BRAINERD PUBLIC UTILITIES
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The regular meeting of the Brainerd Public Utilities Commission was held at 9:00 AM on December 19, 2023.

Commission Vice President Matten called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM.

Commission Roll Call

Mike Angland – Present	Mark O'Day – Present
Tad Johnson – Present	Dolly Matten – Present

Utility Staff Present

Public Utilities Director	Todd Wicklund
Operations Manager	Trent Hawkinson
Water/Wastewater Manager	Charlie Gammon
Finance Manager	Danny Loch
Business Office Supervisor	Jana Pernula
Electric Distribution Supervisor	Mitch Lachelt
Recording Secretary	Mandy Selisker

Others in Attendance

Interim City Administrator	Patrick Wussow
HR Director	Kris Schubert
Bolton & Menk	Morgan Salo, PE
Widseth	Bill Westerberg, PE
Brainerd Dispatch	Theresa Bourke

Commissioner Matten opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Agenda Items

Motion by Commissioner Johnson and seconded by Commissioner O'Day to approve the agenda. There was a unanimous roll call vote in favor of the motion. Motion carried.

Approval of Consent Items

Commissioner Matten requested item D be removed from the consent calendar to be discussed separate from the consent calendar and prior to public forum.

Motion by Commissioner Johnson and seconded by Commissioner O'Day to approve the minutes of the regular monthly meeting of November 28, 2023, approval of current month's bills, approval of Pay Request No. 2 received from Minger Construction for $505,411.49 for Directional Drilling Forcemain River Crossing Project (see attached payment application with change order 1 and 2) and approval of 2024 Commission meeting dates. There was a unanimous roll call vote in favor of the motion. Motion carried.

Item D (from the consent calendar):
Approval of Magney Construction via SEH Pay Application No. 24 in the amount of $296,440.47 (see attached payment application).

- Commissioner Matten inquired on the retainage and if the credit for the previously billed staining has been credited back.
    - Public Utilities Director Wicklund discussed the staining was replaced with clear coat application which resulted in an approximate adjustment of $26,000 via a change order. Wicklund noted the actual cost of the staining was in the $50,000 range.

Motion by Commissioner O'Day and seconded by Commissioner Angland to approve Pay Request No. 24 received from Magney Construction for $296,440.47 (see attached payment application). There was a unanimous vote in favor of the motion. Motion carried.

Public Forum
None

Commission Committee Reports
Personnel
None
Finance
None

- Credit card transaction fees to be discussed under New Business.

Unfinished Business - *See board packet for staff memo.*
The following unfinished business items were noted and presented by Public Utilities Director Wicklund:

Unflorinated Tap
A memorandum from the City's Attorney was included in the packet with the response to the outstanding concern of the unfluorinated tap at the Water Plant recommending the tap remain off. Discussion included:

- Johnson noted that the memo does not address the option of a non-potable sign/designation that could potentially allow us to keep the tap available. Johnson noted the historical value and beneficial resource to those with private wells that are potentially needing clean water during times with their own well maintenance. Johnson also suggested looking into whether making the tap non-municipal would be an option.
- Wicklund noted that the signage option was brought up to Attorney as part of a verbal discussion although not specifically addressed in the memorandum provided.

Motion by Commissioner O'Day and seconded by Commissioner Angland to not turn the unfluorinated tap back on based on the City Attorney's recommendation. There was a vote with Matten, Angland and O'Day voting aye and Johnson voting nay. Motion carried.

Schedule of Authority Roles of Commission and Council in Operation of BPU

A draft document was included in the meeting packet to start identifying and provide discussion around roles and responsibilities of the City Council and BPU Commission.

- Johnson noted that for the upcoming joint meeting with City Council that this would be good to have on the agenda, with staff comments added that would help increase efficiency and make the operation of the utility more effective.

Development of Plan to be Carbon Free by 2040

Commissioner Angland provided an update on a recent grant submission.

- BPU staff along with Commissioners Angland and Johnson worked with BJ Allen, Region 5, to submit a communities Local Energy Action Program (LEAP) grant. April 24th is the notification date for those that will be receiving the grant.

Wellhead Protection Plan (WHP)

Ongoing meetings are taking place with Bolton & Menk and Minnesota Rural Water Association (MRWA). There are about 147 potential wells that are in the area that affects BPU's well field.

Directional Drilling Forcemain River Crossing Project

Bill Westerberg, PE, of Widseth, provided updates on the river crossing forcemain, noting that is in service and the old forcemain is in the process of being abandoned.

Crypto Mining Activity

- There is a call scheduled with VCV this afternoon. Indications are that they will be starting soon.
- JFK has been increasing load to 20MW with intent to be at 25MW for the 1st quarter of 2024. They have also been registering load on the MISO system.

New Business

WAC Request for City Council- *see board packet transfer request letter.*

Finance Manager Loch noted a signed official request from the BPU Commission was requested by City Finance Director Hillman to transfer the requested WAC funds.

Motion by Commissioner Johnson and seconded by Commissioner O'Day to approve the request for the transfer of WAC funds currently being held by the City to BPU by February 1, 2024. There was a unanimous vote in favor of the motion. Motion carried.

Customer Credit Card Policy 2003-2-*see board packet for staff memo.*

Finance Manager Loch presented the memo and summarized the current credit card transaction fees.

Commissioner Matten requested that BPU staff research and discuss further with the Finance committee to break the process down, analyze staff time and percentage of various payment methods and provide an update at next meeting with potential options to consider.

Surplus Auction Items - *see board packet for auction request.*
Loch presented the items that would be listed on the Online Auction with the Minnesota Department of Administration – Surplus Services that are no longer needed by BPU.

Motion by Commissioner Johnson and seconded by Commissioner O'Day to approve the surplus items presented to be sold on the Minnesota Department of Administration Surplus Services Auction. There was a unanimous vote in favor of the motion. Motion carried.

Ratify appointment of Commission Secretary

Motion by Commissioner O'Day and seconded by Commissioner Johnson to ratify Finance Manager Daniel Loch as the Commission Secretary. There was a unanimous vote in favor of the motion. Motion carried.

City Administrator Report
Interim City Administrator Wussow reported on the following:

- $25 million in federal grant funding was awarded for the Highway 210 project. Senator Klobuchar noted this in a press release. Requirements of funding to be coming. Wussow thanked Senator Klobuchar for her work on this project.
- Budget presentation for truth in taxation was held last week. A 6.24% increase was noted followed by a closed session to discuss union negotiations. At last night's City Council meeting, an 8% levy increase was approved to allow funds for union negotiations that wasn't previously budgeted.
- Wussow requested a meeting with the BPU Commission Personnel Committee to discuss the upcoming retirement of Wicklund. Wicklund has identified May 3rd as his upcoming retirement date and per the Personnel policy, this committee will be assisting in the interviews for the replacement of that position. Anticipating authorization to move forward will be given on either the January 2nd or 16th City Council meeting. The meeting with the Commission Personnel Committee is to occur prior to the City Council meeting.

City Liaison Report
Nothing to report.

Public Utility Director's Report
Wicklund reported on the following:

- BPU is working on a federal funded grant application that came through MMUA. Deadline is December 20, 2023. Several of BPU's projects may qualify.
- Commissioner Matten inquired on the status of automation at the Hydro Dam with the upcoming retirement of Brad Holtz and being down to one operator. Wicklund noted that in the short term, BPU will be utilizing an IBEW union employee to assist at the Hydro Dam. Commissioner Matten requested that the Automation of the Hydro Dam be added to unfinished business.

HR Director's Report – *see board packet for report.*

Managers Reports

Operations Manager Hawkinson reported on the following:

- Electric/Hydro:
  - Automation at hydro includes both water flow and governor controls. Equipment was supposed to arrive last week for gate controls but has been delayed but should arrive in the 1st quarter of 2024.
  - Automation of hydro generators themselves is an ongoing project with Barr Engineering which is not yet completed. Water controls are still currently being operated manually with 24-hour monitoring and staff working 12-hour shifts. After-hours monitoring is being done by Hawkinson currently.
  - Currently flows are currently at 2,000 cubic feet per second with generator 3 down for maintenance.
  - Operating west tainter gate remotely.
  - Annual reporting requirements are coming up with FERC in 1st quarter of 2024.
  - Electric Outages: on December 15, 2023: Arrestor failed in Baxter that caused a blink on the system. Equipment and system operated as intended.
  - Training: MMUA Technical and Operations Conference was attended by Hawkinson and five other employees in St. Cloud. Hawkinson mentioned it would be a good conference for Commissioners and City Council members in the future.

Commissioner Johnson inquired on the status of estimate from Barr Engineering on putting a generator in Pit 6. Hawkinson reported that pit 6 was modified during the AmJet project which requires additional engineering because of those modifications. The tailrace below is also needing additional maintenance and needs to be addressed before a generator is placed.

- Water Department:
  - The water main on Wright Street between 11th and 13th street was leaking as of this morning. This project did not make the City's Road project list this year due to lack of funding. The water crew will repair the saddles this week.

- Wastewater Solar Project:
  - All panels are up and functioning. BPU was working with the contractor on wiring, permits and interconnection process. The Metering cabinet and transformer are set and ready. The expectation is to have the project live by the end of 2023 or beginning of 2024.

Commissioner Matten is still interested in having a public-facing option to watch and see generations on our website. Hawkinson responded that this is still a goal, however the current option has a very engineered look and feel to it.

Water/Wastewater Manager Gammon reported:

- Water Production:
  - Automation is continuing to be worked on with water and wastewater.
  - Continued work with Fiber SCADA and security in house.
  - Integrator completed at the Water Treatment Plant.
  - The replacement of chemical tanks and pumps is being done in house.
  - Request for Proposals (RFP) for engineering of reclamation and back wash upgrade was held on December 15th and had a good response with seven to nine engineering companies interested.
- Wastewater:
  - River crossing forcemain went into service December 13th.
  - Generators were installed at SW 6th lift station and Riverside Booster station.
  - Filtrate system at Wastewater Treatment Plant had a break that has been repaired by BPU staff.

Commissioner O'Day inquired on the leak last fall on Linden Lane that was bypassed and if that is an upcoming project.

- Hawkinson explained the proximity of the sewer line and water line are extremely close in the high-water table. City crews are trying to get a camera in to get pictures for a better look at the condition of the sewer line. With the Roberts Gravel Pit project, the hopes would be to relocate that line in the future.

Commission Members – Future Agenda Items

Commissioner Angland reported:

- After the first of the year, looking for a presentation to the Eco Club at the High School with Hawkinson again. This could include an update on the solar project, site visit, and potential coverage by the Brainerd Dispatch.
- There is another opportunity for BPU to speak from a career standpoint, if Gammon, Hawkinson, or any others are interested it would be an opportunity for public outreach.
- Inquired on what is done for an employee's last day with upcoming retirement of Brad Holtz at the Hydro Dam. Hawkinson, responded that it can vary by the employee and what level of recognition they are comfortable with but at a minimum a cake and farewell.

Commissioner Matten reported:

- Staff did an excellent job on the notifications and website updates for the copper communications.
- Last update on the chlorination of the water distribution system was November 17th – Matten requested at least monthly updates be done even if the update is no changes and continuing to chlorinate.
- Acknowledged a City alert notification that was sent out to all residents with the option to sign up.
    - Business Office Supervisor Pernula noted that BPU only emergency notifications are currently being worked on though this same system.
    - Commissioner Matten expressed that if it can work through the same system rather than duplicating resources that would be great.
- Expressed gratitude to staff for taking pride in their work and it is appreciated.

Commissioners wished staff Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Next Board meeting is scheduled for January 30, 2024.

Adjournment

Motion by Commissioner Angland and seconded by Commissioner Johnson to adjourn to the January 22nd joint meeting of the BPU Commission and City Council. Motion carried at 10:31 AM.

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Dolly Matten, Commission Vice-President

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Danny Loch, Finance Manager/Secretary