



WILLMAR MUNICIPAL UTILITIES COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes – June 24, 2024

11:45 am – WMU Auditorium

The Municipal Utilities Commission (MUC) met in its regular scheduled meeting on Monday, June 24, 2024, at 11:45 am in the WMU Auditorium with the following Commissioners present: John Kennedy, Dave Baumgart, Terrill Sieck, and Bruce DeBlieck. Absent were Commissioners Shawn Mueske, Carol Laumer, and Patricia Elizondo.

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, Information Systems Coordinator Mike Sangren, Executive Secretary Beth Mattheisen, and WC Tribune Journalist Jennifer Kotila.

The meeting opened by reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. Due to the absence of Commission President Mueske, Commission Vice President Kennedy continued by asking if any changes to the agenda were needed. There being none, a resolution to approve the consent agenda was requested. Following review and discussion, Commissioner Baumgart offered a resolution to approve the consent agenda as presented. Commissioner Sieck seconded.

**RESOLUTION NO. 23**

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

- ❖ Meeting minutes from June 10, 2024; and,
- ❖ Bills represented by vouchers No. 20240752 to No. 20240875 and associated wire transfers inclusive in the amount of \$1,502,832.08.

Dated this 24<sup>th</sup> day of June 2024.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "John Kennedy", written over a horizontal line.

Vice President

Attest:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "Bruce DeBlieck", written over a horizontal line.

Secretary

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

Commissioner DeBlieck (LC Vice Chair) reviewed with the Commission minutes from the June 18<sup>th</sup> WMU Labor Committee meeting (see attached). Following review and discussion, Commissioner DeBlieck offered a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Commissioner Baumgart seconded the motion which carried by a vote of four ayes and zero nays.

In conjunction with the approved LC minutes, the Commission was requested to approve the proposal from David Drown Associates (DDA) to assist WMU with a search for the General Manager position. DDA has extensive experience with local governments and knows the complexities involved to ensure the best candidate for the organization and community is found. The all-inclusive fee to retain the services of DDA is \$25,000 which also includes a 24-month guarantee for the filled position (if the newly hired General Manager leaves the organization within the first 24 months of employment, DDA will complete another search without professional service fees). Following review and discussion, Commissioner DeBlieck offered a resolution to approve the proposal submitted by DDA to conduct the executive search for the General Manager position. Commissioner Baumgart seconded.

RESOLUTION NO. 24

"BE IT RESOLVED, by the Municipal Utilities Commission of the City of Willmar, Minnesota, that the proposal submitted by David Drown Associates, Inc., to conduct an executive search for the General Manager position be approved as presented in the all-inclusive amount of \$25,000.00."

Dated this 24<sup>th</sup> day of June 2024.

  
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Vice President

Attest:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Secretary

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

General Manager Harren presented the Commission with a mid-year update of the General Manager Goals for 2024. Harren provided a complete overview of the established goals and their status to date. The progress report provided updates of the goals and projects, along with additional noteworthy tasks which have been completed or are ongoing.

Finance & Customer Service Supv. Prekker presented the Commission with the 2024 Energy Acquisition Adjustment (EAA) update. As a reminder, the EAA serves as a mechanism to adjust rates for uncontrollable charges associated with power supply costs. Prekker provided background data and noted that the EAA has not been implemented since 2017. According to actual data through May 2024 and the forecast for the remainder of the year, WMU's energy costs remain below the established threshold of \$66/MWh. Therefore, staff determined that implementation of an EAA is not required at this time. Staff will continue to monitor future data to determine if or when applying the EAA would be warranted.

Commissioners Kennedy and DeBlieck presented a recap of their recent attendance at the 2024 APPA National Conference held in San Diego, California (Commissioner Laumer also attended). Throughout the conference, public power leaders are able to network with others by sharing ideas and insights on opportunities and challenges facing the ever-changing electric industry. Topics of discussion included: industry innovations, federal legislative updates, energy storage, supply chain requirements, environmental regulations, renewable/nuclear/wind/solar energy, AI's potential and risks, 2040 goal, and forecasting the future of public power. Kennedy and DeBlieck extended their appreciation to the Commission for allowing them the opportunity to attend the annual informational conference and encouraged others to attend in the future.

American Public Power Association (APPA) has a 15-part on-demand training course entitled "*Public Power Governance Essentials*". This series offers a convenient way to get "up-to-speed" on governance requirements, such as complying with charters/bylaws, reporting conflicts of interest, understanding duties and legal obligations, and facilitating an effective board meeting. At this time, the informational video entitled "*The Board Meeting*" (Lesson #11) was presented.

General Manager Harren informed the Commission that meetings of both the WMU Planning and Labor Committees would be forthcoming. Tentative future Labor Committee agenda item(s) will include new building land acquisition, and MUC Self-Survey. Tentative future Planning Committee agenda items will include new building, new generation, transmission project, and water treatment plant. In addition to these meetings, a joint meeting between WMU and the City will be scheduled in the near future to discuss a number of items including WMU's Annual Update to the City, updating of collaborative agreements, and a Swansson Field Agreement South of Willmar Avenue.

Upcoming 2024 events to note:

- MMUA Utility Leader Workshop (Alexandria): June 27
- MMUA Summer Conference (Fargo, ND): August 19-21

- Red Rock Hydroelectric Project tours (Pella, IA): July 31, Aug. 28, or Sept. 25
- MRES Leadership Academy (Sioux Falls, SD): September 18-19

There being no further business to come before the Commission, Commissioner Baumgart offered a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Sieck seconded the motion which carried by a vote of four ayes and zero nays, and the meeting was adjourned at 12:44 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

WILLMAR MUNICIPAL UTILITIES



Beth Mattheisen, Executive Secretary

ATTEST:



Dave Baumgart, Secretary



**WILLMAR MUNICIPAL UTILITIES**  
**MUC Labor Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**Tuesday, June 18, 2024**  
**12:00 pm (WMU Conference Room)**

Attendees: Commissioners Patricia Elizondo, Bruce DeBlieck & Carol Laumer, General Manager John Harren, and Executive Secretary Beth Mattheisen.

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

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**1. Discuss the General Manager position:**

Commissioner Elizondo opened discussion regarding the General Manager position by acknowledging receipt of a letter of resignation submitted by General Manager Harren on June 17, 2024. The letter noted his official retirement date would be effective September 20, 2024. As a reminder, PERA law requires a complete separation from all Minnesota public service for 30 days following the termination date.

Three hiring options were presented for consideration:

- a. Post internally
- b. Post externally
- c. Utilize an executive recruitment firm to complete the process. Two proposals have been received for consideration:
  1. Baker Tilly US, LLP
  2. David Drown Associates, Inc.

Additional informational data presented included the 2021 Emergency Succession Plan (MUC approved September 27, 2021) along with a copy of the General Manager job description. In addition, salary range and benefits were reviewed.

Following considerable discussion and review, it was a consensus of the Labor Committee to recommend proceeding with the process to retain David Drown Associates, Inc. (DDA) to conduct the executive search. With this recommendation, the Labor Committee furthermore requested a teleconference meeting with DDA to discuss details of the hiring process. To keep the City Council informed of the process, City Council Liaison Michael O'Brien will also be invited to participate in the teleconference.

**2. Adjournment:**

There being no further business to come before the WMU Labor Committee, Commissioner Elizondo offered a motion to adjourn. Commissioner DeBlieck seconded the motion which carried, and the meeting was adjourned by a vote of three ayes and zero nays at 12:57 pm.