the Library and Merrill Hall, and the ongoing expansion of the Wastewater Treatment plant to name a few.

City Administrator Busse wrapped up by discussing the 2024 budget and everything the levy provides.

General Manager/Staff Report

Director, Information Technology and Metering Baum reported the new audio/visual equipment in the Morehouse Conference Room is scheduled to be updated beginning on March 6th.

Director, Finance and Administration Olson provided an update on the building the City and OPU were looking at purchasing. He noted the City has decided to not participate in the purchase. OPU will continue to do further evaluation to see if the building would meet our needs as far as equipment, vehicle, and supplies storage. The building is located across from the West Owatonna Substation on Bridge Street. Currently Viracon has a lease on the building until 2030 for their storage needs. Staff will bring the item back to the Commission once they have a further update.

Director, Finance and Administration Olson updated the Commission on the status of revised water rates. He noted, a lot of work is being done to better understand the “why” behind revised water rates. Barr Engineering will attend the next Commission meeting to share what they have encountered while dealing with the Department of Natural Resources and asking for additional appropriations regarding water. Staff is working closely with Barr Engineering and is putting together scenarios for handling increased water usage in the summer months. Commissioner Vetter asked for the next meeting to be recorded and made available for Commissioners, along with Barr’s presentation for future reference.

Commissioner Roundtable

Commissioner Doyal thanked City Administrator Busse for her report. Mr. Doyal also expressed he is looking forward to hearing more about the numbers for the Bridge St. building.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Commission, the meeting adjourned at 4:59 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Tammy Schmoll
Executive, Communications & Administration Coordinator