

**WILLMAR MUNICIPAL UTILITIES COMMISSION**

**Meeting Minutes – December 23, 2024**

**11:45 am – WMU Auditorium**

The Municipal Utilities Commission (MUC) met in its regular meeting scheduled Monday, December 23, 2024, at 11:45 am in the WMU Auditorium with the following Commissioners present: Shawn Mueske, Dave Baumgart, John Kennedy, Carol Laumer, and Bruce DeBlieck. Absent were Commissioners Terrill Sieck and Patricia Elizondo.

Others present at the meeting were: Interim General Manager Janell Johnson, Finance & Office Services Supervisor Andrea Prekker, Staff Electrical Engineer Jeron Smith, Facilities & Maintenance Supervisor Kevin Marti, Executive Secretary Beth Mattheisen, Water System Supervisor Alan Neer, City Attorney Robert Scott (via teleconference), City Councilman Michael O'Brien, and WC Tribune Journalist Jennifer Kotila.

The meeting commenced with the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance. Commission President Mueske asked if any changes to the agenda were necessary. Following review and discussion, Commissioner DeBlieck offered a resolution to approve the consent agenda as presented. Commissioner Baumgart seconded.

**RESOLUTION NO. 46**

“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: December 9, 2024 MUC Meeting; and,
- ❖ Bills represented by vouchers No. 20241834 to No. 20241927 and associated wire transfers inclusive in the amount of \$2,738,502.66.

Dated this 23<sup>rd</sup> day of December, 2024.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
President

Attest:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Secretary

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

Following a lengthy search and deliberation process, Commission President Mueske announced that an employment contract had been successfully negotiated for the General Manager position with Jeron Smith, WMU's Staff Electrical Engineer. The agreement was finalized in collaboration with WMU's Negotiating Committee and David Drown Associates. The position had been vacant since the retirement of General Manager John Harren on September 20, 2024. During the interim, Director of Administration Janell Johnson served as Interim General Manager.

Pending Commission approval, the agreement will be forwarded to the City Council for final approval at their January 13, 2025, meeting. Upon approval, Smith will officially assume the General Manager role on January 20, 2025.

After review and discussion, Commissioner DeBlieck offered a resolution to approve the General Manager Employment Agreement with Jeron Smith as presented. Commissioner Kennedy seconded.

**RESOLUTION NO. 47**

“BE IT RESOLVED, by the Municipal Utilities Commission of the City of Willmar, Minnesota, that the General Manager Employment Agreement with Jeron Smith be approved in its entirety as presented, effective January 20, 2025, pending City Council approval.”

Dated this 23<sup>rd</sup> day of December, 2024.

  
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President

Attest:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Secretary

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

Staff Electrical Engineer Smith informed the Commission that the State of Minnesota has several reporting requirements for Distributed Generation. One such report requires WMU to report on energy generation, tariffs, and interconnection status for our customer-owned distributed generation facilities. This report must be filed with the WMU Commission by January 2, 2025. The purpose of the report is to ensure WMU has updated rates on file for customers who have distributed generation resources (rates are published on the WMU website). Smith provided additional data regarding the reporting requirements for the 2025 Electric Distributed Generation Reporting.

On November 18, 2024, Willmar Municipal Utilities (WMU) issued a Request for Proposals for a long-term maintenance and asset management service contract, including re-coating the Northeast (NE) Water Tower. The contract terms specify a minimum duration of 10 years, with an optional extension to 20 years. Two bids were received on December 13, 2024, for the project. Utility Service Group (USG) of Atlanta, Georgia, submitted the low qualifying bid for both the 10-year and 20-year contracts. USG currently manages the long-term maintenance and asset management programs for WMU's Willmar Avenue and Ridgewater College water towers.

WMU staff recommends awarding the 20-year NE Water Tower Asset Management and Maintenance Contract to USG. Following discussion, Commissioner Baumgart offered a resolution to award the 20-year contract to USG in the amount of \$1,484,170. Commissioner Kennedy seconded. WMU staff will collaborate with USG to finalize the contract details and will present the complete agreement to the Commission for signing.

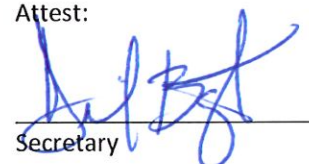
#### RESOLUTION NO. 48

"BE IT RESOLVED, by the Municipal Utilities Commission of the City of Willmar, Minnesota, that the 20-year Northeast Water Tower Asset Management and Maintenance Contract is hereby awarded to Utility Service Group (USG) of Atlanta, Georgia, in the amount of \$1,484,170.00."

Dated this 23<sup>rd</sup> day of December, 2024.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
President

Attest:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Secretary

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

Interim General Manager Johnson presented to the Commission the 2025 WMU Schedule of Charges. The charges are annually updated to reflect adjustments in labor, equipment, and service fees, as needed. One new addition to the listing is the inclusion of a base charge of \$250 for pool filling (bulk water is additional).

Following review, Commissioner Baumgart offered a resolution to approve the 2025 WMU Schedule of Charges as presented. Commissioner DeBlieck seconded.

RESOLUTION NO. 49

"BE IT RESOLVED, by the Municipal Utilities Commission of the City of Willmar, Minnesota, that the 2025 WMU Schedule of Charges be approved in its entirety as presented."

Dated this 23<sup>rd</sup> day of December, 2024.

  
President

Attest:

  
Secretary

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

As a member of Missouri River Energy Services (MRES), Willmar Municipal Utilities (WMU) receives a monthly update regarding the activities of the MRES and Western Minnesota Municipal Power Agency (WMMPA) Board of Directors. The November 2024 update highlighted key topics discussed by the Boards and summarized the actions taken during their meetings.

Interim General Manager Johnson informed the Commission that meetings of the Labor and Planning Committees will be forthcoming. The tentative Labor Committee agenda will include discussions on the new building land acquisition and the MUC Self-Survey. Meanwhile, the Planning Committee will tentatively focus on the new building project and plans for new power generation initiatives.

On behalf of the Commission and staff, Commissioner Mueske expressed his appreciation to Councilor Michael O'Brien for his dedication and service to Willmar Municipal Utilities since 2021. His invaluable contributions as City Council Liaison have greatly fostered collaboration and progress on numerous initiatives. The Commission and staff extend their gratitude for his commitment and wish him continued success. Thank you for your service, Councilor O'Brien.

Upcoming events to note:

- MMUA Legislative Conference: Jan. 28-29, 2025 (St. Paul) (DeBlieck/Smith)
- APPA Legislative Rally: Feb. 24-26, 2025 (Washington, DC) (DeBlieck/Laumer/Smith)


There being no further business to come before the Commission, Commissioner Baumgart offered a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Kennedy seconded the motion, which carried by a vote of five ayes and zero nays. The meeting was adjourned at 12:15 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

WILLMAR MUNICIPAL UTILITIES

  
Beth Mattheisen, Executive Secretary

ATTEST:

  
Dave Baumgart, Secretary

