



Utilities Advisory Board Regular Meeting Minutes

March 25, 2025 at 12:00 PM

City Hall Commission Chambers
401 S. Park Avenue

Present

Alison Yurko, Mary Dipboye, Michael Poole, Paul Conway, Kathryn Sutton, Leon Huffman

Absent

Paul W. Smith Jr.

Staff Present

Director of Water and Wastewater Utilities David Zusi, Director of Electric Utility Jamie England, Director of Finance Wes Hamil, Deputy Director of Water and Wastewater Utilities Jason Riegler, Electric Utility Engineer Manager Mourad Belfakih, Integrated Resources Program Manager Lisa Vedder, Utility Services Manager Ann Newhouse, Electric Field Data Collector Hector Segarra, Administrative Coordinator Madison Smith, Assistant City Manager Michelle del Valle

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 12:03 pm.

2. Consent Agenda

- a. Approve the minutes of February 25, 2025

Motion made by Mr. Conway to approve the minutes with edits, seconded by Ms. Dipboye. Motion carried unanimously with a 5-0 vote.

3. Public Comments (for items not on the agenda): Three minutes allowed for each speaker

Hattie Bryant 1240 S. Pennsylvania Ave. commented that the Utility Advisory Board's (UAB) work in 2021 won the sign-off by the mayor and commissioners. In January 2024, the UAB stated that it aims to gradually increase the supply of renewable energy the city purchases until it ultimately reaches 100% in about 25 years. Your plan is to pay as much as 6 times more than we need to pay. Time to recommend a cease and desist to a plan that won't work over the long haul. We are silly to rely on power, purchase agreements with the utilities, as the utilities are now hitched to the wagon of solar and battery storage, 5 hours of the day only solution, and therefore massively costly, as it must be laid over top of a conventional nighttime system capacity. So, we pay for 2 redundant systems. When Winter Park residents learn you want us to pay 6

times what we need to pay to turn our lights on, they will overturn this like we did the ban on gas leaf blowers. Are you really going to insist the city buy electric vehicles?

4. Action Items

5. Non-Action Items

a. Solar PPA Update

Ms. Vedder reported on one power purchase agreement (PPA) that was terminated by Origo on January 17, 2025. The contract included a clause that allowed for termination without any penalty if interconnection costs exceeded a specified amount.

Unfortunately, these interconnection costs have significantly exceeded that limit, along with other substantial delays. As a result, they provided a notice of termination. This was the final contract of the three, and it was for a capacity of 7 megawatts, scheduled to begin around 2027. Overall, we currently have a total capacity of 23 megawatts.

Ms. Vedder stated that 18 megawatts are expected to come online on January 1, 2026, in response to inquiries about upcoming projects. When asked about the percentage of total renewable energy sources that the additional 23 megawatts would represent, she explained that if Covanta is excluded, the current percentage is approximately 1.2%, and it may increase to around 4%.

A discussion took place regarding the renewable energy goals set to take place in under a decade were aspirational or in need of recalibration. Ms. Vedder explained that with the portfolio that the city purchases if the other utilities increase their renewable energy then the city will partially benefit. Further discussion focused on solar contracts and timelines. Mr. England elaborated on exploration of the strategy and future goals. One significant advantage of solar renewable energy is the price point. When oil and other energy sources are considered, the appeal of solar and renewable options diminishes. Moving forward through the roadmap, it is essential that the direction aligns with the preferences of both residential and commercial accounts. It is necessary to evaluate what makes the most sense in comparison to other opportunities.

Mr. Huffman inquired whether it is accurate to state that certain federal subsidies for solar energy are diminishing. In response, Mr. Poole indicated that these subsidies are anticipated to cease by 2027. The Quanta study advises a review every three years. The study was completed in late 2023 so an update would be anticipated in FY 2027. Chairman Poole stated that it was understood that we would consistently evaluate our costs and the manner in which they are charged. Consequently, the notion that we would be significantly out of the market compared to others was never intended and should not be interpreted in that manner. Mr. Huffman questioned the validity of representing the sustainability portfolio goals as achievable.

Ms. Sutton remarked that, during the meeting last month at which the strategic plan was approved, the fact that the strategic plan is intricately connected to the roadmap and the associated objectives was discussed. She emphasized that this matter be

addressed in depth with the Commission, perhaps at a Workshop, as it is essential for fostering a meaningful dialogue on this important topic.

Mr. Zusi mentioned that Mayor Anderson intended that we regularly revisit this and keep it grounded in reality, rather than pushing for a specific goal. Mr. Poole's opinion is that if the staff believes the city should change the 80% messaging at this time, Mr. England should approach the Commission and City Manager to propose modifications to the language. Mr. Huffman believes that it would be appropriate for the Board to raise the issue directly to the Commission. Mr. England pointed out that when examining any power company, whether it's a municipal or a private entity, their fuel portfolio is never composed of 100% of a single source. This variability is often due to changes in administrations, which can shift the focus toward different energy sources. It's important to carefully consider how we adjust these percentages within our portfolio rather than introducing entirely new concepts. Picking up on Mr. Huffman's earlier point, Mr. Zusi noted that although the Board is advisory to the Commission, it can also recommend staff investigate issues that the Board believes are warranted. Additionally, Mr. Zusi pointed out that collaboration with the Natural Resources & Sustainability Department is imperative, as their action plan closely integrates with Electric Utility's plan.

6. Staff Updates

a. Electric Utility - Jamie England

January 2025 Electric Utility Update

Mr. England provided an update on the undergrounding project. He clarified the completion date for residential service will not be in 2030, but a couple of years later. A significant number of services were not converted during the initial phase of construction 20 years ago. As a result, we will return to these services after the mainline conversions are completed. Staff are working on providing more accurate information on the website to reflect the current status. Mr. Conway suggested adding a frequently asked questions (FAQ) section to the webpage, to which Mr. England responded positively.

Mr. England announced Notes of interest; twentieth anniversary of the electric utility, revising street light policy for the city and Dark Sky initiative and noted the safety goals; zero personal injuries and zero controllable vehicle accidents.

Mr. England clarified that street lighting is not a priority in relation to the undergrounding project. The costs associated with additional street lighting will be covered by the residents. The acorn lights are the standard and dark sky will remain an alternative. It was explained that implementing dark sky lighting would incur a cost of \$9M and the city has not agreed to the initiative. As a result of the discussions regarding dark sky lighting versus acorn lighting, it has been decided to continue using acorn lighting until after the undergrounding is completed. A final decision will be made regarding the potential adoption of dark sky lighting citywide at that time.

Mr. Poole inquired about the possibility of bonding additional funds to expedite the construction timeline. Management decided not to pursue this option. Mr. Hamil will send the analysis to Mr. Poole. The undergrounding has been financed on a pay-as-you-go basis.

b. Water & Wastewater Utility – David Zusi

Mr. Zusi presented the final draft of the Water & Wastewater strategic plan to the board and informed them that both utility strategic plans will be presented to the Commission during an upcoming work session. He discussed minor updates in the industry trends section, including revisions related to technology, a more precise description of the automatic metering system, and a detailed explanation of environmental regulatory constraints. Additionally, he linked financial trends to the actual budget, noting that the budget is tight this year. Key facts were added to the last page of the document.

Mr. Conway inquired whether an analysis had ever been conducted to compare the costs of expanding the reclamation program versus the costs associated with reducing irrigation consumption. Mr. Zusi replied that the most cost-effective approach would be to communicate with individuals who are using their irrigation in violation of the regulations set by the St. Johns River Water Management District. Mr. Zusi discussed converting the vacant irrigation position into a full-time role with additional duties.

Ms. Sutton proposed including a target date for the development of a wastewater master plan. Mr. Zusi responded that, given the current budget constraints, this is not affordable at this time. The plan is to hire a consultant for this significant task, which is particularly important in light of the impacts from the recent storms. However, Mr. Zusi mentioned they would aim to include it in the budget for the next fiscal year.

Motion made by Mr. Conway to approve the Water & Wastewater Strategic plan; seconded by Ms. Sutton. The motion carried unanimously with a 6-0 vote.

c. Performance Measurement – Wes Hamil

- Performance measurements will be tracked through January 2025.
- An increase is anticipated in March due to rising fuel costs.
- In response to Ms. Sutton's question, contributions to the United Way program will be tax-deductible, depending on the taxpayer's circumstances.
- The permitted EV charging stations will no longer be tracked.
- Receivables are gradually increasing. Due to metering issues, accounts that have the most significant balances and the longest duration without payment will be disconnected.

There was a discussion about defining retail electricity rates and the potential overcompensation for net metering customers including taxes and franchise fees. Mr. Hamil noted that this may reflect the limitations of the current billing system, but he will look into this.

d. Educational Campaign – Clarissa Howard

April Utility Update

Ms. Howard included the April bill insert in the agenda packet.

7. Board Comments

Mr. Poole suggested that the Chamber of Commerce and the Economic Development Advisory Board create a list of different Winter Park specialists. Mr. Conway mentioned that it has been a pleasure serving on the Board and Ms. Dipboye concurred.

8. Upcoming Agenda Items

Ms. Dipboye suggested that the board would benefit from hearing insights from Mr. England and Mr. Zusi regarding the impact of AI on utilities. She also mentioned the potential fluctuations in natural gas prices due to its emergence as a global market.

Mr. Poole expressed a desire to discuss shifting from globe fixtures to dark sky fixtures without fully implementing the dark sky initiative. He will provide the board with his review of the bond analysis.

Additionally, Mr. Poole announced that he does not wish to serve as Chair and that Todd Weaver will be appointed to the board by Commissioner Lindsey. Ms. Yurko proposed Ms. Sutton as Chair. The schedule for board appointments was also mentioned and that there would likely be a holdover for current Board members until May with Chair and Vice Chair selection in June.-

9. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 1:22 p.m.

Approved by the board on April 22, 2025
/s/ Bahiyyah Layton, Board Coordinator