

**MINUTES
CITY OF LAKE WORTH BEACH
ELECTRIC UTILITY CITY COMMISSION MEETING
CITY HALL COMMISSION CHAMBER
TUESDAY, JUNE 29, 2021
IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING
THE SPECIAL CITY COMMISSION MEETING**

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Resch on the above date at 6:17 PM in the City Commission Chamber located at City Hall, 7 North Dixie Highway, Lake Worth Beach, Florida.

ROLL CALL: Present were Mayor Betty Resch; Vice Mayor Herman Robinson and Commissioners Sarah Malega, Christopher McVoy (via Zoom) and Kimberly Stokes. Also present were Interim City Manager Juan Ruiz, City Attorney Christy L. Goddeau and Deputy City Clerk Melissa Ann Coyne.

AGENDA - Additions/Deletions/Reordering:

There were no additions or changes to the agenda.

PRESENTATIONS: (there is no public comment on Presentation items)

A. City's Net Metering Program Update

Ed Liberty, Electric Utility Director, spoke about the program background definitions, history, and legal requirements. He explained that Net-Metering typically referenced the customer-owned renewable electric generation systems installed behind the meter on the customers' premises which netted their electric purchases with their own electric production. He stated that there were six system in 2010 when the program began and had grown to 156 systems currently. He said that Resolution 34-2012 added net metering rates and set a size limit of 10kw and the prior commission approved changes in 2019 mirroring those of utilities statewide such as reaffirmation of the previous system size limit, establishing a cap on total Kw allowed, removing the exemptions from minimum bills and establishing program rules and interconnection agreements. He iterated that a cap was necessary as a precautionary measure based on actual experience during "island operations" and the city's power plant units are not equipped to power swings the cap would be revisited when the second transmission line was operational. He reported that the EU was rapidly approaching the cap and staff needed policy direction regarding non-compliant installations.

Discussion ensued regarding the enforcement of the signing of the interconnection agreements, which was required by state law.

Joel Rutsky, Revenue Protection Manager, stated that the city had the documentation for the systems and made it very easy for the customers to sign the agreement. He said that no one had objected to the agreements, some are just ignoring the notifications. He iterated that any systems that were installed without a permit would have to be removed.

Mayor Resch asked if the commission would give consensus to send final notices with large lettering and then disconnect their systems.

Mr. Rutsky asked what the legal ramifications were of shutting off the systems.

Commissioner Malega stated that the city rules needed to be enforced and it was unfair that people were waiting to install systems because some had not signed the agreements.

Commissioner McVoy opined that it needed to be made clear that the customer would not get credit for their electric power and would not be cut off from electric.

City Attorney Goddeau said that she would work with Mr. Liberty and Mr. Rutsky to bring back a letter and press release as an agenda item.

Mr. Rutsky said that there could not be any new solar customers because the 14 people were on the grid, but not in compliance.

Mr. Liberty stated that the customers would be visited in person to get them to sign the agreements. He said that the concept of a cap was neither new nor illegal; the city had a technical cap. He iterated that utilities had wide latitude to disconnect a customer from the system.

Consensus was to bring the agreement back at a future meeting.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION OF NON-AGENDAED ITEMS AND CONSENT AGENDA:

Deputy City Clerk Coyne read the following public comments submitted online:

Emily Abbott wrote to request that residents be able to install solar systems at their homes.

Vice Mayor Robinson stated that the city should be known for encouraging solar and asked if the cap would go away in 2022.

Mr. Liberty responded that the cap would be revisited, but there would be a cap.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Action: Motion made by Commissioner Malega and seconded by Commissioner McVoy to approve the following minutes:

A. April 27, 2021

Vote: Voice vote showed: AYES: Mayor Resch, Vice Mayor Robinson and Commissioners Malega, McVoy and Stokes. NAYS: None.

CONSENT AGENDA:

There were no Consent Agenda items on the agenda.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

There were no Public Hearings on the agenda.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

There were no Unfinished Business items on the agenda.

NEW BUSINESS:

A. Payment of Credit and Debit Card Fees associated with customer payment of utility bills

Mr. Liberty explained that there was a fee to process credit card transactions that had risen to a \$400,000 cost to the city and was a significant expense. He said that Franco Bellitto, Customer Service Manager, had been investigating a solution and found that many utilities and other agencies charge the customer a fee for using a credit card. He stated that the EUAB favored shifting the fee to the customers.

Comments/requests summary:

1. Commissioner Stokes expressed concern about passing costs on to customers.

Mr. Bellitto replied that some customers were using rewards cards which had higher fees, but customers could pay by check and not pay a fee. He stated that any fees that were charged would be passed on to the customer. He said that the cost was \$3.25 per \$500 charge.

2. Commissioner Malega asked about the payment schedule and said that it was confusing. She inquired about paying by electronic check.

Mr. Bellitto agreed that it was confusing but the vendor insisted on having the schedule. He said that there would not be a fee for auto debits from a checking account, only if Paymentus handled the payment.

3. Commissioner Stokes inquired how long the city had been using Paymentus and what other quotes had been received.

Mr. Bellitto said that the city switched to Paymentus two years ago and was the certified preferred partner to Naviline.

4. Commissioner Malega expressed concern about the high fees.

Mr. Bellitto said that he negotiated and could not get the fee reduced. He explained that the fee was based on average bill amounts and that the EUAB had given consensus to charge the fee.

5. Commissioner McVoy inquired if the equity issue could be addressed.

Mr. Bellitto stated that people could set up electronic bill pay without any additional charges. He said that the new bank will do electronic transfers in the future rather than sending a paper check which then had to be opened by the vendor.

6. Commissioner Stokes asked if there had been a survey about credit card use.

Mr. Bellitto stated that there would be notices created in three languages with options for paying without fees if the item were approved. He said that the notice could be put in every bill before the October 1 deadline so some customers could get three notices. He said that there was a one-time \$25 discount for people who signed up for paperless billing and autopay.

Mayor Resch asked if there were any public comments. No one from the public commented.

Action: Motion made by Commissioner Malega and seconded by Vice Mayor Robinson to approve of Credit and Debit Card Fees associated with customer payment of utility bills.

Vote: Voice vote showed: AYES: Mayor Resch, Vice Mayor Robinson and Commissioners Malega, McVoy and Stokes. NAYS: None.

B. Amendment to Task Order No. 3 with TeamworkNET Inc., for additional engineering design services for the Main Yard Substation Control House Protection and Control Project

Mayor Resch asked if there were any public comments. No one from the public commented.

Action: Motion made by Commissioner Malega and seconded by Commissioner Stokes to approve Amendment No. 3 to Task Order No. 3 with TeamworkNET Inc., to provide additional engineering design services for the Main Yard Substation Control House Protection and Control Project at a cost not to exceed \$85,190.

Vote: Voice vote showed: AYES: Mayor Resch, Vice Mayor Robinson and Commissioners Malega, McVoy and Stokes. NAYS: None.

C. Task Order No. 5 with TeamworkNET Inc., for engineering design services for the Main Yard Substation Control House Relay Protection and Controls

Mr. Liberty explained that the work was spread amongst the companies that could do the work.

Action: Motion made by Vice Mayor Robinson and seconded by Commissioner Malega to approve Task Order No. 5 with TeamworkNET Inc., for engineering design services for the Main Yard Substation Control House Relay Protection and Controls.

Vote: Voice vote showed: AYES: Mayor Resch, Vice Mayor Robinson and Commissioners Malega, McVoy and Stokes. NAYS: None.

D. Agreement with Milsoft Utility Solutions Inc., for software, data conversion and implementation of Milsoft Engineering Analysis, Outage Management System & Geographical Information System modules

Mr. Liberty said that he tasked Mr. Bellitto with creating new technologies. He stated that customers would be able to get answers to their questions through automation and that one day there would be integration through automation. He spoke about IVR (integrated voice recognition) that would be able to identify the customer's information and that all of the systems would be compatible.

Comments/requests summary:

1. Mayor Resch asked if there would be a person at the other end.

Mr. Bellitto stated that he had worked with AT&T to have a natural sounding language in English, Spanish and Creole, to answer simple questions to free up staff time. He said that there would be a way to speak with a person.

2. Commissioner Malega asked about the associated cost.

Mr. Bellitto replied that the cost was \$23,500 a year.

Mr. Liberty stated that the service would provide faster responses and the modeling tool would help the engineering staff to understand what the circuits could physically do.

3. Commissioner McVoy spoke in opposition to call centers where the operators did not know anything about the city and expressed skepticism about educating the customers. He said that technology should be used to push information out, but more live operators should be use.

Mayor Resch stated that the system would call to inform the customer of an outage.

Mr. Bellitto said that the timing could be adjusted to shorten the wait for a live person. He stated that the goal was to have a hybrid solution in phases with a call center for after hours and during emergencies.

Mayor Resch asked if there were any public comments. No one from the public commented.

Action: Motion made by Commissioner Malega and seconded by Vice Mayor Robinson to approve Agreement with Milsoft Utility Solutions Inc., for software, data conversion and implementation of Milsoft Engineering Analysis, Outage Management System & Geographical Information System modules.

Vote: Voice vote showed: AYES: Mayor Resch, Vice Mayor Robinson and Commissioners Malega, McVoy and Stokes. NAYS: None.

Mr. Liberty thanked the commission for their ongoing support.

ADJOURNMENT:

Action: Motion made by Commissioner Malega and seconded by Commissioner McVoy to adjourn the meeting at 8:01 PM.

Vote: Voice vote showed: AYES: Mayor Resch, Vice Mayor Robinson and Commissioners Malega, McVoy and Stokes. NAYS: None.

Betty Resch, Mayor

ATTEST:

Melissa Ann Coyne, Deputy City Clerk

Minutes Approved: July 27, 2021