

Regular Lake Geneva Utility Commission Meeting
Wednesday, August 23, 2017 – 4:00 PM
Conference Room 2A, City Hall – 626 Geneva Street

Minutes

Call Meeting to Order by Pres. Lyon at 4:00 P.M.

Roll Call - Members present: President Dennis Lyon, Ald. Cindy Flower, Ald. Rich Hedlund, Brett Stanczak and Mark Johnson **Staff in attendance:** Josh Gajewski, Utility Director; Jo Busch, Office Manager; Blaine Oborn, City Administrator

Comments from the Public as allowed by Wis. Stats § 19.84(2), limited to items on this agenda except for public hearing items. Comments will be limited to 5 minutes.

None.

Approve Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Flower/Stanczak motion to approve the minutes of July 26, 2017 as prepared and distributed. Passed 5-0.

Acknowledgement of Correspondence

None.

Financials Update

Gajewski reported the financial information through the end of July.

Hedlund/Flower motion to approve the financials as presented. Passed 5-0.

Approval of the July Bills

Hedlund/Johnson motion to approve the July bills. Passed 5-0.

Directors Report

Gajewski reported that all of the communications equipment has now been removed from the Host Tower. The welder has been mobilized and once he has finished welding the cell carrier brackets, the painters will start the pressure washing, sand blasting and then the painting. We have done a lot of work in preparation of taking the Host Tower offline in an effort to preempt any demand issues. The Wastewater roof project is moving forward and all the plan drawings have been submitted and approved. We will need to replace more insulation than we hoped but the insulation was included in the bid already. With regard to staffing, we have made an offer to our Wastewater Operator candidate pending the pre-employment physical and drug screen which is scheduled for this week. The AT&T upgrades at Dodge Tower are now complete. Flower asked that Main Street be added to the Directors report for next month.

Discussion/Update on Utility Commission tour dates

Discussion was held regarding the best date for a Commission tour. It was decided that Friday September 29 with an 8:30am start would be best with Friday October 6 being set as a rain date. Oborn would like to do something similar with other departments like Public Works but he will do this on a separate day. Gajewski will extend the invitation to all Council members, Department Heads and City staff.

Discussion/Action/Recommendation on Utility Commission Software Upgrade

Gajewski reported that of the three software companies that demonstrated their product, we have narrowed it down to two. He explained some of the advantages of upgrading the software. The quotes will be going to the Finance Committee at their next meeting in September. The upgrade would be a joint venture between the City and the Commission resulting in a combined software system. Lyon said the Commission supports

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a software upgrade in conjunction with the City and our preference would be to stay with Civic Systems. Gajewski said there is still some discussion to be had but Civic Systems are the lower cost option and would be the easiest transition for the Commission. Flower asked if the City feel the same. Oborn said preliminary discussion with City staff indicate that they do. Flower asked what the annual support fees look like. Gajewski said that Civic Systems were the most cost effective and include software for life upgrades. Hedlund asked how we would be prorating the cost with the City. Gajewski said he and Busch had worked through the numbers first by splitting the cost per user and then by functions specific to each department and the cost allocations were similar for both options. Lyon said he had participated in the Civic Systems demonstration that was given last year when the Commission first considered an upgrade and he was very impressed. With new software we will have capabilities such as e-billing which is often requested by customers.

Flower/Hedlund motion to proceed with the City to upgrade the current software platform with a prorated amount to be shared by the Utilities for the associated purchasing and annual maintenance costs. Passed 5-0.

Discussion/Action/Recommendation on Utility Commission office staffing in response to transfer of Treasury Functions to City Hall

Gajewski said the City Council adopted the ordinance to move Treasury functions from the Utility to the City with an anticipated start date of January 1, 2018. This transfer will go hand in hand with our software upgrade. He has been asked to decide on our office staffing in response to this anticipated change. The City Administrator has offered for our current Bookkeeper to transfer to the City and become a City employee. The City Administrator would like an answer on whether or not this person intends to transfer so that he can begin any recruiting if necessary. The biggest concern is staffing of our front office and although new software should bring efficiencies in workload, it is unknown at this time what those will be. Going to an office staff of two means there may be times that the Water Superintendent or the Utility Director has to provide office cover and take payments.

Lyon said we know that to take our office staff from the small number of three down to two creates problems in terms of both customer service and office cover. He would like to see the existing staff stay in place and the person who handles the treasury functions now, continue to do so for the City while based at the Commission office because the proposed software upgrade would make this possible. He believes it is best for the person who is handling and coding invoices to be close to the source that created the transaction. He feels that not just from the Commission's point of view but from an overall point of view it's worth considering that we have the treasury integration in such a way that it leaves the person at the Utility.

Oborn said he came from a place with a small workforce and he sometimes took payments. He thinks there are ways around this issue including using part time staff. Originally he wanted to have complete consolidation with everyone in one location and cross train and he was voted down by the Council. The whole point of efficiency is to have staff perform multiple functions. For example, payroll will be done in the blink of an eye as they already issue 250 W2's whereas the Utility only have 12 so this area will see consolidation savings. On the billing side, there is not separate billing for any other department and he thinks it's questionable if the Utility was ever legally allowed to do their own financing. He doesn't think it's going to be possible for the person performing these functions to be based at the Utility as their job will entail other areas. For example account payables will include coding for the Utility but also for the Street Department and the other departments. He is in favor of sharing staff and would be willing to send staff down to provide office cover if needed. He feels that if the Utility are worried about staffing then all the functions should come to City Hall and he will provide staff to do it all.

Lyon said he thinks that it is still unclear what is expected in terms of workload. If 30% of the position's workload is actually staying at the Commission then how are we accommodating that?

Oborn said that the current Public Works functions will be relocated from the Utility office. In terms of bill paying the City are going to code them, batch them and then pay them. He thinks the issue is really just staffing and covering the office.

Gajewski explained that there is just too much right now that we don't know in terms of new software improving efficiencies etc. Discussion followed. Busch said she feels the current bookkeeper should remain in place at least until the new software is installed to facilitate a smooth transition. She wants the Commission to understand that customer service will be affected if we go from three staff to two and wonders how it can be cost effective to pull the Superintendent or the Director from their duties to answer the phone or take payments. Discussion followed. Busch expressed concern that the Commission will end up paying for the City to handle the treasury functions but also have to pay for a part time person on top of that. Oborn said he does intend to charge the Commission for the work they do for us. He reinforced that he believes the best option is to downgrade the Commission and absorb it into the City. He hopes that in the long term he'll have staff enough to share positions with the Utility. Flower appreciates the thought of sharing staff but doesn't believe that this is realistic in practice. Discussion followed.

Lyon feels that we need to wait and see what the needs of the Commission are going to be once the treasury transition has taken place before we make a staffing decision. If the City needs to hire somebody and our bookkeeper takes the position then we would need to reconsider but right now we have too many unanswered questions to change our current staffing level.

Oborn said he intends to charge somewhere between 2/3 and 100% of the cost of the current bookkeeper but that is negotiable. If we decide to keep a full time person then he considers it adding staff which he does not agree to. He would prefer that the Utility bookkeeper transfers to the City.

Flower said it seems from what she's heard, that the full time position we currently have is not going to be full time after the transition and this needs to be expressed to staff. Discussion followed. Details of the future staffing plans will be discussed with office staff, so that a decision can be reached on the potential need for recruitment. This information will then be sent to City Hall for any necessary action.

Closed Session/Open Session

The Commission did not enter into Closed Session.

Adjournment

Hedlund/Stanczak motion to adjourn. Passed 5-0.

Meeting was adjourned at 5:45 P.M.

Next meeting set for Wednesday, September 20, 2017 – 4pm at City Hall, Room 2A

/s/ Jo Busch, Utility Office Manager

THESE MINUTES ARE NOT OFFICIAL UNTIL APPROVED BY THE LAKE GENEVA UTILITY COMMISSION