

**WILLMAR MUNICIPAL UTILITIES COMMISSION**  
**MEETING MINUTES - MAY 9, 2022**  
**11:45 AM - WMU AUDITORIUM**

The Municipal Utilities Commission (MUC) met in its regular scheduled meeting on Monday, May 9, 2022, at 11:45 am in the WMU Auditorium with the following Commissioners present: Bruce DeBlieck, Cole Erickson, Shawn Mueske, and Dave Baumgart. Absent were Commissioners Kerry Johnson, Carol Laumer, and Kadar Abdi.

Others present at the meeting were: General Manager John Harren, Director of Administration Janell Johnson, Finance & Office Services Supervisor Andrea Prekker, IS Coordinator Mike Sangren, Executive Secretary Beth Mattheisen, Facilities & Maintenance Supervisor Kevin Marti, Energy/Safety Outreach Coordinator Chris Radel, City Councilman Michael O'Brien, City Attorney Robert Scott (via teleconference), and WC Tribune Journalist Jennifer Kotila.

Due to the absence of Secretary Laumer, Commissioner DeBlieck (President) opened the meeting by appointing Commissioner Mueske to serve as Acting Secretary. Following the appointment, the Pledge of Allegiance was recited. Commissioner DeBlieck continued by asking if any revisions were needed to the presented agenda. There being none, a resolution was requested to approve the consent agenda. Following review and discussion, Commissioner Mueske offered a resolution to approve the consent agenda as presented. Commissioner Baumgart seconded.

**RESOLUTION NO. 18**

"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 April 25, 2022, Commission meeting; and,
- ❖ Bills represented by vouchers No. 20220562 to No. 20220621 and associated wire transfers inclusive in the amount of \$1,263,032.87.

Dated this 9<sup>th</sup> day of May 2022.



President

Attest:



Acting Secretary

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

General Manager Harren reviewed with the Commission the minutes from the May 2<sup>nd</sup> WMU Labor Committee meeting (see attached). Following review, Commissioner Erickson offered a motion to approve the minutes of the May 2<sup>nd</sup> WMU Labor Committee meeting as presented. Commissioner Baumgart seconded the motion which carried by a vote of four ayes and zero nays.

In conjunction with the LC meeting, Energy/Safety Outreach Coordinator Radel presented a condensed review of the Customer Satisfaction Survey recently conducted by Q Market Research (November/December 2021). Surveys were distributed to 1,000 randomly selected WMU customers. Items to note include:

- 1) Overall satisfaction with WMU: rated in the high range;
- 2) Net Promoter Score (meaning given a choice, customers would recommend WMU): rated near the top of the good range (near excellent range);
- 3) Satisfaction with service: rated in the excellent range;

- 4) Many positive customer comments were received (i.e. service reliability, friendly & efficient employees, good response time to outages, affordability); and,
- 5) Additional promoting of energy conservation rebates/programs began in January this year.

The 2021 Customer Satisfaction Survey will serve as a benchmark for additional surveys to be conducted in the future.

As part of the LC meeting, the Commission was requested to approve the Customer Outreach Proposal for 2022. The proposal included multiple events for consideration which are intended to reach a greater diversity of our customer base. These events would directly encompass more community members and their families to assist in increasing awareness of their utility services and energy programs available to them. The enhanced outreach program will include mobile home parks and Somalia community learning events, WillmarFest Block Party, National Night Out, Holidazzle Parade, Willmar Area Learning Center (utility employment opportunities), Aging Wisely: Knowing your Energy, MRES Bright Energy Services Power Team Program for 5<sup>th</sup> graders in Willmar Schools, expanding knowledge of electric vehicles/charging stations, and Senior Day at the area Community Center. It was determined that this enhanced program would reach and benefit considerably more customers than the annual Open House held in the past. The estimated cost of this outreach program is \$18,000. Following discussion, Commissioner Mueske offered a motion to approve the enhanced 2022 Customer Outreach Program as presented in the estimated amount of \$18,000. Commissioner Baumgart seconded the motion which carried by a vote of four ayes and zero nays.

Finance & Office Services Supervisor Prekker presented the Commission with the March 2022 Financial Reports along with a recap of the March 31, 2022 Investment Portfolio, and the March 2022 Cost of Power Report. 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 2021/2022 monthly year-to-date revenues, expenses, and retained earnings were also included with the financial data.

Facilities & Maintenance Supervisor Marti presented the Commission with the April 2022 Wind Turbine Report. Turbine availabilities for the month of April were at 95.8% (Unit #3) and 98.8% (Unit #4) with a total monthly production of 1,416,112 kilowatt hours. Marti noted this was a record for monthly production output of the turbines and only the sixth time the kilowatt hours totaled over one million. Special thank you goes to our WMU employees/technicians who continue to provide the needed maintenance and repairs to keep these units operational.

Energy/Safety Outreach Coordinator Radel reviewed with the Commission the latest 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. Radel presented a step-by-step review of the tasks and timeline updates as of May 2022. The Strategic Plan is considered a "living" document and is continually updated by Staff.

Energy/Safety Outreach Coordinator Radel informed the Commission of the winning entries submitted for the 2022 MMUA Tom Bovitz Memorial Scholarship sponsored by the Willmar Municipal Utilities and MMUA. The applicants are required to submit a 500-750 word essay on "*Municipal Utilities – Good for All of Us*". Participation in this program helps to increase awareness of public power while giving back to the community it serves. The entries are submitted by area seniors who are customers (their immediate families) of the Willmar Municipal Utilities. The first-place entry and winner of a \$750 scholarship is Ryan Pappenfus. (Ryan's entry has been forwarded to MMUA for consideration in the state-wide award selection process.) The second-place winner of the \$250 scholarship is Max Gatewood. Congratulations and best wishes, Ryan and Max!

Missouri River Energy Services (MRES) is once again offering member tours of the Red Rock Hydroelectric Project (RRHP) this summer. RRHP (near Pella, IA) became operational in June 2021 and is the newest clean, renewable, and reliable power supply resource for MRES. Tour dates are scheduled for June 23<sup>rd</sup>, July 20<sup>th</sup>, and August 18<sup>th</sup>.

General Manager Harren informed the Commission that meetings of both the WMU Labor and Planning Committees would be forthcoming. The Planning Committee will be meeting on May 16<sup>th</sup> at 12:00 pm with agenda items to include water modeling, 2021-2022 City street project costs, new building land purchase, Power Plant Substation, and City internet project. Tentative future Labor Committee agenda items will include new logo, software options for accounting & billing, and rate study. Tentative future Planning Committee agenda items will include water treatment plant, agreement with David Turch & Associates (DTA), and new building.

For information: Upcoming events to note include:

- MRES Annual Meeting (Sioux Falls, SD): May 11-12 (DeBlieck/Laumer)
- Special MUC Meeting re MRES transmission presentation: Friday, June 3<sup>rd</sup> @ 11:00 am
- APPA National Conference (Nashville, TN): June 10-15 (DeBlieck/Laumer)
- MMUA Summer Conference (Madden's Resort): August 22-24 (Laumer/Johnson/DeBlieck)

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

Respectfully Submitted,

WILLMAR MUNICIPAL UTILITIES



Beth Mattheisen  
Executive Secretary

ATTEST:



Shawn Mueske, Acting Secretary

**WILLMAR MUNICIPAL UTILITIES**  
**MUC Labor Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**Monday, May 2, 2022**  
**12:00 pm (WMU Conference Room)**

Attendees: Commissioners Kerry Johnson, Dave Baumgart & Bruce DeBlieck, General Manager John Harren, Director of Administration Janell Johnson, Energy & Safety Outreach Coordinator Chris Radel, Executive Secretary Beth Mattheisen, and Q Market Research Representative Rick Naymark.

Commissioner DeBlieck called the meeting to order at 12:00 pm. The first order of business was to establish the 2022 Chair and Vice Chair positions for the WMU Labor Committee. Commissioner Baumgart nominated Commissioner Johnson to serve as Chair for the WMU Labor Committee for 2022. Commissioner DeBlieck seconded the motion which carried by vote of three ayes and zero nays. Commissioner Johnson next nominated Commissioner Baumgart to serve as Vice Chair for the WMU Labor Committee for 2022. Commissioner DeBlieck seconded the motion which carried by vote of three ayes and zero nays.

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**1) WMU Customer Satisfaction Survey Results:**

Q Market Research Rep Naymark reviewed with the Committee the findings of the customer survey conducted in November/December 2021. The team at Q Market Research conduct customer satisfaction surveys for electric, gas, water, and sewer utilities. Survey results identify both strengths and areas for improving consumer services/satisfaction. Randomly selected WMU customers (1,000) were sent the satisfaction surveys. A complete overview of the survey results was presented. Positive input received from the general public including Net Promoter Score (NPS) near excellent rating. Also receiving a Value Enhancement Score of 6.15 which reflects an excellent satisfaction for overall services provided. Reliability, efficiency, friendly staff, and strong services were some of the noted key comments included. The 2021 customer satisfaction survey will serve as a benchmark for future like-surveys.

Additional discussion regarding customer comments and resolve were reviewed. The follow-up process relating to the comments was discussed. Additional comments to be addressed included water quality data and available energy rebates information. Additional promoting of energy rebates began the first of this year with positive input already received. Future items of interest to our community were addressed with focus emphasizing current reliability standards and how to maintain it. WMU should be proud of the positive input received. One item of note was to further address outage situation communications with our customers.

Rep Naymark concluded by stating that this was a very positive customer satisfaction survey which for most participants reflects a favorable view of WMU and the services provided. WMU employees should be proud of the job being done.

(This was for information only. No action required.)

**2) 2022 Customer Outreach/Community Events discussion:**

Energy & Safety Coordinator Radel presented two options for community events for 2022 that would best serve our customers via outreach programs/events. Option #1 was to continue with the traditional Open House as in the past. Option 2 for consideration was to hold multiple events which are intended to reach a greater diversity of our customer base. The multiple outreach events would directly encompass more community members and their families and provide additional knowledge of their utility services and energy programs available.

Following discussion, it was a consensus of the Labor Committee to select Option 2 to conduct the multiple outreach events for 2022. Additional information will be provided to our customers as the events are scheduled. Regarding the business customers, it was noted that key accounts are contacted annually to seek input and to provide insight to the business community relating to energy services and other utility services. Radel is also involved in EDC outreach in the Willmar community which further expands the efforts.

Future expansion of educational topics will include marketing EV and charging stations, and to continue promoting WMU's clean energy programs and 100% carbon-free power supply.

**Action:**

It was a consensus of the Labor Committee to select Option 2 to conduct the multiple community events as presented (enhanced customer outreach). This recommendation will be presented to the Commission for approval at the next regular MUC meeting.

**3) New WMU logo:**

Energy & Safety Coordinator Radel informed the Committee that the process to redesign the current WMU logo is moving forward. The intent of the new logo would be to better reflect the services of the Utility and present a more recognizable image of WMU. Several options were presented for consideration. Following input from the Committee, selected options will now be forwarded to a designer to enhance the versions selected for review.

(This was for information only. No action required.)

**4) Miscellaneous:**

General Manager Harren provided an overview of the proposals received for the upgrading of the financial/accounting and utility billing software project. WMU will be upgrading its current software to provide more concise and advanced service processes. Six RFPs had been received with additional demos presented by the top candidates. Within the next month, staff will determine which software provider would best meet the needs of the Utility. At that time, the Labor Committee and Commission will be requested to support the staff's recommendation, and to enter into an agreement for the accounting/financial and billing software options.

**5) Adjournment:**

There being no further business to come before the WMU Labor Committee, Commissioner Johnson offered a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Baumgart seconded the motion which carried, and the meeting was adjourned by a vote of three ayes and zero nays at 1:12 pm.

