Utilities Advisory Board
Regular Meeting Minutes
February 25, 2025 at 12:00 PM

City Hall Commission Chambers
401 S. Park Avenue

Present
Mary Dipboye, Paul Conway, Kathryn Sutton, Leon Huffman

Absent
Alison Yurko, Michael Poole, Paul W. Smith Jr.

Staff Present
Deputy Director of Water and Wastewater Utilities Jason Riegler, Integrated Resources Program Manager Lisa Vedder, Electric Utility Supervisor Ben Wells, Director of Finance Wes Hamil, Utility Services Manager Ann Newhouse, Electrical Engineer Hector Rodriguez, Director of Human Resources Pam Russell, Administrative Coordinator Madison Smith

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 12:00 pm.

2. Consent Agenda

a. Approve the minutes of January 28, 2025

Motion made by Mr. Conway to approve the minutes with amendment, seconded by Ms. Sutton. Motion carried unanimously with a 4-0 vote.

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

4. Action Items

a. Electric Utility Strategic Plan - Mark McCain

Executive Consultant/Strategic Planning with Hometown Connections Inc. Mark McCain presented the final report on the Strategic Plan for the Electric Utility, highlighting how feedback was incorporated into the document. It was recommended that when presenting the strategic plan to the City Commissioners, the duration of 3 to 5 years should be included.

Mr. McCain provided a summary of each of the five goals and their corresponding strategies. There was a request for clarification regarding Goal 4, specifically about the meaning of "City Solar Deployment." Ms. Vedder sought guidance from the board and, after some discussion, clarified that the roadmap developed by Quantas originally focused on city-owned sites. Ms. Sutton emphasized that if we are referencing the roadmap, we should maintain that distinction until the roadmap is updated, rather than making assumptions about future possibilities. If the current roadmap specifies this link, we should adhere to its contents. Ms. Vedder will review the roadmap further.

Mr. McCain requested that the board enhance the mission, vision, goals, and strategies as presented, and then recommend the plan to the City Commission for approval. The next steps would include developing and refining action plans, assessing budget implications, initiating stakeholder communications, developing and tracking key performance indicators (KPIs), and reporting back to the Utility Advisory Board (UAB).

A question was raised about the goal of achieving 80% renewable energy within the next ten years. Ms. Vedder responded that while this goal is feasible, it is important to consider the associated costs.

Motion made by Ms. Sutton to approve the plan and recommend it to the city commission; seconded by Mr. Conway.

Ms. Sutton proposed including a specific reference to the roadmap in the wording to allow the plan to adapt as changes occur over the next 3 to 5 years. The current wording links to this roadmap, and as it evolves, the plan's language can also be updated. This approach might align with the city's renewable energy plan.

Ms. Vedder confirmed the intention to revise the plan as needed, with periodic updates to the roadmaps.

The motion carried unanimously by a 4-0 vote.

5. Non-Action Items

a. Number of Electric Vehicles Registered in Winter Park - Mary Dipboye

Ms. Dipboye reported that the number of registered electric vehicles (EVs) in the Winter Park zip codes are as follows:

- ***32789: 1,376***
- ***32790: 3***
- ***32792: 915***

In zip code 32792, there is a mix of addresses, making it unclear how many of those EVs are actually located in Winter Park. Notably, this total reflects a 60% increase compared to a year earlier in October. These vehicles are essentially large batteries on wheels, and many utility companies are offering incentives on a contract basis for individuals to supply electricity back to the grid.

Ms. Dipboye inquired whether this information would be useful for Ms. Vedder's planning. Ms. Vedder confirmed that she monitors all consumption and usage. On average, residential electricity usage is approximately 1,300 kilowatt-hours (kWh) per month, and this figure has remained consistent over the past five years. This raises questions as to why the increase in EV registrations is not reflected in the data unless residents are charging their EVs elsewhere or utilizing energy efficiency measures or solar power to compensate for it. This information will be part of the roadmap, and in the next fiscal year, we will begin focusing more on electric vehicles.

Mr. Hamil mentioned that in the performance report, we have started tracking the number of charging stations that have obtained permits.

Mr. Conway inquired whether we could measure the utilization of public EV charging stations, before and after the change in the charging fee. Ms. Vedder expressed her belief that the utilization has decreased. She suggested that the intent would be to conduct a follow-up analysis, similar to the one previously performed, in about a year, although she noted that this analysis is labor-intensive. Through visual observations, it appears that charging stations that were previously always occupied are now often empty.

6. Staff Updates

a. Electric Utility - Ben Wells

Ben Wells presented the monthly update on Electric Utility. A question was raised about whether all service drops would be completed as each section is finished. Mr. Wells responded that not all service drops are completed at once; there are usually a few that get missed. However, the team makes an effort to go back and address those omissions. In general, they try to wrap up the service drops simultaneously with the sections being worked on.

b. Water & Wastewater Utility – Jason Riegler

Jason Riegler presented the Wastewater report. Mr. Zusi reviewed the strategic plan and submitted comments to the consultants. A large bill concerning water additives that are not needed to ensure the safety of drinking water, specifically fluoride, is currently being reviewed by the state legislature. We are actively monitoring this situation.

c. Performance Measurement – Wes Hamil

Mr. Hamil reviewed the performance measures, comparing rates with Duke Energy. He also announced that the fuel rates for the average residential customer using 1,000 kilowatt-hours will increase by 13.59%, resulting in an additional $16 per month.

It was noticed that call wait times have increased and call drop frequency has risen.

Mr. Hamil discussed the fuel cost stabilization fund balance and presented the solar array charts. Ms. Vedder provided an explanation of the Rice Creek – FMPA solar production facility. She reiterated her earlier statement that achieving 80% efficiency within 10 years is feasible but questioned whether it is affordable. Both OUC and FPL have aggressive plans for decarbonization. Mr. Conway remarked that the question of affordability relates to energy storage. He stated that you have to purchase double the amount of fuel and keep half of your power needs stored locally for the cloudy, rainy days. This means buying more bulk power and ensuring it is stored.

Ms. Vedder stated that one megawatt of solar energy is roughly equivalent to one-quarter of a conventional megawatt. It's about 20% capacity factor. The discussion around nuclear energy is ongoing. In fiscal year 2024, our renewable energy sources comprised 20%, with 19% of that being attributed to Covant, which concluded on December 31, 2024. Currently, we are at approximately 1.2% solar energy usage.

The current length of the FMPA solar contract is 20 years, and we anticipate that our next 17 megawatts of solar energy will come online by the end of December. Ms. Vedder explained the absence of firming resources (i.e., resources that fill in the variations in renewable output). Because we are purchasing solar power as a pooled resource, the amount of solar energy we are utilizing is small enough that we effectively use the entire pool as our "battery," so to speak. This situation will evolve as we increase our solar energy penetration to a point where we will need to pay for firming resources.

d. Educational Campaign – Clarissa Howard

Ms. Howard included the current newsletter in the agenda packet. In response to an inquiry regarding the fund that helps customers, Mr. Hamil mentioned that we receive approximately $450 a month from our customers. This contribution can be set up for auto-billing at any amount the customer prefers.

7. Board Comments

Mr. Conway inquired if the donation could be incentivized. Mr. Hamil replied that doing so would complicate the administrative process. Mr. Huffman suggested recognizing donors by listing their names in the newsletter. Ms. Sutton noted that if customers were informed that their contributions were classified as charitable donations, it might hold more significance for some individuals. *Mr. Hamil was asked to follow up on whether the contributions are tax deductible.*

Ms. Dipboye inquired about maintenance contracts for the City's three solar arrays. Staff responded that the responsibility would fall under the facilities department, while the electric utility is likely to oversee the contract. Internal discussions are taking place but no decisions have been made yet.

8. Upcoming Agenda Items

Mr. Zusi has forwarded Mr. Riegler's comments on the water wastewater strategic plan to the consultant

9. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 1:11 p.m.

Approved by the board with edits on March 25, 2025
/s/ Bahiyyah Layton, Board Coordinator