Utilities Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

December 6, 2022 at 12:00 p.m.

City Hall, Commission Chambers
401 S. Park Avenue | Winter Park, Florida

Present

In person: Michael Poole, Alison Yurko, Linda Lindsey, Paul Conway, Fred Guitton, Mary Dipboye; Virtually: Leon Huffman; Board Coordinator Tatia Ghviniashvili.

Staff Present

Director of Water and Wastewater Utility David Zusi; Director of Communications Clarissa Howard; Director of Finance Wes Hamil; Assistant Director of Electric Utility Justin Isler; Assistant Director of Water and Utility Jason Riegler.

1) Call to Order

Michael Poole called the meeting to order at 11:59 a.m.

2) Consent Agenda

a. Approve the minutes of regular meeting, October 25, 2022.

Mr. Poole suggested modifying the wording of the motions under both action items to read “the board voted to support staff recommendation”.

Motion made by Paul Conway to approve the minutes with amendments; seconded by Linda Lindsey. Motion carried unanimously with a 4-0 vote.

3) Public Comments (for items not on the agenda):

Forest Michael, 358 W. Comstock Ave, spoke about flooding in his neighborhood following recent severe weather. He explained how extensive flooding in the area affects sanitary sewer in addition to stormwater sewer, and asked the board a few clarifying questions about the flood.

Alison Yurko arrived at 12:06 p.m.

Martha Bryant Hall, 331 W. Lyman Ave, brought up concerns about recent flooding following severe weather events. She emphasized how proper drainage is being overlooked on new developments and infrastructure, and asked the board what they can do to combat major flooding in the future.

Maria Bryant, 450 S. Virginia Ave, presented her concern with the city of Winter Park and the lack of communication following the flooding post Hurricane Ian. She

hopes the city can make the necessary resolves before the rain season in the Spring.

The board addressed the public comments received, and held a discussion about improving communication regarding flooding to help alleviate confusion and the spread of misinformation. Staff emphasized that the city is aware and working diligently on ways to improve responses and systems to minimize damages.

Fred Guitton arrived at 12:16 p.m.

Staff also addressed resident concerns about sewage in floodwater and suggested the Health Department website for recommendations on disinfecting/handling potential sanitary sewer contamination. A discussion followed about the flooding and what is being actively done by staff and various departments to handle a similar flood in the future.

4) Action Items

a. Septic Sewer Conversion - David Zusi

Mr. Zusi presented on the continuation of the septic to sewer conversion. He emphasized the importance of incentivizing existing customers with access to sewer to connect to it. A proposed ordinance will be brought before the City Commission to discuss the process of incentivizing 150 service addresses that are still using septic to connect to the available sewer. With this ordinance, residents will be required to pay 20% of the conversion fee upfront, and will have the remainder 80% divided into their utility bills over the next 24 months.

The board held an on-going conversation about the costs of conversion for residents, and funding associated with converting the entire city to sewer on a large scale. Ten years ago, staff conducted a cost estimate for a city-wide conversion and findings indicated an 80-million-dollar cost at minimum. Mr. Conway distributed a draft of a potential septic sewer conversion strategy, which can be found attached to the agenda packet. The board also discussed the current conversion policy and the challenges associated with convincing residents to convert. Staff answered board questions about the septic to sewer conversion and various specifics associated with it.

Staff agreed to present the proposed ordinance to the board at next month's meeting before it's presentation to the City Commission.

5) Non-Action Items

Mr. Zusi gave a brief update on the Strategic Action Plan and informed the board that the project has been pushed forward without a solicitation. Staff is looking to the board for feedback in helping to define the scope of the project.

6) Staff Updates

a. Electric Utility - Dan D'Alessandro

Mr. Isler presented the monthly electric utility update. The board questioned whether the goals previously set for 2023 are aligned with those that are achievable financially. Staff agreed that a reevaluation is necessary to account for variables that might hinder the completion of these goals. A discussion about delays of the undergrounding project followed, with staff iterating that residents gave positive feedback about the process. The board and staff held a brief conversation about properly managing resources through project delays.

b. Water & Wastewater Utility - David Zusi

Mr. Zusi presented on post-storm responses and assured the board that staff is working diligently to minimize any flood-related issues that might have impacted residents. The board asked about long-term concerns to the city's sewer systems and held a brief discussion.

c. Performance Measurement - (attachment only)

Mr. Hamil presented on the new billing system that took affect on August 1. He explained that the accounts receivable are higher in August and September because of delays in getting the new billing system out and receiving payments. Staff is actively working with a vendor to redesign the format of the bill and a sample bill will be sent to board members for feedback. A discussion followed about formatting the bill to emphasize water use, and the board brought up concerns about billing and difficulties with payments. Ms. Lindsey suggested staff prioritize repairing problems associated with the payment process.

d. Educational Campaign - Clarissa Howard

Ms. Howard shared the two first implementations of the educational campaign previously approved by the board. She briefly explained each of the three graphs on the *info & updates* utility bill insert, and the board provided feedback, specifically about the *Residential Bill Comparison Chart.* The board pointed out that the chart is very busy, and it would be best to narrow down the comparisons to municipalities of the same size as Winter Park, and to include only a couple comparisons to larger municipalities. Mr. Poole will work alongside staff to make the necessary modifications to the charts to reflect board suggestions.

7) Board Comments

Mr. Guitton spoke briefly on the fuel adjustment process on the website, and asked about fuel calculations- a short discussion with staff followed. Staff also reminded the board that the Cost of Service Study is going before the City Commission on December 14 for approval. Mr. Poole brought up cash-flow strategies and a discussion followed.

8) Upcoming Agenda Items

a. Upcoming Board Items

Under action items, staff will bring back the Strategic Action Plan and the Septic to Sewer Conversion.

Under non-action items, staff will bring back the discussions on the private lift station policy, the Sustainability Plan, and the Broadband update.

Staff updates will include electric utility, water & wastewater utility, performance measurement, and the quarterly financial update.

The board held a brief discussion and agreed to combine the November and December meetings of 2023 into one meeting held on December 5, 2023.

9) Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 1:37 p.m.

Minutes approved by the board on January 24, 2023.

/s/ Tatia Ghviniashvili, Board Coordinator