



Utility Commission Meeting Minutes

Thursday, February 27, 2025 at 6:00 PM

Columbus City Hall – 105 N. Dickason Boulevard

Call to Order

Michael Thom called the meeting to order at 6:00pm.

Roll Call

Members present included: Joe Hammer, Molly Finkler, Michael Thom, Brook Andler, and Sandy Curtis. Reagan Rule was absent. Clerk Caine was present to record the minutes.

Notice of Open Meeting

Noted as posted.

Approval of Agenda

Motion made by Hammer, Seconded by Finkler to approve the agenda. Motion carried on a unanimous voice vote.

Public Comment - None.

Consent Agenda

Motion made by Hammer, Seconded by Curtis to approve the Consent Agenda which included meeting minutes from 01/23/2025, Electrical Outage Report at 636 Hamilton Street on February 6, 2025, and approval of cash disbursements report and accounts payable. Motion carried on a unanimous voice vote.

Unfinished Business

4. Columbus Wastewater Utility Finalized Sewer Rate Case Adjustment Proposals:

Bridgot Gysbers from Ruckert Mielke presented the Columbus Utilities Sewer Rate Study to the Commission members. The study's purpose was to develop a rate structure that ensures adequate revenues to meet operating, maintenance and capital expenditures for 2025, and to develop rate projections for the next five years that has a fair allocation of costs for all user groups.

Ruckert Mielke evaluated six alternatives based on feedback received prior from the Utility. They selected Alternative 2 which provides a volume-based rate structure for Fall River and Elba allowing them to contribute more to the system. The Utility in this alternative is still receiving an increase in fixed meter charges, whereas the volume rates in Columbus will stay the same. Discussion by members included volume charges, key findings of the study with specifics to Alternative 2, adjustments to the capital structure, and a timeline schedule.

Motion made by Thom, Seconded by Hammer to adopt a finalized sewer rate case adjustment Alternative 2 with a 56% fixed rate for residents of the City of Columbus for Waster water and a flow charge of \$6.35/100 cu. ft. for everyone connected, all customers. Motion carried on a 5-0 Roll Call vote.

5. Action Item from January 23, 2025 Columbus Utility Commission Meeting - Vacation Accrual Balances:

Utilities Director Jacob Holbert reported that the scheduled vacation, planned and remaining, is back in alignment and that task is completed.

New Business

6. Exempt Utilities Employees Removal of Compensation Time:

Holbert shared that this is a proposal from City to remove time-and-a-half for compensation time for salaried exempt employees of Utilities and replace it with flex time, which is a one to one hour ratio after forty hours, and accrues up to a maximum total of 40 hours. This would align with the other city salaried employees. There is no payout of flex time at the end of the year it does not carry over.

Motion made by Finkler, Seconded by Thom to approve the exempt Utilities employees removal of Compensation Time to be replaced with Flex Time. Motion carried on a unanimous voice vote.

7. Purchase of Midwest Chemical and Equipment Polymer Skid for Wastewater:

Holbert shared that this was an emergency rental expense incurred last year at a rate of \$350/month. Holbert was approached by Midwest Chemical & Equipment if there would be interest in an out-right purchase of the unit. If purchased now (February) it would cost \$9,813. If we continue to rent the skid through the end of 2025, the cost in December to purchase would be \$8,763. There would be a savings of \$1,050, but we would have paid an additional \$3,500 in rent during that time. If purchased, it would become a backup once the new system is put in service. He is requesting approval of the purchase. It was brand new when the rental started and has a life expectancy of 10 - 15 years.

Motion made by Thom, Seconded by Finkler to approve purchase of the Polymer Skid for Wastewater at a price not to exceed \$9,813. Motion carried on a 5-0 Roll Call vote.

8. Final Closeout Packet for Waterloo Street and Meister Park Lift Station Capital Projects:

Motion made by Hammer, Seconded by Curtis to approve final payment and closeout for all change orders associated with the Waterloo Street and Meister Park Lift Station Capital Projects in the amount of \$322,860.75. Motion carried on a 5-0 Roll Call vote.

Reports

9. MEUW Live Lines February 2025

The February issue of LIVELines newsletter was included in the packet for review.

10. Des Moines Wastewater Reclamation Authority Biogas to RNG to Injection Project

Holbert spoke about the WRA Municipal Case Study on Biogas - RNG - Pipeline Injection by Tim Runde with the Des Moines WRA. The study shows the breakdown of income and return of investment received. In comparison, Columbus Utilities currently receives 60% of loadings from waste haulers, whereas Des Moines receives 40%. This has been shown to work as a regional process for bio solids and waste resources, so Holbert is curious how Columbus could move towards a similar set up and become a hub for a similar project in the future.

Hammer also reported that both he and Michelle Kaltenberg attended the MEUW Legislative Rally at the State Capitol and were able to meet with Senato Sarah Keyeski, and Assembly Member, Maureen McCarville. The ROFR Bill was the main topic of discussion.

Adjourn

Motion made by Finkler, Seconded by Hammer to adjourn at 6:59pm. Motion carried on a unanimous voice vote.

Next Columbus Utility Commission Meeting: Thursday March 20th @ 6:00PM Council Chambers - City Hall

*A quorum of city committees and/or commissions may be present at this meeting. No action will be taken or considered by those committees and/or commissions.