

**WILLMAR MUNICIPAL UTILITIES COMMISSION**  
**MEETING MINUTES - DECEMBER 12, 2022**  
**11:45 AM - WMU AUDITORIUM**

The Municipal Utilities Commission (MUC) met in its regular scheduled meeting on Monday, December 12, 2022, at 11:45 am in the WMU Auditorium with the following Commissioners present: Bruce DeBlieck, Cole Erickson, Carol Laumer, Dave Baumgart, Shawn Mueske, and John Kennedy. Absent was Commissioner Kadar Abdi.

Others present at the meeting were: General Manager John Harren, Director of Administration Janell Johnson, Finance & Office Services Supervisor Andrea Prekker, Facilities & Maintenance Supervisor Kevin Marti, Staff Electrical Engineer Jeron Smith, IS Coordinator Mike Sangren, Executive Secretary Beth Mattheisen, City Attorney Robert Scott (via teleconference), and WC Tribune Journalist Jennifer Kotila.

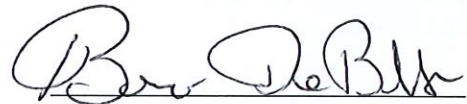
The meeting opened by reciting the Pledge of Allegiance followed by Commission President DeBlieck asking if any revisions were needed to the presented agenda. There being none, a resolution was requested to approve the consent agenda. Following review and discussion, Commissioner Baumgart offered a resolution to approve the consent agenda as presented. Commissioner Laumer seconded.

**RESOLUTION NO. 47**

“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 14, 2022, Commission meeting; and,
- ❖ Bills represented by vouchers No. 20221851 to No. 20221946 and associated wire transfers inclusive in the amount of \$2,485,040.57.

Dated this 12<sup>th</sup> day of December, 2022.

  
President

Attest:

  
Secretary

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


Commissioner Baumgart (LC Chair) reviewed with the Commission the minutes from the November 28<sup>th</sup> WMU Labor Committee meeting (see attached). Following review, Commissioner Laumer offered a motion to approve the minutes of the November 28<sup>th</sup> WMU Labor Committee meeting as presented. Commissioner Kennedy seconded the motion which carried by a vote of six ayes and zero nays.

In conjunction with the approval of the minutes, the Labor Committee was recommending three items for approval consideration. The first item presented by the Labor Committee was to approve the proposed revisions to the WMU Personnel Policies for 2023. Commissioner Baumgart presented a brief overview of the proposed amendments which were minimal with no actual revisions needed to the majority of policies. It was noted that all policies are annually reviewed and that the proposed changes for 2023 were for minimal grammatic revisions and to address travel expense items (i.e. vehicle use and wording updates). Following discussion and review, Commissioner Laumer offered a resolution to approve the revisions to the 2023 WMU Personnel Policies as presented. Commissioner Erickson seconded.


**RESOLUTION NO. 48**

"BE IT RESOLVED, by the Municipal Utilities Commission of the City of Willmar, Minnesota, that the proposed amendments to the 2023 WMU Personnel Policies be approved incorporating the revisions as presented."

Dated this 12<sup>th</sup> day of December, 2022.

  
President

Attest:

  
Secretary

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


The second item recommended for approval was a new logo design for WMU. The intent of the new logo is to better reflect the services of WMU while presenting a more recognizable image of the Utility. Following a lengthy process, the final design (including letterhead incorporating the design) was presented to the Commission for approval. The re-branding process will be a year-long process which will include additional marketing in the community. Following review, Commissioner Baumgart offered a resolution to approve the new logo design as presented. Commissioner Erickson seconded the motion which carried by a vote of six ayes and zero nays.

The final item presented by the Labor Committee was a request to concur with the proposed adjustments to both the health insurance premium and deductible amounts for WMU staff in 2023. Following discussion and review, Commissioner Laumer offered a resolution to approve the 2023 health insurance premium and deductible adjustments for WMU staff effective January 1, 2023. Commissioner Kennedy seconded.

#### RESOLUTION NO. 49

"BE IT RESOLVED, by the Municipal Utilities Commission of the City of Willmar, Minnesota, that the proposed 2023 health insurance premiums and deductible adjustments be approved at the same rate for all WMU personnel (union and non-union) as presented effective January 1, 2023."

Dated this 12<sup>th</sup> day of December, 2022.

  
President

Attest:

  
Secretary

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

Commissioner Mueske (PC Chair) reviewed with the Commission the minutes from the November 28<sup>th</sup> WMU Planning Committee meeting (see attached). Following review, Commissioner Mueske offered a motion to approve the minutes of the November 28<sup>th</sup> WMU Planning Committee meeting as presented. Commissioner Laumer seconded the motion which carried by a vote of six ayes and zero nays.

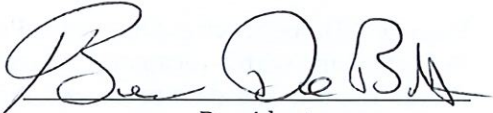
In conjunction with the approval of the minutes, the Commission was asked to consider approval of three recommendations from the Planning Committee. The first item requested for approval was the proposed revisions to the 2023 WMU Operations Policies which include the following: Emergency Contingency Plan

(living document), Operations Policy Manual, Purchasing Policy, and 2023 Schedule of Charges. Following review and discussion, Commissioner Mueske offered a resolution to approve the 2023 WMU Operations Policies and Schedule of Charges as presented. Commissioner Erickson seconded.

#### RESOLUTION NO. 50

“BE IT RESOLVED, by the Municipal Utilities Commission of the City of Willmar, Minnesota, the proposed revisions to the 2023 WMU Operations Policies and 2023 Schedule of Charges be approved in their entirety as presented incorporating the amending changes as identified.”

Dated this 12<sup>th</sup> day of December, 2022.

  
President

Attest:

  
Secretary

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

The second item presented for Commission consideration was two-fold. The first component was to request moving forward the process to acquire property for a new building site. The second part was to approve proceeding with the sale of currently owned WMU property. Following discussion and review, Commissioner Laumer offered a motion to direct WMU staff to move forward with land purchase negotiations for a new building site. Commissioner Baumgart seconded the motion which carried by a vote of six ayes and zero nays. Commissioner Mueske continued by offering a motion to proceed with the process to sell the WMU property located at 810 Litchfield Avenue SW. Commissioner Baumgart seconded the motion which carried by a vote of six ayes and zero nays. It was further noted that staff would rely on input from legal counsel (Flaherty & Hood, PA) throughout the property transaction processes.

Commissioner Baumgart (LC Chair) reviewed with the Commission the minutes from the December 7<sup>th</sup> WMU Labor Committee meeting (see attached). Following review, Commissioner Baumgart offered a motion to approve the minutes of the December 7<sup>th</sup> WMU Labor Committee meeting as presented. Commissioner Kennedy seconded the motion which carried by a vote of six ayes and zero nays.

In conjunction with the Labor Committee meeting, the Commission was asked to approve the 2023 COLA adjustment for General Manager Harren. It was noted that as part of the General Manager Harren’s annual performance review, an updated 2022 Goals Listing along with the 2023 Goals Listing were available for review. As in the past, a survey had been completed by all Commissioners regarding the General Manager’s performance for the past year. The results were compiled and once again reflected favorable results of General Manager Harren’s performance. Commissioners expressed their appreciation to General Manager Harren for the excellent job he has once again done and that his efforts reflect a clear indication of his exceptional performance and leadership attributes. Following additional discussion and positive input, Commissioner Kennedy offered a resolution to approve a 3% COLA adjustment for General Manager Harren effective January 1, 2023. Commissioner Baumgart seconded.

#### RESOLUTION NO. 51

“BE IT RESOLVED, by the Municipal Utilities Commission of the City of Willmar, Minnesota, that following the favorable annual performance review, a 3% COLA wage adjustment be approved for General Manager John Harren effective January 1, 2023.”

Dated this 12<sup>th</sup> day of December, 2022.



President

Attest:



Secretary

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

Finance & Office Services Supervisor Prekker reviewed with the Commission the October 2022 Financial Reports along with a recap of the October 2022 Investment Portfolio, and the October 31, 2022 Cost of Power Report. The data presented included analyses of the Electric, Water, and Combined Divisions. Information contained in the reports reflects 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 November 2022 Wind Turbine Report. Turbine availabilities for the month of November were at 76.6% (Unit #3) and 97.4% (Unit #4) with a total monthly production of 733,123 kilowatt hours. The 2022 total production through November is 7,279,286 kilowatt hours.

For information and review, IS Coordinator Sangren presented the Commission with an annual review of the Information Technology (IT) Department. The report included an update of current and completed projects. The departmental report and items of interest included:

**1) 2022 Year-in-Review**


- a) Operations & Maintenance Projects included:
  - i) Replaced physical server per 5-yr. schedule
  - ii) Renewed fiber and copier lease agreements
  - iii) Changed phone service to increase operational performance
  - iv) Selected new software vendor for finance & utility billing through RFP process (Tyler Tech.)
  - v) Changed managed services to new provider
  - vi) Setup mobile time entry for smart phones
- b) Cybersecurity:
  - i) Pen testing performed by NetSPI (both external and internal testings were completed)
  - ii) Continue to educate staff on cyber awareness (i.e. KnowBe4 and Scam of the Week)

General Manager Harren presented the Commission with the 2023 WMU Consultant Listing. This listing consists of consultants (along with project descriptions and costs) which are over \$10,000 and have been budgeted to be utilized for various projects throughout the year. It was further noted that all projects requiring consulting services over \$10,000 not listed will be brought before the Commission for approval. Following a complete review of the listing, Commissioner Mueske offered a resolution to approve the 2023 WMU Consultant Listing as presented. Commissioner Erickson seconded.

**RESOLUTION NO. 52**

“BE IT RESOLVED, by the Municipal Utilities Commission of the City of Willmar, Minnesota, that the 2023 WMU Consultant Listing be approved as presented.”

Dated this 12<sup>th</sup> day of December, 2022.



President

Attest:



Secretary

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

Staff Electrical Engineer Smith provided an update on a recent power outage. On December 5<sup>th</sup> at 11:53 am, a dump truck collided with overhead powerlines along County Road 5 NW. Protection systems de-energized the affected distribution grid. WMU Linemen isolated the damaged powerlines and restored power to several customers. The Lineman worked to clear the dump truck from the lines and secured the damaged poles prior to restoring power to the remaining customers. Approximately 850 customers were without electricity for 19 minutes. Approximately 600 customers were without power for an additional 65 minutes. Smith along with the Commission expressed their appreciation for the commendable efforts of the Line Department in restoring the power safely and efficiently.

General Manager Harren reviewed with the Commission a tentative listing of proposed educational topics to be presented to the Commission throughout 2023. These informational updates are presented to assist in keeping the Commission well-informed of various topics/issues, projects, policies, and departmental developments throughout the year. Commission input is valued and welcomed to assist in determining topics of interest relevant in keeping the board abreast of the Utility and its operations. Following discussion, it was the consensus of the Commission to concur with the 2023 WMU Commission Listing of Anticipated Educational Subjects as presented.

At this time, General Manager Harren informed the Commission that the next matter of business would be to establish regular Commission meeting times and site location for the next year. Following Commission input, Commissioner Erickson made a motion to set the 2023 Municipal Utilities Commission meeting schedule as agreed upon with the meetings to be held on the second and fourth Mondays of each month (unless otherwise designated, see attached schedule) at 11:45 a.m. in the Municipal Utilities Auditorium. Commissioner Mueske seconded the motion which carried by a vote of six ayes and zero nays.

General Manager Harren reminded the Commission that due to the upcoming holiday, the next and final Commission meeting of 2022 is scheduled for Wednesday, December 21<sup>st</sup> at 11:45 pm.

For information: Upcoming events to note include:

- Holiday Luncheon: Tues., December 13<sup>th</sup> @ 12:00 pm)
- 2023 MMUA Legislative Conference: January 24-25 (St. Paul)
- 2023 APPA Legislative Conference: February 27<sup>th</sup> through March 1<sup>st</sup> (Washington DC)

There being no further business to come before the Commission, Commissioner Laumer offered a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Baumgart seconded the motion which carried by a vote of seven ayes and zero nays, and the meeting was adjourned at 12:51 pm.

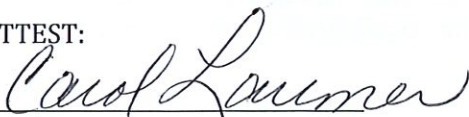
Respectfully Submitted,

WILLMAR MUNICIPAL UTILITIES



Beth Mattheisen  
Executive Secretary

ATTEST:



Carol Laumer, Secretary

**WILLMAR MUNICIPAL UTILITIES**  
**MUC Labor Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**Monday, November 28, 2022**  
**10:45 am (WMU Conference Room)**

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

Commissioner Baumgart (LC Chair) called the meeting to order at 10:45 am.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

**1) Annual review of WMU Personnel Policies for 2023: (Director of Administration Johnson)**

As part of the annual review of WMU Personnel Policies, Director of Administration Johnson presented the Committee with proposed revisions for their consideration. The changes were minimal with the majority of policies requiring no material changes. Johnson provided a step-by-step review of the proposed revisions to the 2023 Personnel Policies as follow:

WMU Personnel Policies with no changes are:

1. Cell Phone Policy
2. Clothing PPE Purchasing Guidelines (2 grammar corrections)
3. Data Practices Policies (5 policies)
4. DOT Drug & Alcohol (CDL) Testing Policy\*
5. Dress Code Policy
6. Drug & Alcohol-Free Workplace & Testing Policy
7. Employee Performance Review
8. FMLA Policy
9. Fraud Policy
10. Information Technology Policy
11. Internship Policy
12. PTO Donation Policy
13. Social Media Policy
14. Tablet Policy
15. Workers Comp Policy

\*products containing THC will be followed per established Federal guidelines

One area with proposed changes was the WMU Personnel Policy Manual, specifically as it relates to business travel expenses. The proposed changes for Section 5.6 "Travel Expenses" are:

- 1) Separate WMU employees from City Officials (i.e. Commissioners and City Councilmembers). This will allow Officials to travel via their own personal vehicle on company business and to be reimbursed the full standard mileage rate.
- 2) If a utility vehicle is available for employee use, and they choose to drive their personal vehicle, they are reimbursed the Standard Government Mileage Rate.
- 3) Revise wording from "Standard Class" to "Business Class" for airline travel.
- 4) Addition of history revision table.

**Recommendation:**

Following discussion and review, 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 12<sup>th</sup> MUC meeting.

**2) WMU Logo: (Director of Administration Janell Johnson)**

**WILLMAR MUNICIPAL UTILITIES**  
**MUC Planning Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**Monday, November 28, 2022**  
**12:35 pm – WMU Conference Room**

Attendees: Commissioners Shawn Mueske, Cole Erickson and Carol Laumer, General Manager John Harren, Director of Administration Janell Johnson, Finance & Office Services Supervisor Andrea Prekker, Water System Supervisor Alan Neer, Facilities & Maintenance Supervisor Kevin Marti, and Executive Secretary Beth Mattheisen.

Commissioner Mueske (PC Chair) called the meeting to order at 12:35 pm.

.....

1. **Water Conservation Program:** (Water System Supervisor Neer)

Water System Supervisor Neer presented an overview of WMU’s Water Conservation Program. This program includes all facets of conservation efforts and efficiency practices across all customer categories that include clearly defined and measurable performance goals (i.e. water shortage or drought plan, public education). Topics reviewed included public education, internal utility practices, external practices, and WMU’s vision as it relates to water conservation.

The data presented was to provide insight into WMU’s water conservation efforts. This was for information only with no action required.

2. **Annual review of Operations Policies for 2023:** (Director of Administration Johnson)

Director of Administration Johnson reviewed with the Committee proposed 2023 updates to the Operations Policies including the Schedule of Charges. Johnson provided a step-by-step review of the proposed revisions including the Emergency Contingency Plan which is considered a “living document” and updated as needed. The following amendments were recommended by Staff for consideration:

**Operations Policy:**

- Increase fee/charge waiver limitation from \$2,500 to \$3,500 to reflect increased labor & equipment costs when offering a donation in kind.
- Updated language to install primary underground wire duct
- Add “for the cost and construction of the pad and” (clarifying language)
- Add Multi-Unit Rate acronyms
- Update language for EV Charging and reference ChargePoint Charges

**Purchasing Policy:**

- Add “minimum fund balance” per auditor’s request.  
It is the goal of the Utility to maintain a fund balance at fiscal year-end equal to 50% of the annual revenue. If the fund balance falls below 50%, WMU will develop a restoration plan to bring it up to the 50% threshold goal.
- Grammar update “his” to “the”

**Emergency Contingency Plan:** (living document)

- Updated contact names, suppliers, and priority lists
- Added Appendix D - Emergency Response Plan

**2023 Schedule of Charges:**

- Update equipment rates
- Update labor rates to reflect COLA
- Update Bulk Water Service to reflect water rate adjustments
- Update Electrical Hook Up Fees Service at 200 amp and over 200 amp
- Update rental fees for main floor retail space effective Jan. 1, 2023

General Manager Harren provided an overview of the process involved in selecting a new logo for WMU. The intent of the new logo is to better reflect the services of WMU while presenting a more recognizable image of the Utility. Director of Administration Johnson continued by presenting the previously selected logo and letterhead incorporating the new logo. The rebranding process will begin in the near future with staff developing a marketing campaign to inform the public of the anticipated change.

**Recommendation:**

Following review and discussion, it was a consensus of the Labor Committee to recommend approval of the presented new logo design to the Commission at the December 12<sup>th</sup> MUC meeting.

- 3) **Health Insurance premium and deductible adjustments:** (Director of Administration Johnson)  
Director of Administration Johnson opened discussion with the Committee on increased health insurance premiums and deductibles for WMU employees in 2023. The union contract dictates WMU to provide full cost of single coverage, premium + deductible and require both VEBA and HSA remain whole. For 2023, family coverage for union employees would increase by \$75.39/month. The IRS also raised the maximum deductible allowed for a high deductible health care plan for 2023 to \$3000/\$6000 for single/family coverage. The Master Plan through MEDICA HSA has: 1. Increased the deductible from \$2,800 to \$3,000 for single coverage 2. Increased the deductible from \$5,600 to \$6,000 for family coverage. In the past, non-union employees did not receive the same adjustments as union employees. It was therefore requested that non-union employees receive the same premium and deductible adjustments as union employees.

Following discussion, it was a consensus of the Labor Committee to increase the health insurance benefits for non-union employees to reflect ½ of the family premium increase and increase the deductible to be equal to union health insurance benefits of union employees.

- 4) **Adjournment:**  
There being no further business to come before the WMU Labor Committee, Commissioner Kennedy offered a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Baumgart seconded the motion which carried, and the meeting was adjourned at 11:42 am by a vote of three ayes and zero nays.



General Manager Harren discussed creating an “Economic Development Discount/Incentive” policy to promote commercial development while addressing the major increases in transformer costs (approximately doubled). Discount/Incentive would consist of a reduction in the cost of the transformer. .

**Recommendation:**

Following review and discussion, it was a consensus of the Planning Committee to recommend approval of the amendments to the 2023 Operations Policies as presented including the Schedule of Charges. This recommendation will be presented to the Commission for approval at the December 12<sup>th</sup> MUC meeting.

**3. Property acquisition for new WMU Building and sale of current WMU property: (Facilities & Maintenance Supervisor Marti)**

Facilities & Maintenance Supv. Marti presented an overview of the progression of the new WMU Building Project (years 2010-2023). It was noted that throughout the process, budgetary measures have been in place since 2010, therefore significant funding is in place for the project. Options were presented for potential property sites. Two potential sites had previously been identified with two additional sites recently added for consideration. Community talking points regarding the project were reviewed and agreed upon with the inclusion of additional items.

Following review of the potential sites, one site was temporarily eliminated. It was determined that the three remaining sites would provide improved access for customers, aid in response time to the community during outages, and allow for future community growth.

Marti continued by informing the Committee of a parcel of property that would be advantageous for the Utility to consider selling. Following discussion, it was the opinion of the Committee that it would be beneficial to the Utility to pursue the property sale at this time. Marti noted that State purchasing guidelines would be adhered to throughout the process.

**Recommendations:**

Following discussion and review, it was a consensus of the WMU Planning Committee to proceed with the property negotiations process for the three identified sites for the new building project. Furthermore, it was their recommendation to proceed with the WMU property sale process. These recommendations will be presented to the Commission for approval at the December 12<sup>th</sup> MUC meeting.

**4. Miscellaneous: (General Manager John Harren)**

General Manager Harren informed the Committee that the Line Department had recently completed repair work at the Celebrate the Lights area (Robbins Island). Damage had been sustained and repairs were required prior to the onset of the community event. Current policy requires MUC approval for any fee/charge waiver prior to the work being completed. The total cost for the repairs set up and take down was \$3,800. The Planning Committee approved the contribution request.

**5. Adjournment:**

There being no further business to come before the WMU Planning Committee, Commissioner Mueske declared the meeting adjourned at 2:10 pm.

**WILLMAR MUNICIPAL UTILITIES**  
**MUC Labor Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**Wednesday, December 7, 2022**  
**12:00 pm – WMU Conference Room**

Attendees: Commissioners Dave Baumgart, John Kennedy and Bruce DeBlieck, General Manager John Harren, Director of Administration Janell Johnson, and Executive Secretary Beth Mattheisen.

Commissioner Baumgart (LC Chair) called the meeting to order at 12:00 pm.

\*\*\*\*\*

**1) 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. Director of Administration Johnson presented background information regarding the process utilized which included conducting a survey of all Commissioners. All Commissioners provided responses to the distributed surveys with the data being compiled and a summary of the findings created.

As part of the review, General Manager Harren presented the Labor Committee with a step-by-step update of the previously established 2022 Goals along with a listing of proposed 2023 Goals. The Labor Committee appreciated the achievements of the current year's goals and concurred with the proposed 2023 Goals with the inclusion of increased marketing strategies/promotions. 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 2022 and 2023 Goals, staff members Johnson and Mattheisen were excused from the meeting. At this time, the Committee reviewed with General Manager Harren the 2022 General Manager Performance Evaluation (annual survey) results.

**Recommendation:**

Following a step-by-step assessment of the General Manager's favorable performance evaluation, it was a consensus of the Labor Committee to recommend a 3% COLA for General Manager Harren effective January 1, 2023. This recommendation will be presented to the Commission for approval at the December 12<sup>th</sup> MUC meeting.

**2) Adjournment:**

There being no further business to come before the WMU Labor Committee, Commissioner Kennedy offered a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Baumgart seconded the motion which carried by a vote of three ayes and zero nays, and the meeting was adjourned at 1:20 pm.

**WILLMAR MUNICIPAL UTILITIES  
2023 MUC MEETING SCHEDULE**

Regular meetings of the Municipal Utilities Commission for the year 2023 will be held on the second and fourth Mondays of the month at 11:45 a.m., in the Municipal Utilities Auditorium, 700 SW Litchfield Avenue, Willmar, Minnesota, according to the following schedule unless revised by order of the Municipal Utilities Commission.

January 9, 2023	July 10, 2023
January 23, 2023	July 24, 2023
February 13, 2023	August 14, 2023
February 24, 2023*	August 28, 2023
March 13, 2023	September 11, 2023
March 27, 2023	September 25, 2023
April 10, 2023	October 9, 2023
April 24, 2023	October 23, 2023
May 8, 2023	November 13, 2023
May 22, 2023	November 27, 2023
June 12, 2023	December 11, 2023
June 26, 2023	December 21, 2023**

\*Denotes Friday

\*\*Denotes Thursday

**BY ORDER OF THE MUNICIPAL UTILITIES COMMISSION**



**Commission President**

