

**MINUTES**  
**City Council Public Works & Utilities Committee**

**Wednesday, August 2, 2023 – 3:30 PM**  
City Council Chambers

Members Present: Mac Morrow, Vice-Chair, Council Member  
Owen Carson, Citizen Member  
Mayor Maureen Copelof, Ex-Officio

Staff Present: Wison Hooper, City Manager  
Dean Luebbe, Assistant City Manager/Finance Director  
Cliff Justus, Public Works  
Dennis Richardson, WTP Director  
Emory Owen, Wastewater Treatment Plant Supervisor  
Alex Shepherd, Assistant to the City Manager  
Becky McCann, Communications Coordinator  
Aaron Winans, WWTP Staff

Guests: Dave Bialac, Citizen; Kevin Jones, Citizen

**A. Welcome and Call to Order**

Committee Vice-Chair Mac Morrow called the meeting to order at 3:39 pm.

**B. Certification of Quorum**

Assistant to the City Manager Alex Shepherd certified that a quorum was present.

**C. Approval of Agenda**

Motion by Mr. Morrow, seconded by Mr. Carson to approve the agenda as presented.  
The motion carried unanimously.

**D. Approval of Minutes from May 3, 2023 Meeting**

Motion by Mr. Carson, seconded by Mr. Morrow to approve the minutes of the  
May 3, 2023 meeting as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

**E. High Strength Waste/Septage Fees**

Mr. Hooper informed the committee that City staff are working on creating two new fees to help raise capital for enhancing or replacing our Wastewater Treatment Plant. These fees are designed to distribute the cost of treating wastewater more

equitably among our customer base and to regulate the remaining capacity of the wastewater treatment plant. The first fee is a septage fee, and the other is a high-strength waste fee. The rationale behind the septage fee is that a hauler who brings a full truckload of 4,700 gallons pays the same amount as a hauler who brings in only 1,301 gallons. We aim to recuperate the expenses incurred by accepting this concentrated and challenging-to-treat septage waste. The staff has conducted an analysis to determine the cost of treating these gallons of septage and to establish an appropriate rate. The proposed new rate will be \$0.062 per gallon, allowing us to recover the current cost of \$0.043 per gallon for treatment, considering the increased cost of necessary chemicals and allocating funds for future capital projects. The expense of treating septage tank hauler waste constitutes a higher percentage than their contribution to the total waste treated per gallon. Mr. Hooper also mentioned that we presently charge only two fees: one for 1,300 gallons or less, and another for 1,300 gallons or more. The high-strength waste fee is established based on the fact that many commercial businesses such as restaurants, grocery stores, laundromats, distilleries, car washes, and mortuaries generate high-strength waste. Despite this, they are charged the same rate as residential customers, even though treating high-strength waste is significantly more expensive for us. We have recognized this discrepancy, as evidenced by our application of a special rate for Oskar Blues Brewery. We intend to apply the same principle to all commercial and industrial users contributing high-strength waste. While discussing this matter during the budget season, our initial goal was to implement this fee by January 1st. However, insights from other cities that have introduced similar programs indicate that substantial engagement with businesses is necessary before implementation. Considering this, our projected implementation date is likely to be postponed. The program's design draws inspiration from a similar initiative in Bend, Oregon, as it appears to align most effectively with our circumstances. In their program, each commercial customer is categorized based on their industry and waste characteristics, encompassing specific ranges of milligrams per liter for BOD (Biochemical Oxygen Demand) and TSS (Total Suspended Solids). Subsequently, a tiered rate structure is assigned to each category, wherein businesses generating higher-strength waste incur higher fees compared to those producing lesser-strength waste. We plan to incorporate an avenue for rate reduction, allowing businesses to demonstrate that their waste output falls below the assigned category. Companies can engage specialized firms to analyze their waste and provide evidence for reassignment to a lower tier. However, opting out of the program will not be possible. Additionally, businesses will have the option to participate as monitored entities, and they will be billed solely for the waste they generate.

#### **F. Engineering Firm Selection Update**

Mr. Hooper explained that we are in the process of hiring two firms for the enhancement or replacement of the Wastewater Treatment Plant. The primary firm will serve as our partner for the upcoming decade, assisting us in securing funding, obtaining state approvals, overseeing the design, facilitating the bidding process, and supervising the construction. This partnership will entail a close working

relationship and a substantial financial commitment, likely totaling millions of dollars. The second firm we intend to hire will assist us in identifying and attracting potential partner firms. We have been in negotiations with AECOM, a nationwide engineering group, to aid us in selecting a suitable firm for a long-term partnership. However, it is important to note that AECOM will not be considered for the primary role in this project. Instead, they will guide us through a comprehensive assessment of our requirements. Subsequently, this assessment will form the basis for crafting a highly detailed Request for Qualifications (RFQ), attracting engineering firms, and systematically evaluating the RFQs to ultimately help us choose the most appropriate engineering firm. Our aim is to finalize the selection of the primary firm, complete contract negotiations, and have the contract signed by the spring of 2024.

**G. Request from Dave Bialac for Garbage/Recycling Pickup Outside City Limits**

Mr. Bialac informed the committee that upon moving into his current residence, he did not plan to utilize city services. Initially, he engaged an independent firm to manage his garbage pickup. He recounted placing his trash cans out, only for the City to collect them. Consequently, he contacted the city to notify them of the situation, and the response was that there were a few cases like his, and he need not be concerned. This continued until a few months ago when one of his neighbors alerted the City that Mr. Bialac's residence falls outside the City limits. He further expressed that the trash truck consistently passes by his house and inquired whether there might be a way for the City to continue picking up his trash.

In response, Mr. Hooper addressed the committee, stating that the staff would conduct research into out-of-town customers who are eligible for service. Subsequently, they would propose a rate that encompasses all associated costs, including the portion of solid waste services funded by property taxes. The committee approved of staff researching this proposal.

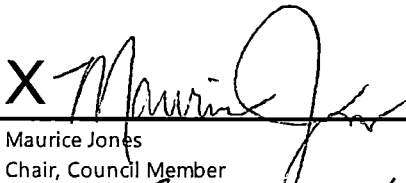
**H. Set Date for Next Meeting**

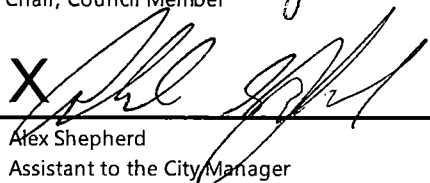
The next regular meeting of the Public Works & Utilities Committee was scheduled for Wednesday, September 6, 2023 at 3:30 p.m.

**I. Adjourn**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:16 n.m.

Minutes Approved: September 6, 2023

X   
Maurice Jones  
Chair, Council Member

X   
Alex Shepherd  
Assistant to the City Manager