Utilities Advisory Board
Regular Meeting Minutes

January 28, 2025 at 12:00 PM

City Hall Commission Chambers
401 S. Park Avenue

Present
Alison Yurko, Mary Dipboye, Paul Conway, Paul W. Smith Jr., Kathryn Sutton (Virtual), Leon Huffman

Absent
Michael Poole

Staff Present
Director of Electric Utilities Jamie England, Director of Water and Wastewater Utilities David Zusi, Electric Utility Operations Manager Miguel Cruz, Assistant Director of Water and Wastewater Utilities Jason Riegler, Electric Utility Engineer Manager Mourad Belfakih, Integrated Resource Planning and Clean Power Program Manager Lisa Vedder, Director of Finance Wes Hamil, Director of Communications Clarissa Howard, Director of Human Resources Pamela Russell, Director of Natural Resources & Sustainability Gloria Eby, Utility Services Manager Ann Newhouse, Electrical Engineer Hector Rodriguez, Administrative Coordinator III Madison Smith

1. Call to Order

Mary Dipboye called the meeting to order at 12:01 p.m.

2. Consent Agenda

a. Approve the minutes of December 17, 2024

Motion made by Allison Yurko approve the minutes, seconded by Paul Conway. The discussion provided clarification on the ongoing conversations concerning the Dark Sky initiative. **Motion carried unanimously with a 6-0 vote.**

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

4. Action Items

5. Non-Action Items

a. Electric Utility Strategic Planning Workshop - Jamie England

The Tiger Team, consisting of Randy Knight, Jamie England, Wes Hamil, Clarissa Howard, and Gloria Eby, reached a unanimous decision to create a shorter mission statement that emphasizes the utility's key values. Mr. Conway disagreed with the use of the word "affordable," believing that "competitive" would be more appropriate. He also noted that the mission statement should include a reference to employee safety. Ms. Sutton suggested changing the word "delivering" to "deliver" for a more actionoriented tone. Additionally, Ms. Yurko proposed adding "safely" before "deliver." The Tiger Team recommended utilizing the City's vision statement rather than creating a new one for the Electric Department.

The original six goals were ranked in order of priority: Reliability, Power Supply, Renewables, Customer Service, Finance, and Workforce. However, the staff condensed these goals to five: Reliability, Power Supply, Customer Service, Renewables, and Organizational Resources. They then revised each goal and presented their recommendations from the departments.

Mr. England presented the recommended strategies for achieving the Reliability goal, which include undergrounding, an Outage Management System (OMS), and maintenance. Ms. Sutton raised a question about why the Cybersecurity strategy was shifted to the Organizational Resources category. Mr. England explained that it was more appropriately aligned with that grouping and emphasized that it was not being deprioritized.

Ms. Vedder presented the recommended strategies for the power supply goal, which included Cost-Effective Power, Supplier Diversity, and Resource Flexibility. These were consolidated into two main categories: Competitive Power and Utility-Scale Solar & Firming Resources. Ms. Sutton questioned the aggressive targets and asked for clarification of firming resources. Ms. Vedder explained the concept of Firming Resources and confirmed the ambitious target of achieving 80% renewable energy within the next 10 years. She noted that new technologies are constantly emerging to support this goal. Ms. Sutton suggested adding a cross-reference or link to the city's current renewable energy mandate for further clarity.

Ms. Howard and Ms. Newhouse presented the recommended strategies for the Customer Service goal: Outage Communication, Website/Portal, Call Center, Customer Engagement, Satisfaction Survey, and Contractor Services were reduced to four strategies: Outage Communication, Website/Portal, Call Center and Customer Engagement. Ms. Howard reported that Outage Communication will be enhanced with the previously mentioned OMS service. Ms. Dipboye inquired whether there is a focus on understanding what customers are looking for. It was suggested that the Satisfaction Survey could be integrated into Customer Engagement.

Ms. Vedder presented the recommended strategies for the Renewable goal. Initially, there were five strategies, but utility scale solar was moved to Power Supply and the rest have been streamlined to three: Program Development now includes Electric Vehicles, In-City Solar Deployment and Update the Plan. A discussion on cost-benefit analysis ensued. Additionally, the renewable strategy 3 wording was corrected from "periodically adapt" to "periodically update."

Ms. Russell, HR Director, presented updated strategies for the Workforce goal. The categories were revised to include Staffing/Recruiting, Attracting and Retaining Talent, Financial Planning, Operational Costs, and Cybersecurity, under the new heading, Organizational Resources. Safety was also suggested as a sixth strategy to be included in the plan.

Mr. Hamil presented the recommended strategies for the Finance goal, consolidating the original preworkshop strategies into two: Financial Plan and Operational Costs, under Organizational Resources. A question arose about the bond ratings for the city and its utilities, to which Mr. Hamil clarified that the utilities have an AA- rating and the city has a AAA rating. It was also agreed to incorporate Mr. Zusi's suggestion to add safety to the Staffing/Recruiting strategy, as is done in the Water and Wastewater strategic plan.

Mr. McCain outlined the next steps, which include creating a final report on the strategic planning project, to be presented to UAB in February. The strategic plan will be submitted to the City Commission for approval, potentially in March. The Staff will then begin work on the plan's implementation phase. This phase includes implementing the plan, communicating the plan and monitoring and evaluating the plan. The board agreed that the presentation was executed.

b. Water & Wastewater Update for Strategic Plan - David Zusi

Mr. Zusi planned to complete the strategic plan by December, but decided to have Mr. Riegler review it for his input. We are actively reviewing and will present the final report at the next meeting. Mr. Zusi mentioned that Water and Wastewater have vision and mission statements along with utility values.

6. Staff Updates

a. Electric Utility - Jamie England

Mr. England presented the monthly electric utility update beginning with the completion percentage of the undergrounding project. Mr. England introduced the new team members, Administrative Coordinator Madison Smith and Electrical Engineer Hector Rodriguez. Collaboration with other departments on the Park Avenue Refresh project was mentioned. In addition, there were zero personal injuries reported. The new service conversion kits are continuing, and the estimated time of completion is 2030.

b. Water & Wastewater Utility – David Zusi

An update was provided on the two lift stations in the Ravaudage development. Water & Wastewater is redirecting the flow from east to west to free up capacity in the city's collection system. The initial budget was $3 million, but bids came in between $17 million and $18 million, prompting us to reassess the project.

We plan to continue pursuing the Orange County Community Development Block Grant for Hurricane Ian-related infrastructure as long as the grants remain available. Additionally, we are working on filling key positions and our consumptive use permit. Water consumption is gradually increasing. *When asked what portion of water is driven by irrigation, Mr. Zusi answered, "north of 50%, in some areas, it's almost 80%. It's a* *large amount*." We aim to increase reclaimed water availability for irrigation as part of our capacity enhancement efforts.

c. Performance Measurement – Wes Hamil

Mr. Hamil reviewed the monthly performance measurements for the utility and noted that fuel costs are expected to increase. Ms. Vedder explained that for the past five or six months, natural gas prices have been unusually low, which is significant because natural gas accounts for over 60% of our fuel costs. Various market factors have contributed to these lowered prices. However, at the beginning of December, we experienced our first cold snap, causing market prices to jump. With the arrival of this Arctic front bringing snow to North Florida, prices have surged again. We expect this trend to continue over the next couple of months. However, it's important to note that natural gas prices can be quite volatile and may fluctuate frequently.

Ms. Dipboye inquired whether the city has contracts for natural gas. Ms. Vedder replied that, no, it is the bulk power contracts that are subject to fuel cost adjustments. The specifics depend on how each contract is written, as they vary slightly. However, no supplier will assume fuel risk unless they own the fuel, which they do not.

Mr. Hamil presented the solar panel production slide, while Ms. Vedder explained the Rice Creek solar facility, which is the first bulk power solar contract the city participated in with Florida Municipal Power Agency (FMPA). The facility began delivering power in October. Its formal commissioning date was in December. In total, we have obtained over a gigawatt of power from them so far, which is quite exciting.

The submitted financial report is filed with the City Clerks office.

d. Communication – Clarissa Howard

Ms. Howard presented the normal monthly updates, including the utility bill insert for the month of February. Articles are being prepared for the next quarterly newsletter, which will include our usual chart and details on the Park Avenue refresh and the new power poles being installed on Park Avenue. More information can be found at https://cityofwinterpark.org/government/projects/park-avenue-refresh/. Mr. Conway observed in last month's newsletter, the request for donations for the utility assistance program. Ms. Howard will follow up on the response received.

7. Board Comments

Mr. England was reminded that the utility department received the community service award about a month ago.

Mr. Hamil presented the Key Financial Performance Indicators financial report slides and the management's unaudited discussion and analysis. These documents will be added to the minutes.

Ms. Dipboye requested that information she provided to staff concerning the number of EVs registered in the City be included for discussion at the February meeting. Mr. Hamil noted that the number of permits for private EV charging stations appears on the Utility Monthly Performance Measurements chart previously displayed.

Ms. Dipboye inquired about which department is responsible for the maintenance of the city-owned solar arrays. It was noted that at present there are no maintenance contracts. Mr. England agreed to look into the matter and report back to the board at a future date.

Mr. Zusi invited the board to the State of the City event on January 31, 2024 at 8:30 am.

8. Upcoming Agenda Items

9. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 1:36 p.m.

Approved with amendment by the board on February 25, 2025
/s/ Bahiyyah Layton, Board Coordinator