

**WILLMAR MUNICIPAL UTILITIES COMMISSION**  
**MEETING MINUTES – JUNE 14, 2021**  
**11:45 AM – WMU AUDITORIUM**

The Municipal Utilities Commission (MUC) met in its regular scheduled meeting on Monday, June 14, 2021 at 11:45 a.m. in the WMU Auditorium with the following Commissioners present: Justin Mattern, Nathan Weber, Bruce DeBlieck, Cole Erickson, and Kerry Johnson. Absent were Commissioners Abdirizak Mahboub and Ross Magnuson.

Others present at the meeting were: General Manager John Harren, Compliance/HR Manager Janell Johnson, Finance & Office Services Supervisor Andrea Prekker, IS Coordinator Mike Sangren, Executive Secretary Beth Mattheisen, Staff Electrical Engineer Jeron Smith, Facilities & Maintenance Supervisor Kevin Marti, Energy/Safety Outreach Coordinator Chris Radel, City Attorney Robert Scott, and WC Tribune Journalist Shelby Lindrud.

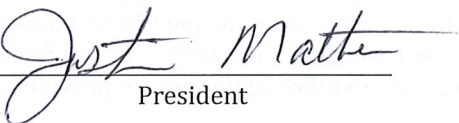
The meeting was opened by reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance. Due to the absence of Commission Secretary Mahboub, Commission President Mattern appointed Commissioner DeBlieck to serve as Acting Secretary. Following the appointment, Commission Mattern asked if any revisions were needed to the agenda presented. General Manager Harren requested the inclusion of three additional items to the agenda. These items would be brief updates of the following: 1) recent generation event; 2) water restrictions implemented; and, 3) assistance by the General Manager to the City. Following the addition of the three items to the current agenda, Commissioner Mattern next requested a resolution to approve the consent agenda. Following review and discussion, Commissioner DeBlieck offered a resolution to approve the consent agenda as presented. Commissioner Johnson seconded.

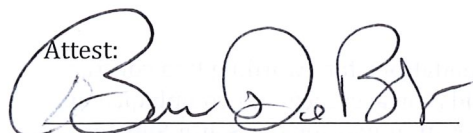
**RESOLUTION NO. 31**

“BE IT RESOLVED, by the Municipal Utilities Commission of the City of Willmar, Minnesota, that the Consent Agenda be approved as presented which includes:

- ❖ Minutes from the May 24, 2021 Commission meeting; and,
- ❖ Bills represented by vouchers No. 20210618 to No. 20210714 and associated wire transfers inclusive in the amount of \$2,638,044.02.

Dated this 14<sup>th</sup> day of June, 2021.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
President

Attest:  
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Acting Secretary

The foregoing resolution was adopted by a vote of four ayes and zero nays, with Commissioner Weber abstaining.

Commissioner Weber (LC Chair) reviewed with the Commission two sets of minutes from recent WMU Labor Committee meetings (see attached). The minutes presented were from the May 27<sup>th</sup> and June 3<sup>rd</sup> LC meetings. Following review, Commissioner Weber offered a motion to approve the minutes of the May 27<sup>th</sup> WMU Labor Committee meeting as presented. Commissioner DeBlieck seconded the motion which carried by a vote of five ayes and zero nays.


Commissioner Weber continued by offering a motion to approve the minutes of the June 3<sup>rd</sup> WMU Labor Committee meeting as presented. Commissioner Erickson seconded the motion which carried by a vote of five ayes and zero nays.


Following approval of the minutes, Commissioner Weber was requesting the Commission approve the recommended pay equity/market adjustments for non-union exempt employees. The adjustments were for three staffing positions and were required to provide pay alignment for the positions identified. Following discussion, Commissioner Weber offered a resolution to approve the pay equity/market adjustments as specified. Commissioner Johnson seconded.

#### RESOLUTION NO. 32

"BE IT RESOLVED, by the Municipal Utilities Commission of the City of Willmar, Minnesota, that the pay equity/market adjustments for three identified non-union exempt positions be approved as presented."

Dated this 14<sup>th</sup> day of June, 2021.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
President

Attest:  
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Acting Secretary

The foregoing resolution was adopted by a vote of five ayes and zero nays.

Finance & Office Services Supervisor Prekker presented the Commission with the April 2021 Financial Reports along with a recap of the April 30, 2021 Investment Portfolio. The data presented included analyses of the Electric, Water, and Combined Divisions. Information contained in the reports reflect operating revenues & expenses, operating income, and retained earnings. Graphs depicting the 2020/2021 monthly year-to-date revenues, expenses, and retained earnings were also included with the financial data.

Energy/Safety Outreach Coordinator Radel continued by reviewing with the Commission the WMU Cost of Power Report for April 2021. This report is illustrated using a rolling year-to-date format and provides the overall cost of power for the year (.065 per kWh twelve-month rolling average). Additional data reflecting the month-to-date cost (.073 per kWh) was also presented for review.

IS Coordinator Sangren presented the Commission with the findings of the Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (RVA) or penetration testing (Pen Test) recently conducted by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). The testing was performed from January 4-15 of this year. While Sangren did not present DHS's detailed report, he gave an overview of the findings. The extensive testing by DHS was very thorough, and we look forward to utilizing the service provided by DHS in the future.

Staff Electrical Engineer Smith presented the Commission with recommendations for awarding two contracts for substation projects. DGR Engineering received and reviewed the bids for accuracy and compliance and has made the following recommendations. The first contract for consideration was for the South Substation Modifications. Five bids were received with the low qualifying bid being submitted by N&M Power Co. for their bid of \$150,236.98. Following review, Commissioner DeBlieck offered a resolution to approve the contract for the South Substation Modifications to N&M Power Co., for their bid of \$150,236.98. Commissioner Erickson seconded.

#### RESOLUTION NO. 33

"BE IT RESOLVED, by the Municipal Utilities Commission of the City of Willmar, Minnesota, that the contract for the South Substation Modifications be awarded to N&M Power Co., of Broken Bow, Nebraska, for their bid amount of \$150,236.98."

Dated this 14<sup>th</sup> day of June, 2021.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
President

Attest:



Acting Secretary

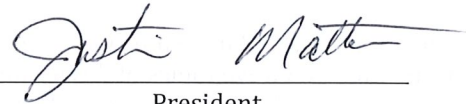
The foregoing resolution was adopted by a vote of five ayes and zero nays.

The second bid award recommendation for consideration was for the Furnishing of Substation Steel for the Priam Substation. Three bids were received with the low qualifying bid being submitted by Galvanizers, Inc., for their bid of \$22,319.17. Following review, Commissioner Erickson offered a resolution to approve the contract for the Furnishing of Substation Steel to Galvanizers, Inc., for their bid of \$22,319.18. Commissioner DeBlieck seconded.

#### RESOLUTION NO. 34

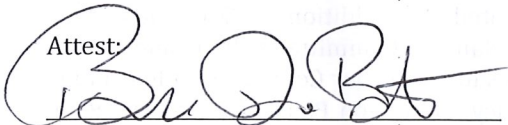
"BE IT RESOLVED, by the Municipal Utilities Commission of the City of Willmar, Minnesota, that the contract for the Furnishing of Substation Steel (Priam Substation) be awarded to Galvanizers, Inc., of West Fargo, North Dakota, for their bid amount of \$22,319.17."

Dated this 14<sup>th</sup> day of June, 2021.



President

Attest:



Acting Secretary

The foregoing resolution was adopted by a vote of five ayes and zero nays.

General Manager Harren asked the Commission to approve a resolution in support of a Capital Project Grant request for the Northeast Water Treatment Plant Improvement Project (NEWTP). This project is required to meet the demands of current and future water needs of Willmar. The request is to be placed on a listing for consideration through the Minnesota State Legislature for the 2022 Capital Budget Request for infrastructure bonding to provide funding assistance for the NEWTP. Following review and discussion, Commissioner Johnson offered resolution to approve being placed on the listing for consideration for financial assistance through state infrastructure bonding. Commissioner DeBlieck seconded.

#### RESOLUTION NO. 35

The foregoing resolution was adopted by a vote of five ayes and zero nays.

Facilities & Maintenance Supervisor Marti presented the Commission with the May 2021 Wind Turbine Report. Turbine availabilities for the month of May were at 99.8% (Unit #3) and 99.0% (Unit #4) with a total monthly production of 509,051 kilowatt hours. Marti noted that while the units are currently operating well, there is generally a decrease in wind production during the summer months.

Commissioner Mattern informed the Commission that Commissioner Magnuson has submitted a notice of resignation as Commissioner for the Willmar Municipal Utilities. As of July 1<sup>st</sup>, Commissioner Magnuson will no longer be a resident of Willmar and therefore is unable to continue his service as Commissioner. Therefore, Commissioner Mattern offered a motion to officially accept the resignation of Commissioner Magnuson effective July 1, 2021. Commissioner Weber seconded the motion which carried by a vote of five ayes and zero nays.

Facilities & Maintenance Supervisor Marti informed the Commission of a recent MISO generation event. Due to the extreme heat recently experienced, on June 10<sup>th</sup> the customer energy use load exceeded MISO's forecast. MISO declared a Max Generation Event (Level 2) which required all capacity registered generation

to run from 2:00-6:00 pm. In response to this event, MRES directed WMU to run its six diesel units (generators) from 2:00-6:00 pm. During that time, one of the diesel generators shut-down. Ziegler has been contacted and is scheduled to diagnose and repair the unit this week. Marti also added that no additional issues were experienced despite the extreme temperatures and that all of the generators were re-fueled the morning of June 11<sup>th</sup>.

General Manager Harren reminded the Commission of the mandatory water restrictions which were initiated on June 11<sup>th</sup>. Due to the extreme heat and lack of precipitation, the water plant was nearing capacity (94% capacity). In an effort to reduce peak water usage, the water restrictions were implemented. Due to the imposed restrictions and to the response of the citizens of Willmar, the consumption has dropped by nearly 1 million gallons. Staff was appreciative of the Commission's approval to implement the water restrictions as needed. These restrictions will remain in place until the water plant capacity is deemed to be at an acceptable level.

General Manager Harren along with the approval of the WMU Labor Committee/Commission has accepted a request from the Mayor and City Council to provide assistance as the interim City Administrator on a limited basis as the City continues the search process to fill the current vacancy. The interim position initially had a deadline date of July 2<sup>nd</sup>. To allow for additional work related to filling the position, the City has requested the deadline be extended to July 12<sup>th</sup>. While this is not a long-term solution, the Commission and General Manager Harren have agreed to the extension.

General Manager Harren informed the Commission that the WMU Planning Committee will meet on July 1<sup>st</sup> at 12:00 pm. Tentative topics of discussion will include: Water Treatment Plant 90% review, employee survey, pay equity, and MRES Economic Rate discount. Harren further noted that additional WMU Committee meetings will be forthcoming. Tentative future agenda topics for the Planning Committee will include: water rates for apartment billings and NISC software. Tentative agenda items for the Labor Committee will include: General Manager pay equity/compensation, clothing policy, Emergency Succession Plan, and Strategic Plan update.

For information: Upcoming meetings/events to note include:

- MRES Red Rock Hydroelectric Project Tour (July 22/July 29/or August 5 @ Pella, Iowa)
- APPA National Conference: (June 20-23 in-person; July 13-14 virtual)
- MMUA Summer Conference (August 16-18 @ Cragun's Resort, Brainerd)

There being no further business to come before the Commission, Commissioner Mattern offered a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Erickson seconded the motion which carried by a vote of five ayes and zero nays, and the meeting was adjourned at 12:28 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

WILLMAR MUNICIPAL UTILITIES

  
Beth Mattheisen  
Executive Secretary

ATTEST:

  
Bruce DeBlieck, Acting Secretary



**WILLMAR MUNICIPAL UTILITIES**  
**MUC Labor Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**Thursday, May 27, 2021 at 12:00 pm**  
**WMU Auditorium**

Attendees: Commissioners Nathan Weber, Cole Erickson & Justin Mattern, General Manager John Harren, HR/Compliance Manager Janell Johnson, Finance & Office Services Supervisor Andrea Prekker, Facilities & Maintenance Supervisor Kevin Marti, Energy/Safety Outreach Coordinator Chris Radel, and Executive Secretary Beth Mattheisen.

Commissioner Weber (LC Chair) called the meeting to order at 12:02 pm.

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**1) 2021 WMU Strategic Plan Update (final draft):**

General Manager Harren reminded the Labor Committee that one of the goals set by Staff for 2021 was to update the 2019 WMU Strategic Plan. Therefore, Facilities & Maintenance Supervisor Marti along with Energy/Safety Outreach Coordinator Radel presented the Labor Committee with a review of the process involved in updating WMU's Strategic Plan. Two planning sessions were held (March 25 & April 15) in the WMU Auditorium with Marcy Douglas of MRES serving as Facilitator. Results of these sessions identified four key points of focus: 1) long-range goals; 2) key performance indicators; 3) strategic priorities with 5-yr. timeline; and, 5) 12-month timeline to achieve the short-term goals. Staff felt working with MRES was very beneficial to the process.

At this time, the 2021 session notes and planning summary were presented. Next the final draft of the 2021 WMU Strategic Plan was reviewed in its entirety. The plan identified and expanded on the long-range goals which consisted of the following components: 1) Utility Identify; 2) Reliable Public Power Provider; 3) Communications, Education & Outreach; 4) Staff Development; 5) Infrastructure; 6) Planning; 7) Technology; and, 7) New Building. Strategic Plan priorities, those directly involved, and the timeline (tentative) to achieve each of the individual goals were established.

It was the consensus of the Labor Committee that the newly formatted Strategic Plan was an improvement from the previous version. Staff was commended for their efforts in creating a more visually and structurally pleasing vision/plan. Committee members provided input and suggestions for consideration regarding the draft (i.e. extension of timeline years).

Following input from the Labor Committee, Staff will prepare the modifications as requested. The Labor Committee will then be forwarded the revised final draft, and subsequently present it to the Commission for approval. Once approved, the Strategic Plan will be updated bi-annually (short-term planning to be continually amended) and presented to the Commission for their information.

*At this time, Safety/Energy Outreach Coordinator Radel departed the meeting (12:47 pm).*

**2) Clothing Options Discussion:**

General Manager Harren provided background information regarding the status of recent clothing discussions. While it was a consensus of the Labor Committee to retain the current WMU Clothing Policy throughout the year, they would like to have a new policy in place beginning in 2022. HR/Compliance Manager Johnson presented the Committee with a summary of the 2021 WMU clothing costs and data for both non-union and union employees. Information was reviewed including current WMU clothing allowances, departmental requests, and options for consideration for each individual departments (Office/non-union, Line Dept., Water Dept., Facilities & Maintenance Dept.). A brief description of past practices was presented.

HR/Compliance Manager Johnson informed the Committee that she had completed a survey of comparable regional municipalities and IOU's per the Labor Committee request regarding employee

clothing policies and presented the results of the survey. Johnson continued by providing a recap of the last 3 years of purchases of required FR apparel (Line Dept.).

Facilities & Maintenance Supervisor Marti provided input he had received from the various departments regarding uniforms vs. individual clothing selections. Marti noted that meeting FR requirements for liability and safety is a big plus by utilizing uniforms through a certified provider. Another factor for consideration was the discretionary purchases outside of policy by individuals.

Uniforms vs specific selection of required apparel along with discretionary items were discussion. Limitations on selections would be determined to establish a more unified appearance for each department as determined.

In conclusion, no recommendation was given by the Labor Committee at this time. To assist in establishing limitations/parameters concerning apparel, Marti will compile additional data with appropriate apparel selections identified (i.e. catalogue) for consideration at a future Labor Committee meeting.

**3) Adjournment:**

Due to time constraints, Commissioner Weber requested that the two remaining agenda items (Pay Equity/Market Adjustments for Exempt Employees and Emergency Succession Plan) be tabled and addressed at the next Labor Committee meeting. The intent of the Labor Committee is to conduct this meeting within the next week if possible.

There being no further business to come before the Labor Committee, Commissioner Weber offered a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Mattern seconded the motion which carried, and the meeting was adjourned by a vote of three ayes and zero nays at 1:31 pm.



**WILLMAR MUNICIPAL UTILITIES**  
**MUC Labor Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**Thursday, June 3, 2021 at 12:00 pm**  
**WMU Auditorium**

Attendees: Commissioners Nathan Weber, Cole Erickson & Justin Mattern, General Manager John Harren, HR/Compliance Manager Janell Johnson, Finance & Office Services Supervisor Andrea Prekker, and City Councilmember Audrey Nelsen (arriving at 12:07 pm).

Commissioner Weber (LC Chair) called the meeting to order at 12:06 pm. (Note: Items #2 & #3 were tabled topics from the May 27<sup>th</sup> LC meeting.)

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**1) Miscellaneous Discussion:**

General Manager Harren introduced City Councilmember Nelsen who was present to request assistance by WMU/General Manager Harren to provide interim administrative support to the City while the process in search of a new City Administrator continues (Brian Gramentz's final day as City Administrator was June 2<sup>nd</sup>). City Officials have reached out to General Manager Harren to consider accepting the interim position for a brief period of time (considered Phase 1). City Attorney Robert has been contacted by members of the City Council to provide a scope of duties, responsibilities, and time requirements this temporary position would entail. While the Labor Committee would like to assist the City, they conveyed their concerns in taking on the additional load/tasks by the General Manager without having a detrimental effect to the operational needs of the Utility. General Manager Harren expressed his willingness to the Committee and Councilmember Nelsen to provide assistance to the City during the interim.

**Action:**

Following discussion, Commissioner Weber offered a motion to authorize General Manager Harren to provide temporary administrative support to the City thru July 2<sup>nd</sup> (2021) while the search for a permanent City Administrator continues. This acceptance would be subject to approval of the scope of work as determined for the temporary position. It was further stated that the Labor Committee and/or Commission would have the ability to rescind the offer at any time as it sees fit. Commissioner Mattern seconded the motion which carried by a vote of three ayes and zero nays.

*At this time, City Councilmember Nelsen departed the meeting (12:55 pm).*

**2) Pay Equity/Market Adjustments for Non-Exempt Employees:**

HR/Compliance Manager Johnson presented the Labor Committee with the proposed market adjustments for WMU's non-union exempt personnel. The data provided included point values and schedules for the years 2020-2023 for both hourly and salaried positions. It was noted that the wages for union personnel positions are established per the ratified Union Agreement (IBEW).

**Action:**

Following discussion, Commissioner Erickson offered a motion to accept the proposed non-union exempt personnel pay adjustments (excluding the General Manager position) as presented. Commissioner Weber seconded the motion which carried by a vote of three ayes and zero nays.

**3) Emergency Succession Plan for General Manager:**

At the request of the Commission, the Labor Committee was requested to review WMU's Emergency Succession Plan in the event of a short or long-term absence of the General Manager. General Manager Harren provided background data including duties and responsibilities of the General Manager and Director of Operations positions. To note, Harren originally held the position of Director of Operation until his appointment to General Manager in October 2016. Since that time,

the Director of Operation's position has been left temporarily vacant. In 2019, the Commission approved an Emergency Succession Plan in the event of an unforeseen departure of the General Manager. Through this plan, HR/Compliance Manager Johnson was named by the Commission to assume the position of Acting General Manager.

Additional information presented for review were the Emergency Succession Plan (General Manager) and the proposed WMU Organizational Chart (May 2021).

After consideration and evaluation of the current staffing needs, General Manager Harren requested the Labor Committee to permanently fill the Director of Operations position with modified responsibilities as presented. In filling the position, this would result in maintaining adequate staffing while providing stability to the organization in the absence of the General Manager. Therefore, General Manager Harren requested support from the Labor Committee to fill the vacant position of Director of Operations.

Following discussion, it was the consensus of the Labor Committee to take no action at this time. The subject will be re-addressed at the next Labor Committee meeting.

**4) Adjournment:**

General Manager Harren discussed with the Labor Committee the length of the recent Committee meetings (longer than anticipated). He requested input from the Committee on ideas of how to conduct more time-efficient meetings while accomplishing the required tasks at hand.

There being no further business to come before the Labor Committee, Commissioner Mattern offered a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Erickson seconded the motion which carried, and the meeting was adjourned by a vote of three ayes and zero nays at 2:07 pm.



**RESOLUTION NO. 35**

**RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF WILLMAR MUNICIPAL UTILITIES' CAPITAL PROJECT GRANT REQUEST FOR THE NORTHEAST WATER TREATMENT PLANT IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT FOR WWTP SALTY DISCHARGE COMPLIANCE PROJECT**

BE IT RESOLVED, by the Willmar Municipal Utilities (WMU) Commission (Commission), City of Willmar, Minnesota, as follows:

WHEREAS, WMU constructed the Northeast Water Treatment Plant (NEWTP) in 1993, to provide a reliable source of drinking water to the City of Willmar's (City) constituents.

WHEREAS, the City constructed the wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) in 2010, to provide a reliable means of wastewater treatment and disposal to the City's constituents.

WHEREAS, the WMU, as the owner, operator, and user of this facility, funded the cost of the NEWTP with City funds.

WHEREAS, current WWTP treatment processes will not meet future salty discharge requirements set forth by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA).

WHEREAS, treatment and capacity upgrades to the NEWTP will improve drinking water quality and provide a source of blending water to the WWTP to help WMU's WWTP meet MPCA salty discharge requirements.

WHEREAS, preliminary costs for the construction of these NEWTP improvements are estimated at \$21.1 million.

WHEREAS, the WMU has proactively raised water user rates by 80% in order to provide a source of funding for the project.

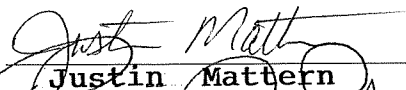
WHEREAS, the WMU will require additional water rate increases to fund the expansion and improvements if no grant dollars are received from the State.

WHEREAS, the Commission, recognizing that the expansion and improvements to the NEWTP is required to meet the water demands of current and future users, to provide a reliable source of drinking water to its constituents, to address the WWTP's future wastewater salty discharge requirements as well as be protective of public health, on June 14, 2021, move to authorize staff to prepare and submit a request to the Minnesota State Legislature for the 2022 Capital Budget Request for bonding funds to complete design and construction of the NEWTP upgrades.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Commission of Willmar Municipal Utilities supports the pending state legislation to appropriate funding for the implementation of improvements at the NEWTP to meet potable water demands, address health concerns and help address future WWTF salty discharge compliance requirements.

PASSED by the Commission of the Willmar Municipal Utilities on this 14<sup>th</sup> day of June, 2021.

Signed by

  
Justin Mattern

Date

6/14/21

Attested by

  
Bruce DeBlieck

Date

6-14-21

