

**WILLMAR MUNICIPAL UTILITIES COMMISSION**  
**MEETING MINUTES - DECEMBER 28, 2021**  
**11:45 AM - WMU AUDITORIUM**

The Municipal Utilities Commission (MUC) met in its regular scheduled meeting on Tuesday, December 28, 2021, at 11:45 a.m. in the WMU Auditorium with the following Commissioners present: Justin Mattern, Abdirizak Mahboub, Bruce DeBlieck, Cole Erickson, and Kerry Johnson (attending via Zoom). Absent were Commissioners Shawn Mueske and Dave Baumgart. Since the meeting was being attended both in-person and via teleconference, let the minutes reflect that all resolutions and motions were conducted by verbal roll call.

Others present at the meeting were: General Manager John Harren, Director of Administration Janell Johnson, Finance & Office Services Supervisor Andrea Prekker, Staff Electrical Engineer Jeron Smith, IS Coordinator Mike Sangren, Executive Secretary Beth Mattheisen, City Attorney Robert Scott, and Commissioner-elect Carol Laumer.

The meeting opened with reciting of 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 DeBlieck seconded.

**RESOLUTION NO. 65**

"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 December 13, 2021, Commission meeting; and,
- ❖ Bills represented by vouchers No. 20211594 to No. 20211659 and associated wire transfers inclusive in the amount of \$2,286,174.49.

Dated this 28<sup>th</sup> day of December 2021.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
President

Attest:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Secretary

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

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

In conjunction with the Labor Committee meeting, the Commission was presented with three items for consideration and approval. The first item was a request to approve proposed revisions to the current General Manager job description. The basic revisions were needed to better align the position with the current organizational structure of the Utility. Following review and discussion, Commissioner Mahboub offered a motion to approve the revised job description for the General Manager position as presented. Commissioner DeBlieck seconded the motion which carried by a vote of five ayes and zero nays.

The second item being presented for approval was the 2022 COLA and wage adjustment for the General Manager. It was noted that as part of the General Manager Harren's annual performance review, an updated 2021 Goals Listing along with the 2022 Goals Listing were available for review. As in the past, Attorney Scott had assisted in conducting a Commission survey regarding the General Manager's performance for 2021. The results were compiled by Attorney Scott and once again reflected favorable results of General Manager Harren's performance. Commissioner Mahboub stated that General Manager Harren's business/industry vision and leadership efforts reflect a clear indication of his exceptional performance and leadership attributes. Commissioner Mattern echoed Mahboub's sentiments and added that while doing so, he also provided managerial assistance to the City of Willmar during their leadership transition this past year. Following additional discussion and positive input from all Commissioners, Commissioner Mahboub offered a resolution to approve a market adjustment of 6% plus a 3% COLA for General Manager Harren effective January 1, 2022. Commissioner Johnson seconded.

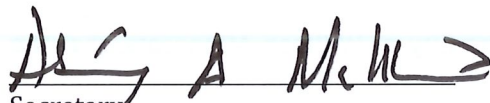
**RESOLUTION NO. 66**

"BE IT RESOLVED, by the Municipal Utilities Commission of the City of Willmar, Minnesota, that following the favorable annual performance review, a wage adjustment of 6% plus a 3% COLA be approved for General Manager John Harren effective January 1, 2022."

Dated this 28<sup>th</sup> day of December 2021.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
President

Attest:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Secretary

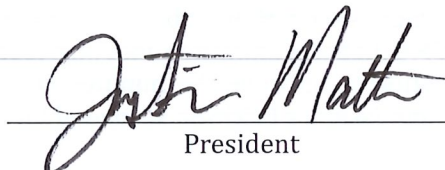
The foregoing resolution was adopted by a vote of four ayes and one nay (Mattern).

The final recommendation presented by the Labor Committee was to approve the proposed revisions to the WMU Personnel Policies for 2022. Director of Administration Johnson provided a brief overview of the proposed amendments to seventeen Personnel Policies. It was noted that all policies are annually reviewed and that most of the proposed changes were for minor revisions including grammar/language, name, and title updates. Following discussion and review, Commissioner Mahboub offered a resolution to approve the revisions to the 2022 WMU Personnel Policies as presented. Commissioner Erickson seconded.

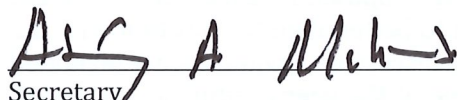
**RESOLUTION NO. 67**

"BE IT RESOLVED, by the Municipal Utilities Commission of the City of Willmar, Minnesota, that the proposed amendments to the 2022 WMU Personnel Policies be approved incorporating the revisions as presented."

Dated this 28<sup>th</sup> day of December 2021.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
President

Attest:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Secretary

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

Staff Electrical Engineer Smith informed the Commission of several reporting requirements for Distributed Generation. One such report requires that it be filed with the WMU Commission by January 1, 2022. Per state requirements, WMU is required to report on energy generation, tariffs, and interconnection status for our customer-owned distributed generation facilities. The purpose of the report is to ensure WMU has updated rates on file for customers who have distributed generation resources. Smith provided additional data regarding the reporting requirements for the 2022 Electric Distributed Generation Reporting.

At this time, Commissioner DeBlieck presented Commissioner Mattern with a plaque in honor of his years of service and dedication to the Willmar Municipal Utilities (2014-2021). His years of leadership and expertise are to be commended. At this time, Commissioner Mattern accepted the honor and expressed his appreciation for the opportunity to serve as Commissioner throughout years. Congratulations and best wishes on a job well done, Justin!

Commissioner Mattern reminded the Commissioners that at the first meeting of the new year (January 11<sup>th</sup>), the election of officers along with committee appointments are required. If any Commissioner would like to provide input or nominations, please contact Commissioner DeBlieck (Vice President) or General Manager Harren prior to the meeting. Mattern further added that the City Council recently approved the appointment of Carol Laumer and reappointment of Commissioner Mueske to serve as Commissioners for 3-year terms.

Commissioner Mattern reviewed the 2021 Commission meeting attendance record. Mattern noted that to remain well-informed of all issues concerning the Willmar Municipal Utilities, it is important to make attendance to the meetings a priority.

General Manager Harren informed the Commission that a WMU Planning Committee meeting will be forthcoming (TBD) with tentative agenda items to include water modeling and water treatment plant.

For information: Upcoming meetings/events to note include:

- 2022 MMUA Legislative Conference (St. Paul): Feb. 8-9
- 2022 APPA Legislative Rally: Feb. 28 through March 2 (Washington, DC)
- 2022 APPA National Conference (Nashville, TN) June 10-15

There being no further business to come before the Commission, Commissioner Erickson offered a motion to adjourn. Commissioner DeBlieck seconded the motion which carried by a vote of five ayes and zero nays, and the meeting was adjourned at 12:25 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

WILLMAR MUNICIPAL UTILITIES



Beth Mattheisen  
Executive Secretary

ATTEST:



Abdirizak Mahboub, Secretary



**WILLMAR MUNICIPAL UTILITIES  
MUC Labor Committee Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, December 15, 2021  
12:00 pm – WMU Conference Room**

Attendees: Commissioners Abdirizak Mahboub, Cole Erickson & Dave Baumgart, General Manager John Harren, Director of Administration Janell Johnson, Finance & Office Services Supervisor Andrea Prekker, and Executive Secretary Beth Mattheisen.

Commissioner Mahboub called the meeting to order at 12:00 pm. Due to an anticipated early meeting departure of Commissioner Erickson, agenda items were adjusted (prioritized).

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**AGENDA ITEMS:**

**1) Value in Missouri River Energy Services (MRES) membership:**

Director of Administration Johnson provided insight into General Manager Harren's vision to become a member of MRES, a Joint Action Agency (JAA). In 2017, WMU began the process of vetting and modeling costs associated with options for the district heating and power plant operations along with power supply needs. It was determined that by shutting down the aging plant and joining a JAA, positive financial gain estimated at \$3 million could annually be realized.

In 2018, WMU officially joined MRES for a one-time buy-in cost of \$400,000 (no additional annual fees) and started receiving JAA benefits. In 2019, MRES took over the power supply scheduling services, and started providing the additional power required by the community above our current power supply contracts. . Johnson presented an overview of various financial and operational benefits WMU has experienced since becoming a member. It was noted that many benefits offered by MRES carry a dollar value that cannot be identified, however, the tangible dollar value identified is estimated at an annual savings of \$943,000 for being a member of the JAA. In addition, WMU has received various refunds including a one-time refund from Power Supply & Transmission for overcharges totaling \$458,274.

Director of Administration Johnson reviewed a summary listing of benefits provided to WMU as a member of MRES including providing some of the lowest retail rates of all JAA in the Upper Midwest. Numerous Engineering and Financial Programs are provided along with Education and Advocacy Programs. Due to the annual cost reductions, WMU has been able to maintain their electric rates without the need to implement an increase in the past 5 years.

Director of Administration Johnson further added that this membership would not have become a reality if not for the foresight of General Manager Harren and the leadership he provided to attain it.

**2) General Manager job description updates:**

Director of Administration Johnson presented the Labor Committee with revisions for consideration to the job description of the General Manager. The current job description was last updated in 2012. The proposed revisions were minor yet necessary to reflect updated organizational structure along with City Charter compliance. City Attorney Scott also provided input on the proposed revisions.

**Recommendation:**

Following review, it was a consensus of the Labor Committee to recommend approval of the updated General Manager job description as presented. The recommendation will be presented for approval at the December 28<sup>th</sup> MUC meeting.

**3) General Manager Annual Performance Review:**

An annual review of the General Manager's position was conducted to assist in assessing management/leadership performance and to establish future goals for the position. As part of the review, General Manager Harren presented the Labor Committee with a step-by-step update of the

previously established 2021 Goals along with a listing of proposed 2022 Goals. The Labor Committee appreciated the achievements of the current year's goals and concurred with the proposed 2022 Goals as presented. Harren continued by expressing his appreciation to both the Labor Committee and entire Commission for the opportunity to serve as General Manager for the Willmar Municipal Utilities.

Following review of the 2021 and 2022 Goals, staff members Johnson and Mattheisen were excused from the meeting. At this time, the Committee reviewed with General Manager Harren the 2021 General Manager Performance Evaluation (annual survey) results.

It was noted that Attorney Robert Scott had once again assisted in the review process by requesting all Commissioners to participate in an annual survey of the General Manager's performance. The surveys were submitted directly to Attorney Scott who compiled the data and created a summary of the findings received. The Labor Committee and General Manager reviewed the evaluation results and input provided by the Commissioners.

At this time, Johnson and Mattheisen rejoined the meeting.

**Recommendation:**

Commissioner Mahboub stated that following a step-by-step assessment of the General Manager's favorable performance evaluation, the Labor Committee was recommending a market adjustment of 6% plus a 3% COLA for General Manager Harren effective January 1, 2022. This recommendation will be presented to the Commission for approval at the December 28<sup>th</sup> MUC meeting.

**4) Annual review of WMU Personnel Policies:**

As part of the annual review of WMU Personnel Policies, Director of Administration Johnson presented the Committee with proposed revisions for a number of Personnel Policies. The majority of proposed changes were for minor revisions including grammar/language, name, and title updates. Johnson provided a step-by-step review of the proposed revisions to the 2022 Personnel Policies as follow:

a. WMU Personnel Policies:

1. Cell Phone Policy\*
2. Clothing PPE Purchasing Guidelines\*
3. DOT Drug & Alcohol (CDL) Testing Policy V3\*
4. Dress Code Policy\*
5. Drug & Alcohol-Free Workplace\*
6. Employee Performance Review\*
7. FMLA Policy\*
8. Fraud Policy\*
9. Identity Theft Prevention\*
10. Information Technology (IT) Policy\*
11. MGDPA Data Privacy Policies \*
12. Personnel Policy Manual\*
13. PTO Donation Policy\*
14. Social Media Policy\*
15. Tablet Policy\*
16. Workers Comp Policy\*
17. Emergency Contingency Plan (living document) \*

\*Policy contains proposed revision(s)

**Recommendation:**

Following discussion, it was the consensus of the Labor Committee to recommend approval of the proposed revisions to the WMU Personnel Policies as presented. This recommendation will be presented to the Commission for consideration and approval at the December 28<sup>th</sup> MUC meeting.

**5) NISC software discussion:**

General Manager Harren and Director of Administration Johnson informed the Labor Committee of present software issue(s) continuing to be addressed by staff. In 2014, WMU converted their software system to NISC (National Information Solutions Cooperative). The intent of the conversion was to upgrade the software and support in areas including customer billing, accounting, engineering, and operations. Following years of education and training, the system does not function as anticipated. WMU requires more of a fund accounting-based program to better meet the Utility's needs and improve functionality. Johnson provided a summary of various issues which are problematic and remain unresolved by NISC. The software does not meet the needs of the Utility nor the specific needs of our Customer Service/Billing Department. Therefore, staff was requesting support from the Labor Committee to move forward to research additional vendors that could better provide software solutions and support to WMU.

Following discussion, the Labor Committee concurred with staff's recommendation to proceed with creating an RFP to begin the process to seek an alternative software vendor to support and resolve the current issues. Upon completion of the RFP process, a recommendation will be brought back for review and approval of the Labor Committee.

**6) Adjournment:**

There being no further business to come before the WMU Labor Committee, Commissioner Mahboub offered a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Baumgart seconded the motion which carried by a vote of two ayes and zero nays (Commissioner Erickson departed the meeting at 12:50 pm), and the meeting was adjourned at 1:49 pm.