

The Owatonna Public Utilities Commission met in regular session via Microsoft Teams. Present were Commissioners Doyal, Keilman, Kottke, Rossi and Johnson. Also present were General Manager Warehime; City Administrator Busse; Director, Finance & Administration Olson; Director, Field Operations & Engineering Fenstermacher; Director, Engineering Johnson; Manager, Human Resources Madson; Supervisor, Accounting Linders; Supervisor, Meter Services Johnson; Executive, Communications & Administration Coordinator Schmoll; and Key Accounts/Energy Conservation Officer Hendricks. Also present were employees Kate Scheurer, Shanda Meier, Lori Jerpbak and Timothy Kalis.

President Doyal called the meeting to order and asked for approval of the agenda, including the consent agenda items. The consent agenda items include the Minutes from the regular meeting of December 22, 2020, the Contributed Services Report as of December 31, 2020 and the annual policy review of the Distribution Generation Rules. Commissioner Kottke moved to approve the consent agenda as submitted. Commissioner Keilman seconded the motion. On roll-call, all Commissioners voting Aye, the motion passed.

Committee Reports

Finance Committee – Commissioner Kottke reported the Finance Committee met, reviewed and approved disbursements totaling \$6,802,905.28. Mr. Kottke further reported Work Orders completed in 2020 are about 17% underbudget. There are 15 work orders carrying forward to 2021. Mr. Kottke concluded by reporting the Committee discussed reimplementing late fees to the customers. General Manager Warehime added, OPU stopped charging late fees as a response to the Governor’s executive order to waive late fees for customers affected by COVID. The easiest way to comply was to not charge them to anyone. With reinstating them, if someone is affected by COVID, they can contact us and we’ll waive the fees. After discussion, the Commission agreed to reimplement late fees to customers beginning with the March billings.

Personnel Committee – Commissioner Keilman reported the Personnel Committee met and received a staffing update. The update included, there are two internal applicants for the Electric Design Engineer position as well as one internal candidate for the Electric Engineering Technician position. An offer was made and accepted by Timothy Kalis for Electric Design Engineering and interviews were upcoming for the Electric Engineering Technician. There are a couple budgeted positions that remain open, but they are not being filled at this time. Ms. Keilman further gave an update on safety and noted the Safety Committee is working on developing a program around leading indicators versus lagging indicators. The office officially reopened to the public on January 19, 2021.

City Administrator’s Report

City Administrator Busse reported, the Streetscape Project is moving forward. There is an in-person, open house type meeting scheduled for downtown folks and people who want to hear more about it. Ms. Busse further reported the new Park and Recreation Director has been hired. Her name is, Jenna Tuma, from the Minneapolis Park and Rec Agency. She has over 20 years’ experience and will be starting on February 8th. The City’s strategic planning session will be February 10th and 11th and will revisit the three-year strategic plan, including with how COVID affected the city, what they learned from it, and how they will handle a similar situation in the future. She concluded by reporting the joint task force with representatives from the City, County, School and OPU will be meeting the next day to review the public engagement platform, joint communication person and the high school.

Four Seasons Building Utilities Approval

General Manager Warehime recapped the history behind this agreement and noted it is to be reviewed annually. The agreement states up to \$100,000 of the Four Season's Building's utilities will be considered contributed services. This number represents about 75% of the overall annual bill which coincides with the percentage of Owatonna citizens who use the facility. After discussion, Commissioner Kottke moved to approve the agreement for another year. Commissioner Keilman seconded the motion. On roll-call, all Commissioners voting Aye, the motion passed.

Economic Development Policy

Key Account & Energy Conservation Office Hendricks presented the Economic Development Policy to the Commission. He noted, the changes being recommended are to align the policy with changes SMMPA has made in their program. The biggest change to the policy is that not all qualifying customers are required to have \$50,000 in state, federal or local economic development assistance. That number has been dropped to \$25,000 for customers looking to expand or new customers to Owatonna. The other change has to do with customers who are moving from one SMMPA member city to another and are expanding their load. After discussion, Commissioner Johnson moved to approve the Economic Development Policy as presented. Commissioner Kottke seconded the motion. On roll-call, all Commissioners voting Aye, the motion passed.

Line Extension Fees Policy

Director, Engineering Johnson presented the Line Extension Fees policy to the Commission and noted it will be replacing the Connection Fees policy. He noted, the Connection Fees policy was last updated in 1998 and labor costs have increased approximately 75%. Mr. Johnson discussed what other utilities are charging and discussed the benefits of the changes to the policy. After discussion, Commissioner Keilman moved to approve the policy as presented. Commissioner Johnson seconded the motion. On roll-call all Commissioners voting Aye, the motion passed.

Connection Fees Policy Cancellation

Director, Engineering Johnson reported this is the policy the Line Extension Fees policy will be replacing so it is recommended to cancel this older policy. Commissioner Kottke moved to cancel the Connection Fees Policy. Commissioner Johnson seconded the motion. On roll-call, all Commissioners voting Aye, the motion passed.

Temporary Electric Services Policy

Director, Engineering Johnson presented the Temporary Electric Services policy to the Commission. He noted, the policy was last updated in 1998 and mentioned it is a convenience for contractors. He discussed what other utilities are doing and discussed the benefits of updating the policy. Commissioner Johnson moved to approve the policy as presented. Commissioner Keilman seconded the motion. On roll-call, all Commissioners voting Aye, the motion passed.

Operations/Scorecard

There was not anything to note on the scorecard.

General Manager/Staff Report

General Manager Warehime introduced Kate Scheurer, OPU GIS Coordinator, to the Commission. Kate's presentation is the first in a series of monthly presentations the Commission will receive providing insights into each of the utility departments. Kate presented to the Commission on OPU's GIS department including an overview description of the department, department employees, equipment used, 2021 projects, and the collaboration with the City, County and other organizations for imagery flights that are conducted every 3 years.

General Manager Warehime discussed OPU's current strategic plan with the Commission. He discussed the process staff goes through, shared the picture of the future, the focus areas for the next three years, the outcomes for each focus area, and some of the action items for each outcome.

Commission Roundtable

All Commissioners were appreciative of the reports given by the staff.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Commission, the meeting adjourned at 5:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Tammy Schmoll
Executive, Communications & Administration Coordinator