

**WILLMAR MUNICIPAL UTILITIES COMMISSION**  
**MEETING MINUTES - NOVEMBER 22, 2021**  
**11:45 AM - WMU AUDITORIUM**

The Municipal Utilities Commission (MUC) met in its regular scheduled meeting on Monday, November 22, 2021, at 11:45 a.m. in the WMU Auditorium with the following Commissioners present: Justin Mattern, Abdirizak Mahboub, Bruce DeBlieck, Cole Erickson (arriving at 12:02 pm), Kerry Johnson, Shawn Mueske, and Dave Baumgart.

Others present at the meeting were: General Manager John Harren, Director of Administration Janell Johnson, Finance & Office Services Supervisor Andrea Prekker, Executive Secretary Beth Mattheisen, Facilities & Maintenance Supervisor Kevin Marti, Staff Electrical Engineer Jeron Smith, Energy/Safety Outreach Coordinator Chris Radel, City Attorney Robert Scott, and City Councilman Michael O'Brien.

Commissioner Mattern (President) opened the meeting by introducing newly appointed Commissioner Dave Baumgart. Baumgart is an Environmental Engineer with Hormel Foods Corp. (Jennie-O Turkey Store) and provided a brief background summary of himself to the Commission. He also accepted an appointment by Commissioner Mattern to serve on the WMU Labor Committee. We appreciate Commissioner Baumgart's willingness to serve and look forward to his involvement as a member of the Willmar Municipal Utilities Commission.

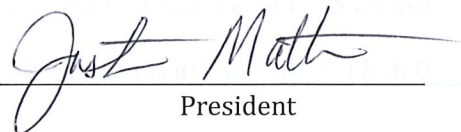
Following the introduction, the meeting continued by reciting the Pledge of Allegiance followed by Commissioner Mattern (President) inquiring if any revisions were needed to the presented agenda. There being none, a resolution to approve the consent agenda was requested. Following review and discussion, Commissioner Mahboub offered a resolution to approve the consent agenda as presented. Commissioner Mueske seconded.

**RESOLUTION NO. 59**

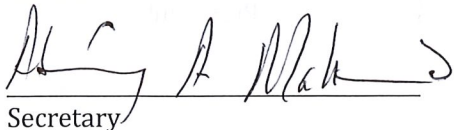
"BE IT RESOLVED, by the Municipal Utilities Commission of the City of Willmar, Minnesota, that the consent agenda be approved as presented which includes:

- ❖ Minutes from the November 8, 2021, Commission meeting; and,
- ❖ Bills represented by vouchers No. 20211424 to No. 20211492 and associated wire transfers inclusive in the amount of \$1,685,097.94.

Dated this 22<sup>nd</sup> day of November 2021.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
President

Attest:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Secretary

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

Commissioner Johnson (PC Vice Chair) reviewed with the Commission the minutes from the November 15<sup>th</sup> WMU Planning Committee meeting (see attached). Following review, Commissioner Mahboub offered a motion to approve the minutes of the November 15<sup>th</sup> WMU Planning Committee meeting as presented. Commissioner Johnson seconded the motion which carried by a vote of five ayes and zero nays.

In conjunction with the approved Planning Committee meeting minutes, the Commission was asked to consider three items recommended for approval. The first item was a request to proceed with the purchase of a new Line Department bucket truck prior to 2022. This truck would be a replacement for Unit #26 which is over 16 yrs. old. Additional factors relating to the request to purchase the unit at this time include reliability/safety issues, longer wait times for delivery of the unit, and anticipated price increases. The purchase of the replacement truck is included in WMU's 2022 Budget in the amount of \$300,000 and has been priced through the MN State Bid Program. The actual quote for the unit comes in under budget at \$249,000. By ordering the truck prior to the first of the year, this could help alleviate both anticipated price increases and wait times for delivery of the unit. Following discussion, Commissioner Mueske offered a motion to direct staff to proceed with the purchase of the new bucket truck prior to 2022. Commissioner Johnson seconded the motion which carried by a vote of five ayes and zero nays.


The second item to be presented for consideration was the request for the Commission to concur with the response prepared to Kandiyohi Power Cooperative (KPC). KPC had recently inquired about a possible buyout of WMU's electric division. The Commission and City expressed that there is no interest in considering this action. Therefore a response letter has been authored to respectfully decline the request by KPC. Following review and discussion, Commissioner Mueske offered a motion to concur with the prepared response to KPC and to request support from the City (Mayor/City Council) by also signing the intended letter. Commissioner Mahboub seconded the motion which carried by a vote of five ayes and zero nays.

The third item presented for approval was a proposal received from Attorney R. Reid LeBeau II of the Jacobson Law Group to provide State lobbying services. The services provided would be to procure funding in the bonding bill to assist with financing of the Northeast Water Treatment Plant (NEWTP) project. The proposed cost to provide these efforts would be in the amount of \$20,000 (flat-fee retainer). General Manager Harren contacted Rep. Dave Baker who provided favorable input regarding the proposal. Following discussion, Commissioner Mahboub offered a resolution to approve the proposal with the Jacobson Law Group to provide lobbying services in the amount of \$20,000. Commissioner Mueske seconded.


#### RESOLUTION NO. 60

"BE IT RESOLVED, by the Municipal Utilities Commission of the City of Willmar, Minnesota, that the proposal from R. Reid LeBeau II of the Jacobson Law Group to provide State lobbying services to secure funding assistance through State bonding efforts be approved in the amount of \$20,000 (flat-fee retainer). This funding assistance would be for the NEWTP project."

Dated this 22<sup>nd</sup> day of November 2021.

  
President

Attest:

  
Secretary

The foregoing resolution was adopted by a vote of five ayes, zero nays, and one abstention (Commissioner Erickson).

Energy/Safety Outreach Coordinator Radel reviewed with the Commission a WMU Strategic Plan update. This newly formatted plan was approved by the Commission on June 28<sup>th</sup> (2021). Eight primary goals have been identified and prioritized along with actions and timelines required to achieve these goals. This format streamlines both short term (one year) and long-term (2-5 yrs.) timelines. The Strategic Plan is considered a "living" document and will continually be updated by Staff.

General Manager Harren presented a recap of his recent attendance at the MRES Fall Member Meeting (Nov. 9-10). Commissioner DeBlieck, Staff Electrical Engineer Smith, and Energy/Safety Outreach Coordinator Radel also attended the meeting in Sioux Falls. Included among the topics of discussion were: COVID, Membership Survey (100% satisfaction), strategic priorities, rates, budgets, legislative updates, clean energy, Bright Energy Choices, REC program, impact of Polar Vortex, power supply, Risk Identification, and cybersecurity. Harren stated that this meeting is highly informative and encouraged members of the Commission to attend in the future. Commissioner Mattern along with General Manager Harren further encouraged Commissioners to view additional information regarding MRES and its services by visiting the "Members Only" section of the MRES website([www.mreenergy.com](http://www.mreenergy.com)).

General Manager Harren requested the Commission to concur with having a holiday gathering of WMU employees and Commissioners. The tentative gathering would be held on Tuesday, December 21<sup>st</sup> at 12:00 pm in the WMU Auditorium. It was a consensus of the Commission to hold the holiday gathering as requested. Those planning to attend are asked to contact either John or Beth so necessary arrangements may be made (i.e. publishing of notice).

General Manager Harren informed the Commission that a meeting of the WMU Planning Committee will be scheduled shortly. Agenda items will include a Time of Use electric rates, year-end operational policy updates, and rate study proposal. Additional WMU Committee meetings will be forthcoming. Agenda items for the WMU Labor Committee meeting (TBD) will include General Manager pay equity/market adjustment, year-end personnel policy updates, and NISC software. Tentative agenda items for a future WMU Planning Committee meeting (TBD) will include water modeling and water treatment plant.


For information: Upcoming meetings/events to note include:

- 2022 APPA Legislative Rally: Feb. 28 through March 2 in Washington, DC (DeBlieck/Harren)

There being no further business to come before the Commission, Commissioner Mattern offered a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Mueske seconded the motion which carried by a vote of six ayes and zero nays, and the meeting was adjourned at 12:18 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

WILLMAR MUNICIPAL UTILITIES



Beth Mattheisen  
Executive Secretary

ATTEST:



Abdirizak Mahboub, Secretary



**WILLMAR MUNICIPAL UTILITIES**  
**MUC Planning Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**Monday, November 15, 2021**  
**12:00 pm – WMU Conference Room**

Attendees: Commissioners Bruce DeBlieck, Kerry Johnson & Shawn Mueske, General Manager John Harren, Finance & Office Services Supervisor Andrea Prekker, Line Distribution Supervisor Ed Zurn, Staff Electrical Engineer Jeron Smith, Facilities & Maintenance Supervisor Kevin Marti, and Executive Secretary Beth Mattheisen.

Commissioner DeBlieck (PC Chair) called the meeting to order at 12:00 pm.  
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**1. Request to purchase new Line Dept. bucket truck:** *(Line Distribution Supv. Zurn)*

Line Distribution Supv. Zurn informed the Committee of the need to replace the Line Department's Unit #26 bucket truck. Due to the age of the unit (over 16 yrs.), reliability and safety issues along with potential pricing increase are major factors relating to the request to purchase the unit at this time. The bucket truck is included in WMU's 2022 Budget in the amount of \$300,000. The new truck has been priced through the MN State Bid Program with the actual quote received for the unit coming in under budget at \$249,000. Ordering the truck prior to the first of the year could help alleviate both anticipated price increases and longer wait times for delivery of the unit which could be up to a year and a half (1½ yrs.).

**Recommendation:**

Following review of the presented request, it was a consensus by the Planning Committee to recommend that Staff proceed with purchasing the bucket truck to replace Unit #26 prior to 2022. The recommendation will be presented to the Commission at their Nov. 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting and a motion requested to move forward with the purchase.

**2. Power Plant Substation location:** *(Staff Electrical Engineer Smith)*

General Manager Harren provided brief background information regarding the site location for the Power Plant Substation and its proximity to the railroad tracks. Staff Electrical Engineer Smith provided an overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the previously selected site along with an alternate site (Taco John's). Factors included in selecting the site included power sources/load center, site access, geographical data, and additional items such as safety, noise, security appearance, highway traffic and zoning. Considering all factors involved, the Power Plant's previous coal yard site was deemed the location best suited for the relocation of the substation.

Following review, it was the opinion of Staff that the most economical and best technical location for the substation would remain at the previously identified site (coal yard).

**Recommendation:**

Following review and discussion, it was a consensus of the Planning Committee to concur and support Staff's recommendation to proceed with the location identified for the new Power Plant Substation be the previous coal yard, noting that the design meets all railroad requirements as needed.

**3. Review current and recommended security measures for WMU facilities:** *(Facilities & Maintenance Supv. Marti)*

Facilities & Maintenance Supv. Marti reviewed with the Committee both current facility security measures in place along with additional recommendations from the Dept. of Homeland Security (DHS) findings of 2019. (Note: The data presented is confidential information.) Staff has addressed most of the recommendations brought forth from DHS. A summary of preventive and discretionary measures which have been conducted was reviewed. Optional future upgrades were presented for

consideration. Marti further noted that WMU is also included on the listing to have future DHS security inspection(s) conducted.

**Recommendation:**

Following review and discussion, it was a consensus of the Committee to direct Staff to continue to monitor the changing environment and initiate additional security measures as needed.

**4. Response to Kandiyohi Power Cooperative (KPC):** *(General Manager Harren)*

General Manager Harren summarized for the Committee a recent inquiry/request from KPC along with a proposed response from WMU/City to this request. Earlier this year, KPC had contacted General Manager Harren (and subsequently the City of Willmar) to discuss a possible venture of the two entities. While WMU is open to exploring cost-effective ways to better serve its customers and KPC members, there is no desire on Willmar's part to sell the electric division of WMU's distribution and transmission assets to KPC.

**Recommendation:**

Following input and discussion, it was the consensus of the Planning Committee to make minor revisions to the draft response and request the Commission to offer a motion to concur with sending the letter as presented.

**5. Sale proposal received for Gerry's Liquor/Taco John's property:** *(Facilities & Maint. Supv. Marti)*

Facilities & Maintenance Supv. Marti informed the Committee that WMU had been approached by its rental property manager that a verbal purchase request had been received for the former Gerry's Liquor property. The current main-floor tenant is interested in purchasing the property. This tenant has a 3-year lease with WMU for the property. The building has approx. 1200 square feet of retail space on the main floor with four two-bedroom apartments above. Marti reviewed the proposal and surrounding properties including a site plan diagram. This property is located inside the City's Renaissance District Overlay. Previously, the City had proposed a possible land swap option for Gerry's Liquor/Taco John's properties with WMU (new WMU facility).

**Recommendation:**

Staff recommends soliciting the City's interest in the property and to support their development efforts for the former Gerry's Liquor/Taco John's properties. Staff will identify sites/properties that will meet the future needs of WMU (new facility). It was the consensus of the Planning Committee to concur with Staff's recommendation and to contact City officials to further discuss a possible land-swap option that would be mutually beneficial to all.

**6. Consider proposal from the Jacobson Law Group for state lobbying services:** *(General Manager Harren)*

General Manager Harren requested input from the Planning Committee regarding a proposal received from R. Reid LeBeau of the Jacobson Law Group to provide state lobbying services. The legislative lobbying efforts would be to establish grant/funding assistance to finance the Northeast Water Treatment Plant. The proposed flat-fee retainer is in the amount of \$20,000. Harren noted that he had contacted Rep. Dave Baker for additional insight into the matter. Harren proposed that the Committee recommend proceeding with the proposal for the lobbying services with the caveat stipulation of Rep. Baker's input.

**Recommendation:**

The Planning Committee concurred with the recommendation to proceed with the proposal for state lobbying services with the Jacobson Law Group, per input from Rep. Baker. Upon positive input from Rep. Baker, approval of the proposal would be requested at the Nov. 22<sup>nd</sup> MUC meeting (resolution).

**7. Adjournment:**

There being no further business to come before the WMU Planning Committee, Commissioner DeBlicek declared the meeting adjourned at 1:44 pm.

