

The Owatonna Public Utilities Commission met in regular session in the Morehouse Conference Room at the Owatonna Public Utilities. Present were Commissioners Zirngible, Johnson, Doyal and Vetter. Absent was Commissioner Rossi. Also present were General Manager Warehime; City Administrator Busse; Director, Finance & Administration Olson; Director, Engineering & Field Operations Fenstermacher; Director, Information Technology and Metering Baum; Manager, Human Resources Madson; Supervisor, Accounting Linders; Executive, Communications and Administration Coordinator Schmoll; Accountant Lori Jerpbak; Accounting Specialist Shanda Meier; and Gas/Water Design Engineer Anthony Lance. Other guests included City Councilmember Schultz.

President Zirngible called the meeting to order and led the Pledge of Allegiance. He then asked for approval of the agenda and the consent agenda. The consent agenda items contained the minutes from the September 26, 2023 Commission meeting as well as the contributed services report as of September 30, 2023. Commissioner Johnson moved to approve the agenda and consent agenda. Commissioner Doyal seconded the motion. All Commissioners voting Aye, the motion passed.

Committee Reports

Personnel Committee – Commissioner Vetter reported the Personnel Committee did not meet in September.

Finance Committee – Commissioner Doyal reported the Finance Committee met, reviewed and approved vouchers totaling \$5,899,842.41. He reported six work orders were completed coming in 7.5% underbudget. 28 out of 48 work orders have been completed to date. The Committee approved a work order for pouring a cement pad to house transformers. Due to the lead time on transformers, several are being bought ahead of time.

City Administrator's Report

City Administrator Busse reported the city council approved improvements to Merrill Hall with work to potentially begin in January. She further reported the community wide brand was approved. The process involved a wide range of people and included several survey responses and engagement with the community. The new tag line is "Where the extra mile takes you". She concluded by reporting the police and fire departments will be using the old Monson Eye Care building for training before it is demolished. The hands-on training is very helpful.

Drug and Alcohol-Free Workplace Policy

Manager, Human Resources Madson discussed changes to the Drug and Alcohol-free Workplace policy since the new Minnesota law legalizing cannabis went into effect on August 1, 2023. She explained there are three plans that cover the employees at OPU. They are the US Department of Transportation (DOT) Pipeline Drug & Alcohol Testing plan and the US DOT CDL Drug & Alcohol testing plan. She noted both plans are federally regulated and any changes to the Minnesota law does not affect the testing requirements of these plans. The third plan is a non-DOT pipeline or CDL drug testing plan and regulates drug and alcohol testing for job applicants and employees not covered under the other plans. OPU is required to conduct pre-employment and reasonable suspicion testing but will not request or require a job applicant to undergo cannabis testing as a condition of employment unless required by state or federal law or statutes. Mrs. Madson also discussed drug and alcohol testing requirements of contractors work on OPU's natural gas system. She noted, they must show documentation they are covered by a qualified anti-drug and alcohol program that meets all requirements. After discussion, Commissioner Vetter moved to approve the policy with a change in wording to item #5 under the general section. The wording will be changed from "Any drug or alcohol conviction occurring in the workplace while operating OPU-owned equipment or vehicles that will affect the requirements of the employee's job description shall be reported to the supervisor and Human Resources within 5 days of the

conviction” to “Any drug or alcohol conviction that will affect the requirements of the employee’s job description shall be reported by the employee to the supervisor and Human Resources within 5 days of the conviction.” Commissioner Doyal seconded the motion. All Commissioners voting Aye, the motion passed.

System Health Reports

Director, Engineering & Field Operations Fenstermacher; Gas/Water Design Engineering Anthony Lance and Director, Information Technologies & Metering Baum presented the Electric, Gas/Water and Technologies system health reports respectively. Commissioner Vetter inquired regarding driving factors for moving overhead to underground; specifics regarding the water ban policy, specifically the use of garden hoses; and cost benefits surrounding data analytics. Overhead to underground is determined by if the area can be sufficiently maintained or if the area has a major event such as straight-line winds. The water ban policy has several details that still need to be worked out and cost benefits for data analytics will be tracked to develop an accurate report of benefits.

General Manager/Staff Reports

General Manager Warehime reported a cost avoidance of \$200,000 has been reported on the scorecard due to a change in the asset management agreement.

Director, Engineering & Field Operations Fenstermacher updated the Commission on the grant OPU was part of noting the project did not get passed, so therefore we did not get the grant. The grant project was for FLISR fault location indicator, a system automation tool, and the next steps will involve the group getting back together to determine if it will be resubmitted.

Commission Roundtable

Commissioner Vetter inquired regarding adding capacity for generation to Owatonna. General Manager Warehime replied, our recommendation to SMMPA is to put SMMPA owned generation here in Owatonna.

President Zirngible will give an update from the SMMPA annual meeting at the next Commission meeting.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Commission, the meeting adjourned at 6:03 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Tammy Schmoll,
Executive, Communications & Administration Coordinator