# Utilities Advisory Board Regular Meeting Minutes

**March 26, 2024 at 12:00 PM**

City Hall Commission Chambers
401 S. Park Avenue

**Present**
Alison Yurko (arrived at 12:12), Fred Guitton (arrived at 12:15), Leon Huffman, Mary Dipboye, Michael Poole, Paul Conway, Linda Lindsey

**Staff Present**
Director of Electric Utility Dan D'Alessandro, Director of Water and Wastewater Utility David Zusi, Director of Finance Wes Hamil, Assistant Director of Water and Wastewater Utility Tara Lamourex, Electric Utility Engineer Manager Mourad Belfakih, Integrated Resource Program Manager Lisa Vedder, Electric Utility Operations Manager Miguel Cruz.

## 1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 12:00 p.m.

## 2. Consent Agenda

a. Approve the minutes of the regular meeting on February 27, 2024

Mr. Conway noted that Dan D'Alessandro was absent and should be removed from showing as present. He asked for clarification on the smart city lights being active versus enabled. Mr. D'Alessandro said although the proposed lights are Smart City ready, they will not be purchased without guidance from the IT Department. Mr. Conway pointed out scrivener's errors under Item 4a and Item 6a.

**Motion made by Mr. Conway to approve the minutes as amended, seconded by Mrs. Dipboye. The motion carried unanimously with a 5-0 vote. Ms. Yurko and Mr. Guitton arrived late.**

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

Sustainability Manager Sara Miller gave an update on the Sustainability Action Plan which is on the city's website and spoke about public education and communication efforts. Staff is working on deliverables and are pursuing grants relating to reducing energy and carbon emissions and increasing energy efficiency. She responded to questions on potential grants and funding opportunities for EV charging stations, solar installation for the community center, resilient retrofit program and energy investment. She reported on upcoming events for Earth Month and the Earth Day event on April 27th.

## 4. Action Items

a. Electric Power Purchase and Sale Agreement with Covanta Energy Marketing, LLC - Lisa Vedder

Ms. Vedder said staff's recommendation is to not renew the contract with Covanta, due to high costs which is driven by natural gas prices. If gas prices remain as they are today, the contract will be five percent more and staff estimates a savings between $2.5 and $5m over two years if FMPA takes over the remainder of the contract.

Mr. D'Alessandro said staff has requested that FMPA submit an offer for a two-year extension to lock in current rates. Mr. Poole spoke about the need to determine where solar power will come from in the next 6 1/2 to 7 years and lock in some solar power rates in the next couple of years.

After a brief discussion, Mr. D'Alessandro restated staff's recommendation to not renew the contract with Covanta and added that FMPA contract contains a provision that FMPA would take the load when the Covanta term expired. Further discussion was held on the background leading to the Covanta contract.

**Motion made by Mr. Conway to approve staff's recommendation not to renew the contract with Covanta, seconded by Ms. Dipboye. The motion carried unanimously with 7-0 vote.**

b. EV Rate Policies - Lisa Vedder

Ms. Vedder said a study of use of EV stations shows that people are overusing the stations. To address the problem, staff is recommending that use of the stations would be free for the first three hours and then $10/hour following, new signage with rules and rates and increased parking enforcement. The three hour restriction is consistent with the regular parking on Park Avenue. In-depth discussion followed on rate options, time on the meter, enforcement and penalties for non-connection.

**Motion made by Mr. Guitton to charge $3/hour ($1/hour per 20 minutes), then a penalty of $10; seconded by Mr. Huffman. The motion carried with a 5-2 vote. Mr. Conway and Mrs. Dipboye voted no.**

Staff responded to questions explaining charging stations require a credit card allowing automatic billing. The Sustainability Division oversees the public-facing charging stations and private stations are maintained by the city's Fleet Division. Optimus Energy is contracted to provide upkeep and maintenance on the charging stations

c. Decorative Street Lighting Policy - Dan D'Alessandro

Mr. D'Alessandro spoke about the decorative lighting policy previously reviewed by the Board. Twelve lights will be installed on Lakeview and eight lights on Lake Knowles. Once they are in place, he will let the Board and the Commission know so they can review them.

d. Additional funding for Heart of Florida United Way Emergency Utility Assistance Program

Mr. Hamil provided data on this program since the relaxation of the requirement to provide proof of financial hardship, which shows higher participation and quicker reduction in program funds. The city matches dollar for dollar that the residents donate. Over the period from November 2023 through February 24, the total average financial assistance provided is approximately $4500 and the average customer assistance is $450. If usage of the program continues, the program balance on September 30th would be approximately $2,500. In order to support the program, $9 of city funds per each $1 of customer funds is needed or $30k from both the Water and Wastewater Fund and Electric. Staff is recommending allocating $30k from each fund for FY 25.

**Motion made by Mr. Poole to approve staff's recommendation, seconded by Mr. Conway.**

Mr. Poole and Mrs. Lindsey suggested increased communication that the city will contribute $9 to the program for each $1 contributed by customers.

**The motion carried unanimously with a 7-0 vote.**

## 5. Non-Action Items

a. Electric Strategic Plan - Dan D'Alessandro

Mr. D'Alessandro advised that Hometown Connections has developed an agenda and is dedicated to the timeline and will provide something for each board meeting. Updates will be provided in each meeting. Mr. Poole noted that board members will be changing in June and suggested current members be asked to participate while the new members become acclimated.

## 6. Staff Updates

a. Electric Utility - Dan D'Alessandro

Mr. D'Alessandro noted that while the miles of undergrounding do not change much, a number of services are being completed due to required upgrades of meter cans by the city's permitting department. He spoke about issues with removing overhead lines and adding that mileage is not counted until overhead lines are removed.

Ms. Lindsey asked for an update on project R. Mr. D'Alessandro said the area is busy and problems relating to Mead Garden Apartments needed to be resolved before moving forward. Ms. Lindsey asked that the map on the website be updated.

b. Water & Wastewater Utility – David Zusi

Mr. Zusi said that the strategic plan solicitation has been released and that Mr. Conway will be on the selection committee. A pre-bid meeting was held today on two lift station projects. Progress has been made on filling key staff positions.

c. Performance Measurement – Wes Hamil

Mr. Hamil noted that staff is monitoring utilities receivables due to an increase in accounts 60 days past due. He advised that the fuel cost recovery rates were reduced on January 1st, reducing our fuel cost stabilization fund balance and reaching the max trigger point. This will be closely monitored.

Mr. Zusi said the rates for water & wastewater are adjusted annually by the Public Service Commission index. While rates were projected to increase last year by 7.5% it is closer to 3.2%, which will reduce the budget. Mr. Poole suggested a cost of service study be budgeted in FY 25. Mr. Hamil noted the last study was done in 2012 and discussion followed on the feasibility of conducting a study.

d. Educational Campaign – Clarissa Howard

No report.

## 7. Board Comments

a. Rate Structures for Solar - Mary Dipboye

Ms. Dipboye said a cost study is planned for next year. Mr. D'Alessandro said the rate study will be addressed once the budget is approved. He will bring back a timeline. In depth discussion followed on the purpose, context and components of the study (cost of service, net metering, rate structure, sustainability).

## 8. Upcoming Agenda Items

Non-Action Items:

- Water and Wastewater Strategic Plan
- Solar rates.

## 9. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 1:43 p.m.

Approved by the board on April 23, 2024
/s/ Bahiyyah Layton, Board Coordinator