

**MINUTES
CITY OF LAKE WORTH BEACH
ELECTRIC UTILITY CITY COMMISSION MEETING
CITY HALL COMMISSION CHAMBER
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2021 – 6:00 PM**

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Triolo on the above date at 6:06 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. Also present were City Manager Michael Bornstein, City Attorney Christy L. Goddeau and Deputy City Clerk Melissa Ann Coyne.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: led by Commissioner Carla Blockson.

AGENDA - Additions / Deletions / Reordering:

There were no changes to the agenda.

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

Ed Liberty, Electric Utility Director, announced that there were four apprentice linemen who would be graduating and joining the EU staff and the electric vehicle charging stations were up and running at two locations with usage being tracked. He said that the electrical failures in Texas were the result of a perfect storm with many units being unavailable resulting in an increase of \$300,000 in the price of natural gas; the EU budget would be able to absorb the additional cost.

A. Customer Service Update

Mr. Liberty introduced Franco Bellitto, Customer Service Manager, who gave a roadmap of the new Customer Service projects. He said that a new vendor had been selected for the utility bills and that there would be a three to six month transition with a complete bill redesign. He stated that the vendor would save the City money and worked with several surrounding cities.

Mayor Triolo told Mr. Bellitto that the pricing for four color should be the same as black and white and to look at the cost difference for sending out separate bills.

Mr. Bellitto said that sending out two separate envelopes would be cost prohibitive.

Vice Mayor Amoroso asked where the physical bills would be mailed with the new vendor and if there was information about the drop box downtown.

Mr. Bellitto replied that the paper bills went to Tampa with a separate vendor for the lock box for the paper bills. He said that the redesigned bill would list all the ways to pay one's bill.

Mr. Bellitto explained that customer service hours had been Monday to Friday from 8 AM to 5 PM, after partnering with FMPA for a new vendor, hours had been extended to 8:00

AM to 8:00 PM seven days a week. He stated that there were customers calling multiple times a month with basic billing inquiries.

Mr. Liberty iterated that the City was notified when there was an outage and outages could be reported online. He stated that the calls could be whittled down with technology.

Vice Mayor Amoroso said that getting the right information out in different languages would be important. He expressed concern about the repeat calls.

Mr. Bellitto said that more messaging and technology were necessary. He iterated that currently customers called to ask simple questions and the changes to Call Management would utilize an AT&T hosted Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system with messaging in three languages; Phase 1 would be for the Customer Service line and Phase 2 for the Outage line.

Mayor Triolo asked if there could be a message about outages on the outage line.

Mr. Bellitto responded that there could be more detailed messaging in Phase 1 with targeted messaging in Phase 2.

Mr. Liberty said that the technology would be built to achieve those goals.

Vice Mayor Amoroso expressed concern about AT&T because there had been some problems with coverage and asked if Verizon had the same service available.

Mr. Bellitto responded that the coverage issues were related to cell towers while the IVR used computers and that there would be redundancy with vendors. He gave an update on the Prepay App (“Pay-as-you-go”) which worked like Sunpass and would eliminate the need for a deposit; when the balance was low, the customer would get an alert to replenish and service would be disconnected if funds were not added.

Vice Mayor Amoroso spoke in favor of pay-as-you-go and asked about the platform regarding issues during a storm.

Mr. Bellitto said that customers could pay online, by phone, drop a check in the drop box, pay cash at 7-11 or mail a check. He stated that the pay app vendor was not the issue, but rather the billing vendor causing the hold up. He said that all of the new changes would require a new Utility Billing Software. He explained that all of the other components relied on the CIS billing system, which was outdated and more expensive over time and the new software would allow for increased staff efficiency.

Mr. Liberty stated that the need for modern day tools affected water and sewer in addition to the electric utility. He said that the investment would be made to improve customer service.

Vice Mayor Amoroso asked if the outdated software was Naviline and suggested sending a survey to customers that would include a space for updating their contact information.

Mr. Bellitto responded that it was Naviline and agreed to getting updated information.

Commissioner Maxwell asked about the cost of disconnecting and reestablishing service on the Pay app versus not using the app and the fairness of one over the other.

Mr. Bellitto answered that the customer would need to have a remote meter.

Mr. Liberty said that remote meters were installed in areas with high turnover and the cost was negligible, whereas without a remote meter, a worker would have to go out to the location to turn service on and off. He stated that there would not be a charge to the customer to switch to a remote meter. He said that an incoming customer would have the option to go with pre-pay without a credit check or deposit, or set up traditionally requiring a credit check and a deposit.

Mr. Bellitto said that he would be able to offer the pay-as-you-go option to customers who had been disconnected as they could add a past due balance and pay it down with each replenishment.

Commissioner Blockson said that the pay-as-you-go option would be a great option as it was easier and beneficial. She asked how a customer would be notified when their account balance was running low.

Mr. Bellitto replied that the app would give a low balance alert and a final alert before disconnection.

Mr. Liberty said that automatic replenishment would be available.

Vice Mayor Amoroso said that the pay-as-you-go app would cut down on the number of calls.

City Manager Bornstein said that there would be a reduction in the City's exposure to being left with outstanding and unpaid bills.

B. SHRIP Project Presentation

Mayor Triolo said that she had talked with Mr. Gill about adding to the system which Naviline would not accommodate and it was great to see the progress towards automation.

Walt Gill, Electric Utility Assistant Director, gave an update about the 26B1W13 Western Circuit and Hooper Construction Projects. He showed what was covered in Phase 1 and said that all system circuits were forced ranked with 26B1W13 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 and there had been substantial improvements with a reduction of 82.7% in affected customers, less outages and a reduction in outage minutes. He said that Phases 2 and 3 were 95% designed with construction scheduled to begin by summer. He showed the extensive project area for Hooper Construction and stated that the circuits were rated the second, third and fourth poorest performing on the list. He explained that the area issues included old insulators, open wires, lack of animal guards and bad poles and that 1948 poles would need to be examined and corrected. He said that if issues were not addressed, fires could occur causing sustained and extended outages.

Mr. Liberty thanked the IBEW workers for their ingenuity in addressing the issue.

Mr. Gill stated that internal line crews had begun the work, but due to its magnitude, Hooper Construction would complete a substantial number of tasks including examining, repairing and replacing equipment at the cost of \$2.4 million which had been approved by the commission. He stated that the work would be substantially completed in 90 business days with final completion in 110 business days. He showed images of the work that had been completed by the EU staff.

Vice Mayor Amoroso asked why wooden poles would be used rather than cement poles and asked if door hangers would be enough information and if the City could use the other cities to disseminate the information.

Mr. Gill responded that all poles were rated by class and there would be a different mix of poles to strengthen the system. He said that the vendors would put out door hangers 72 hours in advance and the City would send automatic phone calls with the outage information to affected customers at 72, 48 and 24 hours.

Mr. Liberty said that a lot of what the EU was doing was based on best practices.

Mayor Triolo asked if EU workers would be used on other upgrades.

Mr. Liberty stated that crews were working on capital work six days a week, which also allowed for quicker response time to outages on the weekend. He said that the City did not have the equipment to lift concrete poles so contractors were needed for that work, but EU staff would continue to be used on various projects.

The meeting recessed at 7:52 PM and reconvened at 8:07 PM.

Commissioner Maxwell left the meeting at 7:52 PM.

C. Presentation of the Annual Report

Mr. Liberty said that the annual report would be both printed and posted on the website. He said that the EU had a plan and the funding and was moving forward. He reported that there were many large projects in the planning stages and other projects would ramp up in the coming months. He said that costs and wholesale prices were continuing to be reduced, the load was growing and \$44 million had been acquired and pledged to harden the system. He spoke about equitable access for customers so that payments could be made in cash in many locations around the state and country. He iterated that the EU was weather driven and had put \$14 million into the local community. He said that more solar would come online in 2023 going from 1.7% to over 37%, resulting in the lowest carbon footprint in the state of Florida by 2024, with the next level of investment in battery storage. He stated that the report contained both structural and occupational progress showing how the EU has progressed in the past three years.

Mayor Triolo said that residential rates would continue to be low and she looked forward to a conversation about commercial rates. She asked if there were incentives still in place.

Mr. Liberty stated that the EU desired to be equitable and correct. He said that residential rates were close to par but commercial rates would need to be addressed. He responded that there were still incentives available.

City Manager Bornstein said that years ago there was a fight over keeping or getting rid of the EU because many people left the City due to the high rates. He stated that the EU was now a valued asset and had become the brand to entice new residents and businesses to the City. He gave kudos to the commission for approving the bonds to allow the infrastructure to be addressed and for turning around the EU to be a source of pride for the City. He expressed gratitude to the EU staff for what the team had been able to do and said that the improvement could not be overstated.

The commission thanked Mr. Liberty for his hard work.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION OF NON-AGENDAED ITEMS AND CONSENT AGENDA:

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Action: Motion made by Vice Mayor Amoroso and seconded by Commissioner Blockson to approve the following minutes:

A. January 26, 2021

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

CONSENT AGENDA: (public comment allowed during Public Participation of Non-Agendaed items)

Action: Motion made by Vice Mayor Amoroso and seconded by Commissioner Robinson to approve the Consent Agenda.

A. First Amendment to the Purchase Agreement with Gresco Utility Supply, Inc for Single-Phase Voltage Regulators

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

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

There were no Public Hearing items on the agenda.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

There were no Unfinished Business items on the agenda.

NEW BUSINESS:

A. Resolution 06-2021 and Local Funding Agreement with the Florida Department of Transportation for Signalization & Street Lighting Improvements along Dixie Highway between Lake Avenue and Lucerne Avenue

City Attorney Goddeau did not read the resolution.

RESOLUTION NO. 06-2021 OF THE CITY OF LAKE WORTH BEACH, FLORIDA, APPROVING THE LOCALLY FUNDED AGREEMENT WITH THE STATE OF FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION FOR THE SR-802 (NORTH DIXIE HIGHWAY) SIGNALIZATION AND LIGHTING IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT; AUTHORIZING THE EXPENDITURE OF \$44,443 AS THE CITY'S SHARE OF THE PROJECT; AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR TO EXECUTE THE AGREEMENT AND ALL RELATED DOCUMENTS; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE; AND, FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Action: Motion made by Vice Mayor Amoroso and seconded by Commissioner Robinson to approve Resolution 06-2021 and Local Funding Agreement with the Florida Department of Transportation for Signalization & Street Lighting Improvements along Dixie Highway between Lake Avenue and Lucerne Avenue

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

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

ADJOURNMENT:

Action: Motion made by Vice Mayor Amoroso and seconded by Commissioner Blockson to adjourn the meeting at 8:27 PM.

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

Betty Resch, Mayor

ATTEST:

Deborah M. Andrea, CMC, City Clerk

Minutes Approved: March 30, 2021