

**MINUTES  
CITY OF LAKE WORTH BEACH  
ELECTRIC UTILITY CITY COMMISSION MEETING  
CITY HALL COMMISSION CHAMBER  
TUESDAY, APRIL 27, 2021 - 6:00 PM**

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Resch on the above date at 6:01 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 and Kimberly Stokes. Also present were Assistant City Manager Juan Ruiz, City Attorney Christy L. Goddeau and Deputy City Clerk Melissa Ann Coyne.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** led by Commissioner Sarah Malega.

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

Mr. Liberty requested to speak briefly about the recent outages.

**Action:** Motion made by Commissioner Malega and seconded by Vice Mayor Robinson to allow Mr. Liberty to add a brief overview of recent outages.

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

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

A. (added) Recent Outage Events & Causes

Ed Liberty, Electric Utility Director, spoke about the recent electrical outages, the number of affected customers and the length of the outages. He explained that the outages had been caused by animals, lightning, switch failures and vegetation, many of which were outside of the EU's control, and the length of the outages ranged from 28 minutes to one hour and 18 minutes.

Mayor Resch asked when and where the information would be posted.

Mr. Liberty replied that he could email the outage information as well as have it posted on the website.

B. Presentation regarding payment plan

Mr. Liberty stated that service disconnects had been discontinued during the pandemic and a payment plan was instituted to allow customers to catch up and repay late bills.

Franco Bellitto, Customer Service Manager, gave an overview of the payment plan stating that there were 1194 plans, the original amount due was \$990,605 of which 59.8% or

\$592,346 had been repaid and 333 accounts were past due. He explained that the residential plans were for a 12-month period while the commercial plans were for 24 months; eligibility ended on October 1, 2020 when disconnects were reinstated. He said that he and his team were working compassionately with customers to help them keep current on their plans.

Commissioner Malega asked for the breakdown of the past due accounts into residential and commercial customers and the amount commercial properties were being asked to pay.

Mr. Bellitto replied that he would provide the breakdown and the payment plan was determined by the amount due divided by 24 months added to their monthly bill.

Mayor Resch relayed that a resident had reported that her power was shut off because the bill had not reflected the payment plan amount and asked if that could have happened.

Mr. Bellitto said that they were working on a case by case basis to prevent shut offs and often times the paper bill crossed with the payment in the mail.

Commissioner Malega asked how many commercial customers were still in business and if their security deposits could be used for repayment.

Mr. Liberty responded that those on a payment plan would still be in business, commercial deposits could not be returned until the account was closed and could not be used for repayment; the commission would have to change the policy.

Commissioner Stokes asked if those in arrears were still paying their monthly bills.

Mr. Bellitto responded that it varied by account and to be current, both the monthly charges and repayment amount had to be paid.

Mayor Resch asked if the annex was open and if a person would get a customer service representative.

Mr. Liberty explained that the annex closed to cash payments in December 2019, which alleviated about 4,000 occurrences of monthly foot traffic, and since March 2020, accounts could be opened or closed by phone or email.

Mr. Bellitto answered that initial contact would be to the call center and the call would be transferred to a city staff member when needed. He said that the call center typically received 300-400 calls a day, but on Mondays received 800-900 calls.

Mr. Liberty stated that customer service could be reached 12 hours a day, seven days a week and the outage line operated 24/7.

Commissioner Malega asked about late fees and requested that the EU not disconnect customers on Fridays.

Mr. Liberty responded that there were no late fees during the pandemic, but had resumed on October 1. He said that customers could pay 24/7 and therefore their power would be restored right after the bill was paid.

Mr. Bellitto said that customer service could reconnect the power remotely.

Commissioner McVoy asked why the EU did not contact customers proactively who were late on their bills and if customers could be required to provide email addresses or cell numbers.

Mr. Bellitto stated that customers received late notices and were not disconnected until the 42<sup>nd</sup> day; the EU was working on getting email addresses or cell phone numbers.

Commissioner McVoy asked about the percentage of customers on the automated (AMI) system and suggested pushing a text regarding outages.

Mr. Liberty replied that almost 100% were on the AMI system, but a handful of customers refused to allow the automatic meters. He stated that customers did not need to report outages because the EU knew when outages occurred; the existing technology was outdated and could not send information about outages to customers. He said that there was an outage map on the website.

Discussion ensued about how to move forward with the technology related to outages.

Commissioner Stokes said that it might take time for customers to catch up with the payment processes that were available and the picture on the website showed City Hall, not the annex.

Mr. Liberty stated that there was a drop box at the annex for customers to drop bill payments.

Vice Mayor Robinson asked if there was a way to extend the time to shut off the water and what the time frame was for the Naviline contract.

Mr. Bellitto replied that he and his team worked with customers on a case by case basis to prevent shutoffs.

Juan Ruiz, Assistant City Manager, said that Naviline was on a yearly contract.

Mr. Bellitto went over the assistance payments that had been received by PBC, the number of outreach calls that had been made and the aging report showing the accounts that were 30/60 days past due.

Mr. Liberty explained that collections happened after the account received the final bill.

Mr. Bellitto stated that the collection numbers were tracked, unpaid balances were sent to a collection agency after 60 days and only 12% were recovered.

Commissioner Malega asked if the collection debt was written off.

Bruce Miller, Financial Services Director, replied that receivables were written off annually.

City Attorney Goddeau explained that there would be a lien on the property for an

uncollected debt; some would be collected when the property changed hands.

Mr. Liberty stated that a tenant could not open up a new account until the balance on the previous account was paid. He said that 85% of collections were for residential customers and the deposit policy would be brought before the commission in the future.

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

Deputy City Clerk Coyne stated that there were no public comments submitted online.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

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

A. March 30, 2021

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

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

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

A. Second 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

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

**PUBLIC HEARINGS:**

There were no Public Hearings on the agenda.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

There were no Unfinished Business items on the agenda.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

A. Task Order No. 5 with Power Engineers, Inc. to complete engineering design and support during construction for the new Canal 8-Bay Distribution Substation

Mr. Liberty explained that the canal station, where the new tie line would come in, required a new substation.

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 Task Order No. 5 with Power Engineers, Inc. to complete engineering design and support during construction for the new Canal 8-Bay Distribution Substation.

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

**ADJOURNMENT:**

**Action:** Motion made by Vice Mayor Robinson and seconded by Commissioner Stokes to adjourn the meeting at 7:24 PM.

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

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Betty Resch, Mayor

ATTEST:

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Deborah M. Andrea, CMC, City Clerk

Minutes Approved: May 25, 2021