

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE RICHLAND CENTER MUNICIPAL UTILITY COMMISSION
Wednesday, June 12, 2024 4p.m.,
Council Room, Municipal Building, 450 S Main St, Richland Center WI 53581
This Meeting was held in person and via WebEx

Members present: Nice, Heiar, Collins, Melby, Downs, and Sawle

Members absent: Schaub

Others present: Fischer, Gald, Mueller, Krueger, Andy Zimmer (MSA), Jasen Glasbrenner, and Michael Windle

President Sawle called the meeting to order at 4:00p.m. The meeting had been properly posted.

Motion by Heiar, second by Downs to approve the minutes of the last meeting as printed. All voting aye upon voice vote, motion carried.

Treasurer's report was received and filed.

Motion by Heiar, second by Melby to approve the Electric Bills for June totaling \$774,333.01. Also acknowledges the balance for May, thus totaling \$720,295.78. All voting aye on roll call, motion carried.

Motion by Nice, second by Collins to approve the Water Bills for June totaling \$70,439.13. Also acknowledges the balance for May, thus totaling \$97,592.13. All voting aye on roll call, motion carries.

Motion by Collins, second by Sawle to approve the Sewer Bills for June totaling \$120,165.54. Also acknowledges the balance for May, thus totaling \$176,923.04. All voting aye on roll call, motion carries.

Gald reported under safety that the Electric Utility received Gold at the MEUW Conference in Marshfield. Todd said that G-Pro has the same crew as before so they already know the expectations.

Vanessa explained that in order to transfer the USDA Bond Fund to Peoples Community Bank, she needed to have the commission vote on it. Collins made a motion, second by Heiar to transfer the 2015 USDA Bond Fund for the WWTP from Richland County Bank to Peoples Community Bank. All but Melby voted aye on roll call. Melby abstained from voting. Motion carried.

The current money market accounts at Community First bank hardly get any interest. Vanessa recommends moving the electric and water money market accounts from Community First Bank to the local government fund and wastewater to the general checking at People Community Bank. Sawle made a motion, second by Downs to move the electric and water money market accounts from Community First Bank to the local government fund and wastewater money market account from Community First Bank to Peoples Community Bank. All but Melby voted aye on roll call. Melby abstained from voting. Motion carried.

Richland Rejuvenates is seeking sponsorship for Thunderfest. In the past the utility has donated \$1,000.00. Those funds are reimbursed by WPPI. Heiar made a motion, second by Melby to sponsor Richland Rejuvenates Thunderfest for \$1,000.00. All voting aye upon roll call, motion carries.

Todd Fischer explained Resolution #2024-1. It is for the WWTP 2023 CMAR. This report shows the grade point for the plant. It is an internal measuring of how the plant operated in the previous calendar year. Heiar made a motion, second by Collins to accept the Compliance Maintenance Annual Report 2023 for the WWTP. All voting aye upon voice vote, motion carried.

WPPI offers a loan for up to \$500,000.00 interest free for 10 years with 1% up front. This funding will help cover the cost of AMI meters. We have a local government account setup that we are putting money away in each month but Scott feels it is benefit to us at 0%. City Utilities qualifies for \$480,000.00 because the city borrowed money for the new Community Center. We will need to pay \$4,800.00 up front. Resolution #2024-2 is to borrow

\$480,000.00 from WPPI. Collins made a motion, second by Sawle to accept Resolution #2024-2. All voting aye on roll call, motion carried.

Richland Center Parks & Recreation is seeking sponsors for the Summer Recreation Sports Program for their t-shirts. In the past we have donated \$100.00. Melby made a motion, second by Nice to sponsor the Summer Recreation Sports Program t-shirts for \$100.00. All voting aye on roll call, motion carried.

RCCFAC is seeking sponsorship for 2024 National Night Out. In the past we have donated \$200.00. Heiar made a motion, second by Collins to sponsor RCCFAC 2024 National Night Out for \$200.00. All voting aye on roll call, motion carried.

Andy Zimmer presented the commission with the numbers for relocating the utility office to the line and water shop. It is 1.5 million to remodel the front for offices and 2.5 million to add onto the back of the shop. Collins made a motion for MSA to draw up a formal proposal for the next meeting. Second by Nice, all voting aye on roll call, motion carried.

Electric Superintendent Gald reported that John Collins, Jim Heiar and himself attended the MEUW conference in Marshfield. We received the safety award. Gerald, Rowen and Grant attended Career Day at the Intermediate School. We escaped any damage from the storms that were around us on May 21st. Hunter did have to go to Reedsburg for mutual aide, as they had some poles that were down. There is a job posting for a journeyman lineman. Applications are due in the office by June 17th. We continue to work on pole replacement and underground conversions. We did some tree trimming for G-Pro around the construction project. We also helped the hospital and the rodeo with their banners.

Water Superintendent Krueger reported that the street project on 8th street has begun. They have started flushing water mains this week. There are 2 hydrants that have been problems, Kinder and Rosa. They are 2/3 through valve exercising and it is going well. They did assist at the high school to replace the service lateral to the FFA building. We will be billing for our time. The Consumer Confidence Report is up on our website. It will be published and handed out to our industrial customers. There will be a notation on it for fluoride exceedance at well 8. There were 45 possible lead services, 20 for sure are lead and 25 unknown. As of May 29th we have 23 out of the 25 that are copper. There are 22 lead on the utility side that we have to replace.

Wastewater Superintendent Fischer reported that G-Pro had some problems with cross drains. They thought they could just dig through but they broke a tooth off the bucket and crushed the hydraulic line on the jack hammer hoe. Montana Birch is back for the summer. Brad is taking his lab exam and Evan is taking his disinfection exam today. We had to put a new air conditioner in the admin building. There was an old septic tank found on the northwest corner of the property. We have been trying to get someone to come out and fill it in, but it has been too muddy so Stibbe planted around it.

Office Manager Mueller reported that last Thursday she received a call for the investigation that the city has ongoing. She wasn't able to talk then, so she scheduled it for tomorrow at 9 a.m. She finds it interesting that she is the only person that she knows of that has been called so far. Vanessa feels like she is being targeted by certain people. It has been two years of agony and she feels that she is at her limit. At this point she isn't sure if she should speak to the investigators. There was an incident that occurred yesterday. The City Administrator sent Vanessa an email asking for the minutes of the May Commission Meeting. Vanessa responded that as soon as they were approved at tonight's meeting she would send them to her. Later in the day Vanessa received a phone call from City Attorney Michael Windle asking Vanessa why she denied the administrator the minutes of the May Commission meeting. This is not the first time something like this has happened. Vanessa feels the commission needs to be made aware of it.

We received a thank you card from the Richland Fire Department for a recent donation.

Fischer mentioned that there will be a project walk through for Phase 2 in the next few weeks.

City Attorney, Michael Windle, attended the meeting. He wanted to make the commission aware of two things. He is reviewing the committee structure. He said that the commission and the parks board are unique because they are made up of citizen representatives, not elected like the council. He would like an explanation of services provided by the commission. Windle also would like access to certain documents related to the operations of the commission. He stated that he was trying to be more delicate, but due to the ongoing conflict between the utility office and the city, he just wants to know who he can talk to without anyone feeling attacked. Commissioner Nice asked Windle if there was a movement to abolish the commission based on his findings. Windle responded that he is not investigating the commission to demolish them. He is trying to get information so he can advise the Council. President Sawle asked for his request in writing and the commission will work on a response. Commissioner Heiar feels that the ongoing problem is not with our utility office but somewhere else. Windle responded that there is an ongoing investigation. Sawle replied that it is putting a lot of pressure on the office, especially Vanessa, and if we lose her it will be a sad day. Commissioner Collins has spoken to a few other utility managers. He asked them if they feel their city alderperson/council has the utility back. They all responded no. He asked where the disconnect is and one said they feel that government and business are not run the same. It is not just a Wisconsin thing, it is across the nation. Commissioner Nice stated that this is the first time he has ever felt the city is coming after us to dissolve the commission. Nice said he agrees with Sawle, that all information he is requesting should be in writing and we will respond in writing.

President Sawle stated that the job applications for the lineman posting are due by Monday. According to the new handbook, we have to as a commission approve the new hire. We will have a special meeting to do so. Sawle said that he will be attending Vanessa's call with the investigators, he will announce his presence to them. He also stated that he has had several meetings with the mayor. He has also met with Ryan Cairns and Ashley. We were supposed to meet today, Ryan put it on pause. Scott has tried to smooth out the issues and he feels badly about it. Commissioner Heiar commented that he offered to sit in on the interview with Vanessa but if Scott is then that is great. He should announce his presence and ask if anyone else is sitting in on the interview on their end. We are just protecting Vanessa. He also says he will be in Canada for the August meeting. Commissioner Downs stated that he was not aware of the ongoing dispute between the utility and city. He says he is very disturbed at that possibility. He appreciates Vanessa's work. Nobody should be going after her for bureaucratic reason. People make mistakes and he is not sure if there is a mistake here that needs to be addressed. Also thank you supervisors for the great work. Thank you Mr. Windle for your work as well.

Wastewater Superintendent Fischer addressed Mr. Windle in regards to the Chapter 430 for the sewer use ordinance. Mr. Windle says he was referencing Chapter 60. Fischer said that 430 pertains to him and he would like to see that while those ordinances are being looked at, they also need to be followed. Commissioner Nice asked Mr. Windle if he will be attending meetings going forward and were you requested to be here? Windle responded that he is trying to be mindful of the dispute that he understands is ongoing. He has been tasked per resolution performing a review of the committee structure. He feels he needs to observe the commission to be fair in his review. Nice says he is happy that he is at the meeting. It just seems unique because all of a sudden he is there. Windle says his presence in the meeting should not cause so much disruption. He has a unique set of skills that allow him to serve the community in which he lives and the community that he loves in a way that a lot of other people can't. He believes in performing his job to the highest ethical standard. Windle stated that if he was there to dissolve the commission, he would have told them that. He doesn't have that power. At the end of the day he has to report back to the council. Windle said he needed to attend the meeting to see how the utility commission works. Melby asked what the purpose of the investigation is. Windle responded that there have been concerns about the environment in the city due to the departure of personal in recent history. Sawle asked if it was unusual that Vanessa was the only one called. Windle asked how many people they asked and Sawle said several. Vanessa said that when they called her, it sounded like her name was given to them. She says it is very disturbing because her whole office sees things going on and good people are leaving. Vanessa says that all the recently departed employees want to speak and she hopes they get contacted. Fischer says that the personal investigation is not why the attorney is looking at the ordinances. It did not occur to Windle that his review of the ordinances could be perceived to have anything to do with the investigation. Commissioner Heiar asked Jasen if he

had anything. Jasen said he was there to better understand the relocation of the utility office. He had gotten his questions answered tonight.

Motion by Collins, second by Heiar to adjourn. All voting aye upon voice vote, motion carried without dissent at 5:30p.m. Meeting adjourned.

Minutes submitted by:

Vanessa Mueller