

VILLAGE OF MCFARLAND  
**Public Utilities Committee Minutes**

*Tuesday, July 20, 2021 - 6:00 PM*

**1. CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL.**

Ed Wreh called the regular meeting of the Public Utilities Committee to order at 6:00 PM in the Community Room.

Members present: Chris Fredrick, Marc Nielsen, Chris Reynolds, Carrie Nelson, Edward Wreh, Eric Kryzenske

Members not present: Pauline Boness

Staff Present: Jim Hessling (Director of Public Works), Lee Igl (Streets and Utilities Superintendent), Aimee Irwin (Assistant to the Public Works Director), Brian Berquist (Town and Country Engineering), Tim Stieve (Town and Country Engineering)

**2. PUBLIC APPEARANCES.**

No public appearances.

- a. *This is an opportunity for members of the public to address the Village Board. Please remember this is a virtual meeting conducted through the Zoom online meeting platform. Zoom meeting attendees wishing to address the board may do so using the Question and Answer feature within the Zoom online meeting platform. You may state your name, address, and provide your comments to the board for their consideration. Members of the public who are present in person and wish to address the board should fill out a public comment form and turn into the meeting chairperson. Members of the public may speak during public appearances or during their selected agenda item as they designate on the public comment form. Please adhere to the 3-minute time limit. Additionally, you may send your public comments to [aimee.irwin@mcfarland.wi.us](mailto:aimee.irwin@mcfarland.wi.us) to be included as part of the meeting.*

**3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES.**

- a. *Discussion and action regarding the minutes from the Public Utilities meeting held on June 15, 2021.*  
Motion by Chris Fredrick, second by Christopher Reynolds, to approve the minutes from the Public Utilities meeting held on June 15, 2021. Motion carries 5-0-1 with Eric Kryzenske abstaining.

**4. BUSINESS.**

- a. *Discussion regarding meter reading and future options*  
Aimee Irwin provided background related to the possible future of meter reading for the utility. Provided in the packet is an additional cost estimate if a mobile drive-by format would be selected. Also included is a PowerPoint presentation visually representing the data contained on both the mobile drive-by and cellular cost estimates. Steve Dauster with Midwest Meter was present to assist in explanation and answering questions.

- Eric Kryzenske asked for additional information related to the statement that most utilities are moving to a cellular meter reading format. Irwin and Dauster stated that the industry is moving this way in that mobile drive-by and other meter reading formats are being phased out.
- Carrie Nelson asked if the customer access option would only be available with the cellular reading format. Dauster responded that the customer access option is available with other formats not only cellular.
- Ed Wreh asked what the current annual costs are for the hardware/software being utilized by the utility and costs associated if the utility remains status quo. Dauster stated that there will be hardware and software required updates in terms of support, hardware such as the handheld for reading and updates to the software. Irwin was unable to provide the exact quarterly fees associated with FCS/Itron (software) system but did state that if the handheld failed, the utility would need to purchase a \$2,000 handheld to continue to read meters. Dauster also stated that the utility needs to make a decision on replacement of the 50W endpoints that are failing in the system.
- Chris Reynolds asked what the lifespan would be on the new system if adopted. Dauster stated that the new transmitters have a 20 year life and the software which is cloud based would be continually refreshed.
- Carrie Nelson asked if the 50W, 60W, 100W replacements would be completed as the units fail. Irwin responded that we would establish a replacement schedule and not necessarily wait till the units fail. The reason for this is that if we update the hardware and software that new setup will not read the 50W endpoints which means the utility will operate on two systems temporarily. The hardware/software upgrade along with the 50W replacement could be completed concurrently to shorten the window.
- Ed Wreh asked how much staff time is allocated for our current meter reading. Irwin stated that the amount varies but we would estimate 15 to 30 minutes per daily final read with the possible of multiple a day Monday through Friday. Each month the cycle reading is approximately three to four hours in length.
- Carrie Nelson asked for clarification regarding the service costs that were identified and the difference in cost between the two reading formats. Dauster responded that cellular does have a higher service costs than the mobile drive-by format. Irwin stated that the service costs include the per unit service cost, the reading fees (mobile service units) and the annual license user login.
- Ed Wreh asked how does a new software benefit consumers. Dauster stated that it would allow consumers to monitor water usage on a 15 minute basis, monitor for water conservation, allows the utility to understand how customers are utilizing water to assist with answering consumer questions.
- Chris Fredrick asked if the committee would need to make a recommendation for installation. Irwin responded that staff would encourage that a company is contracted to complete the necessary replacements due to department staffing levels. The committee can provide their recommendation of an installation process with their recommendation of the future meter reading approach.

Committee members recommended bringing back information on funds for this project including any allocations. The committee would also like to see a benefit analysis for the Village and staff to change to a new meter reading process.

b. Discussion regarding pavement replacement timeline

Brian Berquist with Town & Country Engineering provided background regarding the development of a pavement replacement timeline. Provided to the committee was an overview of infrastructure costs for water mains, sanitary sewer and streets which included an assumed service life and estimated depreciation each year. The assumed service life and estimated depreciation is to help provide guidance of how much a committee of McFarland's size should spend each year.

- Chris Reynolds asked where the traffic data was collected from. Berquist responded the data is provided by the State and some by the County.
- Marc Nielsen asked if curb replacement costs were expensed to the stormwater utility. Berquist stated yes those funds are from the stormwater utility.
- Chris Reynolds asked if public input was incorporated into the pavement plan. Berquist responded that the input is subjective and could be gathered by the Public Works Department, at Committee meetings or various other sources.
- Eric Kryzenske asked for clarification regarding the assumed service life and estimated depreciation document presented. Berquist responded that the document was intended to be a point of reference.
- Marc Nielsen asked what the Terminal Drive bridge project would encompass. Berquist responded that the Terminal Drive bridge is related to the stormsewer from the Terminal Drive corridor to the railroad corridor that is in need of repairs.
- Ed Wreh asked what the village can do to help improve the longevity of projects. Berquist stated that inspections when projects are being conducted and ongoing maintenance are efforts that can assist with longevity which staff are currently performing.
- Eric Kryzenske asked if the WISLR data is for the current year or expected rating in the applicable year. Berquist stated the WISLR data is for the current year. Kryzenske also asked if the project costs include inflation. Berquist stated the costs are 2021 based.

c. Update regarding the conventional rate case.

Aimee Irwin provided an update regarding the conventional rate case including the effective date of the new rates and the various formats that notifications have been sent to utility customers. Monthly billing will be prorated for the months of August and September along with final bills based on their respective dates. The new rates will be fully incorporated by the October billing cycle.

d. Presentation of the Public Works monthly report

Jim Hessling provided the Public Works monthly report for the month of June.

- Chris Fredrick asked if the cause was found for the South Court watermain breaks. Hessling responded that it may have been caused by the installation

techniques along with some pipe delamination.

**5. SCHEDULE NEXT MEETING DATE.**

*a. Discussion of Hybrid Meetings 2.0.*

Nicholas Boucher provided an update regarding the meeting format that will begin on August 2, 2021 which will include encouraging committee members and staff to attend meetings in person. At this time masks will be required while in attendance in person.

*b. Joint meeting with Public Works on Tuesday, August 10, 2021 at 6:00 p.m.*

**6. ADJOURNMENT.**

Motion by Ed Wreh, second by Chris Fredrick, to adjourn at 7:56 p.m. Motion carries 6 - 0 - 0.