

The Owatonna Public Utilities Commission met in rescheduled session in the Morehouse Conference Room at the Owatonna Public Utilities. Present were Commissioners Rossi, Doyal, Johnson and Vetter. Commissioner Zirngible was absent. Also present were General Manager Warehime; City Administrator Busse; Director, Finance and Administration Olson; Director, Engineering & Field Operations Fenstermacher; Director, Information Technology & Meter Baum; Supervisor, Accounting Linders; Supervisor Meter Services Johnson; Executive, Communications & Administration Coordinator Schmoll; and Accountant Lori Jerpbak. Also present were customers Roger Wacek and Donn Robinson.

Vice-President Rossi called the meeting to order and led the Pledge of Allegiance. He then asked for approval of the agenda and the consent agenda items. The consent agenda items included the minutes from the July 25, 2023 meeting and the Contributed Services report as of July 31, 2023. Commissioner Doyal moved to approve the agenda and consent agenda. Commissioner Johnson seconded the motion. All Commissioners voting Aye, the motion passed.

Committee Reports

Personnel Committee – Commissioner Rossi reported the Personnel Committee met and received a staffing update. As of the date of the meeting, there are not any open positions at OPU. The last position filled was the Electric Design Project Coordinator. Travis Feist began on August 14th. Other discussions surrounding the updating of Human Resources policies and procedures.

Finance Committee – Commissioner Doyal reported the Finance Committee met, reviewed and approved vouchers totaling \$5,541,822.71. Nineteen work orders have been completed to date coming in 4.3% under budget. Commissioner Vetter inquired if we are on target to complete all projects. The answer was no.

City Administrator's Report

City Administrator Busse updated the Commission on the work the Greater Minnesota's Cities Coalition is doing, as well as cultural progress being made at the city. She reported, ClickSeeFix was launched which is a tool for reporting issues by community members. They can report on such things as potholes, needed park maintenance, etc. whereby the proper personnel can be dispatched to address the issues more efficiently. The city is in the midst of their budgeting process. Departmental presentations are currently being held. Follow-up meetings are scheduled with the Council to address any concerns or questions they may have. City Administrator Busse discussed major components in the budget and provided an update on the Vine Street project.

Residential Time-of-Use Policy - Pilot Program

General Manager Warehime presented the Residential time-of-use policy to the Commission. He noted changes were made based on the discussions at the last Commission meeting. Clarification surrounding the pilot program included it is not a required program; any customers can get on it; and it will be kept small at first with a soft launch. Discussion ensued as to how the off-peak, critical peak and on-peak rates were determined. Director, Finance & Administration Olson noted, the off-peak is based on an electric rate study performed in 2018. It is the lowest amount we could charge. Critical Peak and On Peak are set up so to be revenue neutral. The goal is to incentivize customers to move usage out of critical peak times when it costs more for the energy. Mr. Olson also mentioned the critical peak is only effective during the summer months. After discussion, Commissioner Johnson moved to approve the policy. Commissioner Rossi seconded the motion. All Commissioners voting aye, the motion passed.

Load Control and Energy Management Policies

General Manager Warehime asked to have this item removed from the agenda. He noted, these policies will be brought forward next month.

Camera Security System Policy

General Manager Warehime presented the Camera Security System policy and noted this is part of the overall security system implementation. This policy has been reviewed with legal counsel and was drafted to address concerns with the functionality of the new cameras in the area of audio recording. Director, Information Technology and Meter Services Baum noted the policy was drafted to provide transparency and accountability as to how the collected audio will and will not be used to provide clarity and understanding for everyone. The cameras will be used to resolve incidents, not to manage productivity. After discussion, the Commission asked for more time to review the policy. The policy will be brought back to the next meeting.

Safety Policy

General Manager Warehime presented the updated Safety Policy. He noted, this is one of the Human Resources policies being updated as mentioned in the Personnel Committee report. We are actively working on the safety culture, so this one seemed appropriate to start with. Notable changes include the addition of the Fair Safety Culture language and the duties of the Safety Committee. Commissioner Johnson inquired as to what is a fair safety culture. General Manager Warehime noted, it is a culture where employees are not afraid to come forward with issues, near misses, and/or good catches and are not afraid of punishment. The accompanying procedure clearly lays out levels of discipline based on the severity of the offense. After discussion, Commissioner Doyal moved to approve the Safety Policy as presented. Commissioner Vetter seconded the motion. All Commissioners voting Aye, the motion passed.

Position on Greenhouse Gas Emissions

General Manager Warehime noted a questionnaire he sent out to the Commissioners to gauge their positions on green house gas emissions and whether OPU should state a position. Mr. Warehime noted, he found the process valuable and appreciated the different feedback he received. Each Commissioner recapped their positions. At the end of the discussion, a consensus was reached that there will not be a public stance made nor announced. Our goal as a utility is to educate the public on what cost and reliability may look like in a carbon-free environment.

General Manager/Staff Report

General Manager Warehime invited the Commissioners to attend the SMMPA Board meeting being held at OPU on September 13th. He further updated them on the progress of the history book noting "reminiscing" sessions will be held with retirees the end of September. He further noted, OPU and its employees were recognized by the United Way as one of their top 20 most generous companies in the community for what we raise by employees. Mr. Warehime concluded with an update to the outage at the library and how it tied back to the outage management system. Data is still being collected and sorted through. He will report back as soon as an answer is received.

Director, Information Technology and Metering Services Baum asked the Commission for direction and approval of an unbudgeted project related to the audio/visual system in the Morehouse Conference room. He noted the total cost of the project will be approximately \$70,850 without overheads and will include a whole

room system with 8 ceiling mounted microphones. He noted, not only will it help with the audio during the Commission meeting, it will also provide for a better experience during all-employee meetings for the employees attending virtually. After discussion, Commissioner Doyal moved to proceed forward with an unbudgeted project not to exceed \$77,000 for audio/visual equipment in the Morehouse Conference Room. Commissioner Vetter seconded the motion. All Commissioners voting Aye, the motion passed.

Commission Roundtable

Commissioner Doyal expressed his appreciation for all the work that went into the fair booth including his appreciate for the people who worked the booth. He noted it was well constructed, had good information and caught people's eyes.

Audience Comments

Roger Wacek expressed his concerns with what he viewed as inaccuracies related to the life expectancy of solar arrays and asked for this information to be changed in the newsletter.

Donn Robinson discussed the continuing rust issues at his residence. He noted, the street was dug up and it was determined it was not his house causing the issue, it was something outside. He further noted there are still rust issues.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Commission, the meeting adjourned at 5:24 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Tammy Schmoll
Executive, Communications and Administration Coordinator