

**MINUTES  
CITY OF LAKE WORTH BEACH  
ELECTRIC UTILITY CITY COMMISSION MEETING  
CITY HALL COMMISSION CHAMBER  
TUESDAY, JANUARY 26, 2021 – 6:00 PM**

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Triolo on the above date at 6:00 PM in the City Commission Chamber located at City Hall, 7 North Dixie Highway, Lake Worth Beach, Florida.

**ROLL CALL:** Present were; Mayor Pam Triolo; Vice Mayor Andy Amoroso; and Commissioners Scott Maxwell, Carla Blockson and Herman Robinson (via zoom). Also present were City Manager Michael Bornstein, City Attorney Christy L. Goddeau and Deputy City Clerk Melissa Ann Coyne.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** led by Vice Mayor Andy Amoroso.

**AGENDA - Additions / Deletions / Reordering:**

There were no changes to the agenda.

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION OF NON-AGENDAED ITEMS AND CONSENT AGENDA:**

Deputy City Clerk Coyne said that there were no public comments.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

There were no minutes on the agenda.

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

A. Electric Utility & Customer Service Presentation

- Update on outage caused by private tree trimming at 1029 S G Street on Dec 26, 2020

Ed Liberty, Electric Utility Director, gave status about the outage that had affected thousands of customers when the branches of a tree knocked out power. He stated that the EU was very upset as no prior notice of the tree trimming had been given; over 4,000 customers were without power for three hours. He reported that the repair had cost over \$6,000 and a claim would be pursued through the insurance company to recoup the costs. He said that the processes around tree trimming had to be revisited and the EU could assist.

Mayor Triolo asked if there was a list of customers with special medical needs.

Mr. Liberty replied that there was a list of people with medically essential equipment so that their power could be restored as quickly as possible.

City Manager Bornstein stated that the City coordinated with the assisted living facilities and there was an effort to remain aware of their circumstances.

Vice Mayor Amoroso asked if the contractor who was responsible had been identified.

Mr. Liberty responded that the owner of the property had been identified.

Vice Mayor Amoroso expressed concern that the property owner did not step forward. He requested that the City would hold the company responsible.

City Manager Bornstein said that there were some code issues which he would forward to the commission.

Commissioner Maxwell asked if there was a box on the utility application regarding needing special attention due to medical needs.

City Manager Bornstein stated that the issue could be addressed and added to the application.

- Update on Utility Payments and Payment Plans

Mr. Liberty introduced Franco Bellitto, Customer Service Manager. Mr. Bellitto reported that according to the aging report that tracked 30+ days past due accounts, the total of all utilities in arrears was \$547,425 or 10.8% broken down into \$57.39 or 5.5% of commercial, \$212,733 or 12.7% of residential and \$171,181 or 11.3% of water and sewer. He said that the number had increased from an average of 4% in the two previous years. He announced that as of January 19, 2021, 1196 payment plans totaling \$387,992.81 had been set up, 1116 residential and 80 commercial, with 39% paid and 32% delinquent. He stated that \$186,984 in assistance had been received from PBC since April 1, 2020, for 420 total accounts. He explained that the collection numbers were from customers who had closed their accounts and moved out of the City while leaving a balance, and that approximately \$425,000 was projected to be sent to collections for 2020, a 47% increase over 2019.

Mr. Liberty explained that if a customer in arrears attempted to open a new account in the City, they would be responsible for clearing up the balance on the previous account.

Commissioner Robinson asked if customers on the payment plan were delinquent and what would be done. He inquired if more staffing was needed.

Mr. Liberty replied that customers could work with customer service and make some form of payment to keep service connected.

Mr. Bellitto stated that staff was working overtime to help the customers stay on the payment plans and that extra staffing was not needed. He explained that there was a seven day delay after not receiving payment before the power was shut off and that only the electric was shut off, not the water. He iterated that most customers were calling the City an hour after having their service cut off; there was a 98% restoration rate of having the power restored within 24 hours. He said that there was outreach to ensure that no one was in a property without power, but that was no longer an issue.

Vice Mayor Amoroso asked if commercial properties were monitored for compliance and about the CARES Act.

Mr. Bellitto responded that there was a conservation team that would make field visits for any customers that did not call to have service restored. He said that the county had

more funding available from the CARES Act and was contacting the City on a daily basis.

City Manager Bornstein stated that the City was looking to recoup as much funding as possible.

Vice Mayor Amoroso suggested marketing the Care to Share aspect to inform customers that any donations would go to help neighbors who could not pay.

Mayor Triolo questioned if there could be a rounding up program.

City Manager Bornstein said that the City was a public entity without knowledge of whether a customer would qualify for assistance; the City had identified community partners to help those in need.

Mr. Liberty stated that a list of approved and vetted non-profit organizations would be provided to the commission formally in the future. He said that some residents had given money to help those in need and the charities would identify others requiring assistance.

- 3 Year Overview of EU Activities and Progress

Mr. Liberty said that customers should have seen an improvement in service and reliability. He explained that Davenport had put the slides together for the bond initiative which gave an overview of the structural and operational initiatives that had been undertaken to improve, control, measure and communicate electric system performance including: developing a monthly review and forecast of power supply costs, a monthly financial review of key performance indicators, restructuring of staff roles and responsibilities, improvement of labor contracts and pay rates, increased preventive maintenance, using AMI data to address potential problems and troubleshoot and improvement in storm response and recovery processes. He announced that the City's carbon footprint would be the lowest in the State by 2025 and a public information campaign with its own website was launched called City Owned Energy (COE). He said that the customer service processes had been improved including an after-hours call center, on-line outage reporting, 24/7 national payments and migrated to 100% remote customer service capability. He said that the EU was continuing to grow and use more energy. He stated that the SHRIP was a system-wide upgrade that would ensure that the City's electric systems and infrastructure were reliable and designed to weather big storms with a multi-year capital plan to replace older poles with newer, larger and stronger ones to stand up to Category 5 storms.

Vice Mayor Amoroso left the meeting at 6:56 PM and returned at 7:00 PM.

- Example(s) of the EU System Hardening and Reliability Improvement Projects (SHRIP)

Mr. Liberty spoke about the 26B1W13 Phase 1, North Loop Phases 1, 2 and 3 and South Loop Phase 1 Projects. He said that all system circuits were forced ranked by poorest performance and 26B1W13 had been ranked as the poorest performing. He stated that of the three-phase project, Phase 1 had been completed in July 2020 by an outside contractor at a cost of \$2,436,800 with 126 total poles replaced, 72 wood and

54 concrete, and 18 new transformers; since completion there had not been any breaker operations or lockouts, improving the reliability of service to 2,205 customers. He explained that it would take several years to update the entire system, but customers could expect improvements similar to those that had already been quantified after completion of Phase 1. He announced that Phases 2 and 3 were 95% designed with construction scheduled to begin by summer. He stated that completing the projects with the City's own resources was a productive use of in-house labor, a learning opportunity for larger scale work to come and had alleviated the immediate needs before the bond funds were available. He showed photos of the work that was done as well as the areas covered. He gave details of the north and south loop project phases including why they were necessary, what had been converted and completed. He spoke about evolving concerns of the failures of underground conductors installed in 1970s, all of which would need replacement and accelerated attention under SHRIP before the substations were built.

Mayor Triolo said that she was reflecting on the inception of the projects and the discussion of using EU staff and now the projects were in process using EU workers. She expressed pride in all of the EU team.

Vice Mayor Amoroso thanked Mr. Liberty and his staff for all of their hard work and asked how the pole attachment relationships were progressing.

Mr. Liberty replied that he gave credit for building the relationships to Paul Nicholas, Engineering Manager for Special Projects and the revenues were more appropriate.

Commissioner Blockson inquired when the residents on the west side would have work done.

Mr. Liberty responded that the work could begin as early as April but certainly by the summer.

Commissioner Robinson said that all of the citizens should be proud of the EU staff and the increased morale showed in the work being done.

Mr. Liberty stated that some early changes had not been well received, but over time a better system was built with a lot of work coming; many staff members were staying to support the system. He said that the employees were greatly valued and the system improvements had made staff feel better.

City Manager Bornstein stated that the significant amount of infrastructure improvements had positively impacted the quality of citizens' lives. He explained that the EU system had been neglected for 40 years and was being addressed; the EU was creating a brand for the City and making the City financially sustainable for the future. He expressed pride in the team under Mr. Liberty's leadership and thanked the commission for funding the needs of the EU. He stated that there were more great things to come.

Commissioner Maxwell thanked Mr. Liberty and his team and recalled the pushback from elected officials and residents but Mr. Liberty had turned the liability into a positive. He said that the realtor community should be informed about all of the work that had been done and there should be town hall meetings to show the residents where

the City was and where it was now as well as the green initiatives. He stated that a coal mine had been turned into a gold mine.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

**Action:** Motion made by Vice Mayor Amoroso and seconded by Commissioner Blockson to adjourn the meeting at 7:26 PM.

**Vote:** Voice vote showed: AYES: Mayor Triolo, Vice Mayor Amoroso and Commissioners Maxwell, Blockson and Robinson. NAYS: None.

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Pam Triolo, Mayor

ATTEST:

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Deborah M. Andrea, CMC, City Clerk

Minutes Approved: February 23, 2021