

The Owatonna Public Utilities Commission met in regular session in the Morehouse Conference Room at the Owatonna Public Utilities. Present were Commissioners Zirngible, Ross, Doyal and Vetter. Absent was Commissioner Johnson. Also present were General Manager Warehime; Director, Finance & Administration Olson; Director, Engineering & Field Services Fenstermacher; Director, Information Technologies and Metering Baum; Manager, Human Resources Madson, Manager, Gas & Water Operations Prokopec; Supervisor, Accounting Linders; Executive, Communications & Administration Coordinator Schmoll; Key Accounts & Energy Conservation Officer Hendricks; OPU Employees Lori Jerpbak and Shanda Meier and Greg Ilkka, Steele County Engineer.

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. There was a typo in the date for the October minutes. The October minutes were from October 24th. The consent agenda items contained the minutes from the October 24, 2023 Commission meeting, the special budget meeting of November 6, 2023 and the contributed services report as of October 31, 2023. Commissioner Rossi moved to approve the agenda and the consent agenda items with the October minutes being changed from October 26 to October 24. Commissioner Doyal seconded the motion. All Commissioners voting Aye, the motion passed.

Committee Reports

Finance Committee – Commissioner Doyal reported the Finance Committee met, reviewed, and approved disbursements totaling \$5,739,277.77. He reported one work order was completed and one for underground vaults was cancelled. The work order was canceled due to the work not going to be done. There was a request for another work order to replace the heating boiler in the building. Since there was not a quorum at the Finance meeting, Commissioner Doyal moved for approval of the work order in the amount of \$20,000 and asked Commissioner Zirngible to sign it with him. Commissioner Rossi seconded the motion. All Commissioners voting Aye, the motion passed.

Personnel Committee – Commissioner Vetter reported the Personnel Committee met and received a staffing updated. He noted interviews for an open Meter Serviceworker position are ongoing with external candidates, as well as internal interviews are being conducted for the HR Generalist position. Mr. Vetter also noted the committee discussed non-union wage adjustments for 2024. They received wage comparisons, historic wage adjustments versus CPI and are recommending a 3.5% wage increase. There also was not a quorum at this committee meeting, so Commissioner Vetter moved to approve a 3.5% wage increase for the non-union employees. Commissioner Rossi seconded the motion. All Commissioners voting Aye, the motion passed. Mr. Vetter continued by noting the committee received updates regarding the proposed Diversity, Equity and Inclusion policy up for approval at this meeting, changes in the PDO policy due to state law changes and an update regarding proposed health insurance company changes. He noted the union voted to stay with the existing health insurance company.

City Administrator Report

City Administrator Busse was not present,

Letter of Support for Grant Related to East Corridor Project

General Manager Warehime introduced Greg Ilkka, Steele County Engineering, and noted Mr. Ilkka will be discussing the east corridor project and asking for support of a grant for the project.

Mr. Ilkka discussed what the East Side Corridor project and study consist of and noted the County is applying for a grant to help with funding the project. Part of that process is including letters of support from the community. The main purpose of the project is to improve the connectivity of the county's transportation

network and meet near term and future travel needs on the east side of Owatonna and adjacent townships for motorized and non-motorized users. He discussed the differences between local, collector and arterial roadway functions. He discussed the purposes, needs and additional considerations for the corridor including mobility – poor connectivity, functional class network, downtown congestion impacts, land use and anticipated growth areas, walkability/bikeability, consistency with officially mapped corridor, and consistency with the County and City plans regarding transportation and development. He noted, the existing property owners along this corridor will not see an impact to the size of their property. If additional land is needed, they would try to buy additional land from the farmer across the road. Mr. Ilkka shared the project timeline and urged the Commission to check out the project website at eastsidecorridor.com. After discussion, Commissioner Doyal moved to accept and sign the letter of support for the East Side Corridor. Commissioner Rossi seconded the motion. All Commissioners voting Aye, the motion passed.

Liability of Coverage Waiver Form

Director, Finance & Administration Olson presented the Liability of Coverage Waiver Form to the Commission. He noted this is a formality the League of Minnesota Cities requires us to sign every year indicating our wishes regarding monetary limits on municipal tort liability. The form indicates we DO NOT WAIVE this liability coverage. Commissioner Rossi moved to sign the form. Commissioner Doyal seconded the motion. All Commissioners voting Aye the motion passed.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Statement

General Manager Warehime presented the draft policy statement which clearly states OPU's position on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Mr. Warehime noted, this has been part of strategic planning, and our focus on our culture. The company has spent about a year drafting this policy. After discussion, Commissioner Vetter moved to approve the policy as presented. Commissioner Rossi seconded the motion. All Commissioners voting Aye the motion passed.

PDO Policy

General Manager Warehime presented an updated PDO policy to the Commission. He noted, Director, Finance and Administration Olson gave a brief presentation at the Personnel Committee meeting regarding the changes to the Minnesota Earned Sick & Safe Time law (ESST) and turned it over to Mr. Olson. Mr. Olson explained what the ESST law encompasses and addressed how OPU plans to meet the requirements. He noted our current policy is more generous than what the law requires, and the updates to the policy include adding the protected uses. All employees will be notified with a copy of the updated PDO policy and/or a Memo of Understanding addressing the sections in the union contract. Supervisors will be trained on how to handle this time off law. Mr. Olson wrapped up by discussing the definition of a family member, eligible uses of ESST and made a recommendation to the Commission to approve the policy as presented. After discussion, Commissioner Rossi moved to approve the PDO policy to be compliant with the State of Minnesota changes to the law. Commissioner Vetter seconded the motion. All Commissioners voting Aye, the motion passed.

2024 Budget, 2025-2028 Forecast

Director, Finance and Administration Olson sent out the final budget to the Commission through a separate email. He noted there were not any changes discussed at the budget meeting that affected he expenses, revenue or capital. The only change made was taking out the excess residential water tiered plan. Commissioner Doyal moved to approve the 2024 Budget, 2025-2028 Forecast as presented. Commissioner Rossi seconded the motion. All Commissioners voting Aye, the motion passed.

Rate Policies

General Manager Warehime presented the rate policies which were approved in the 2024 Budget, 2025-2028 Forecast. Director, Finance & Administration Olson noted there was one minor change from the policies presented in the agenda packet. In the water rates policy, it did not specify which months were considered summer. The policy now notes the summer months for purposes of the rate policy are June to October. Commissioner Rossi moved to approve all the rate policies provide in the agenda packet. Commissioner Doyal seconded the motion. All Commissioners voting Aye, the motion passed.

General Manager/Staff Report

General Manager Warehime reminded the Commission the December meeting is rescheduled to December 20th and Mr. Warehime noted OPU will be participating in the Holiday Lighted parade with a truck and the Employees' Club is coordinating walkers to join the truck.

Director, Information Technology & Metering Baum reported the cameras for the audio-visual project are on backorder until February. The installer has been asked if the project can move forward without the cameras in regard to wiring, etc. until the cameras come in. Mr. Baum will update the Commission in December.

Commissioner Roundtable

There was nothing else to discuss.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Commission, the meeting adjourned at 5:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Tammy Schmoll
Executive, Communications & Administration Coordinator