



Utilities Advisory Board Regular Meeting Minutes

May 27, 2025 at 12:00 PM

City Hall Commission Chambers
401 S. Park Avenue

Present

Michael Poole, Kathryn Sutton, Leon Huffman, Allison Yurko (Virtual)

Absent

Paul W. Smith Jr., Todd Weaver

Staff Present

Director of Water and Wastewater Utilities David Zusi, Director of Electric Utility Jamie England, Director of Communications Clarissa Howard (Virtual), Electric Utility Operations Manager Miguel Cruz (Virtual), Electric Utility Engineer Manager Mourad Belfakih, Integrated Resources Program Manager Lisa Vedder (Virtual), Utility Services Manager Ann Newhouse, Administrative Coordinator Madison Smith

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 12:01 p.m. Quorum was not met.

The utility debt issue will be discussed at the next meeting when Mr. Hamil returns.

2. Consent Agenda

Ms. Sutton provided a clarification concerning the minutes, indicating that staff will present an update on the proposed state legislation pertaining to utility rates during the May meeting. Mr. Zusi updated the board on the legislation, explaining that the city attorneys reviewed the bill and concluded it does not affect Winter Park, therefore, the surcharge will remain in effect.

- a. Approve the minutes of April 22, 2025

Due to lack of quorum, the approval of the April minutes will be moved to the June meeting.

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

4. Action Items

5. Non-Action Items

- a. Online Utility Start/Stop Service

Ms. Newhouse shared how the stop and start service works through the city website. The option was implemented internally without any promotion, resulting in no charge. It offers 24/7 access, enabling staff to manage requests during peak phone hours.

- b. Discussion of Fluoride

Mr. Zusi announced that the governor has signed a bill that prohibits utilities from adding any chemicals unrelated to water treatment, effective July 1. The city is expected to deplete its stock by that date, as there have been no recent purchases. A notice will be sent to city water customers informing them that fluoride is no longer being added to the water. The taste and texture of the water will remain unchanged.

Ms. Yurko indicated that this legislation is mandated by state law. In her view, it will impact children from lower-income backgrounds who do not visit the dentist.

6. Staff Updates

a. Electric Utility - Jamie England

Mr. England extended an invitation to the board for the commemoration of the 20th Anniversary of the Electric Utility, scheduled for June 11 and June 14. He provided the following updates:

the miles of undergrounding achieved; the undergrounding map; the strategic plan, which will be presented in collaboration with Hometown Connections; ongoing discussions with several OMS providers; the initiation of Project "O"; and the reporting of zero personal injuries along with zero controllable vehicle accidents.

b. Water & Wastewater Utility – David Zusi

Mr. Zusi mentioned that the state Department of Environmental Protection requires the implementation of a cross-connection control program, wherein backflow preventers are a required component of operating a potable water system. The city's water and wastewater department require the inspection of backflows for all new construction and renovation type building permits. The city ordinance permits disconnection if the backflow code is not adhered to.

The city's backflow manager has expressed his concern that people avoid installing backflows due to the city's leniency in enforcement. Staff are proposing to bring to the City Commission a policy to turn people off if they don't have the backflow device installed. It is a public safety issue.

Mr. Zusi discussed the purpose of backflow prevention, which is to protect drinking water from contamination in the city's water distribution system. The objective is to secure the board's and the commission's support for enforcing water shutoffs for violators. The backflow installation cost may range from approximately \$400 to \$1200. Mr. Poole proposed compiling a list of vendors (plumbers). Ms. Sutton emphasized the need for enforcement due to potential negative effects on human health. Notifications will be sent out ahead of time through various channels, beginning with commercial accounts and followed by residential ones. It was recommended to implement a fine for a certain duration before proceeding to shut off the water.

Currently, the backflow is tested on an annual basis by the city. The fee for known customers is \$35. This procedure will be enforced for all individuals who are mandated to maintain a backflow system.

c. Performance Measurement – Wes Hamil

Mr. Hamil was not present. In response to questions from Mr. Huffman, Mr. Poole confirmed that the kilowatt-hour chart represents a rolling 12-month period. Ms. Vedder clarified that the power generated by the solar arrays is indicated on the side of the chart in cumulative megawatt hours for the calendar year, with the bars representing monthly megawatt-hours.

d. Educational Campaign – Clarissa Howard (virtual)

7. Board Comments

It was noted that the renewable energy that was received from Covanta has not been replaced. Staff noted that Rice Creek provides 5 MW and the City's share of the Whistling Duck Solar Farm was increased from 5 to 18 megawatts. Mr. Huffman pointed out that the renewable power target for 2025 is 23%, while in 2022, it was at 21.72% with Covanta, indicating movement in the wrong direction. Ms. Vedder clarified that the decision to discontinue using Covanta was based on financial considerations.

Mr. England indicated that negotiations concerning power are currently underway. Subsequently, a discussion ensued regarding the goals outlined on the website. Mr. Poole suggested that updates be communicated in a manner that does not specifically reference competitors. Ms. Vedder conveyed that the city is ahead of schedule with the acquisition of 13 additional megawatts from Whistling Duck, which is several years ahead of the projected timeline.

Following the discussion about the city's roadmap for transitioning to full renewable energy, the Board requested that Staff provide quarterly updates on the roadmap milestones. Staff agreed.

8. Upcoming Agenda Items

- Debt and rate discussion - action item
- Budget discussion, if approved - action item
- Mr. Zusi's discussion on backflow
- Chair and Vice Chair selection

Following the water and wastewater strategic planning session with the city commission, the Board Appreciation Event will be held at the Farmer's Market. *The actual location is the Events Center.*

9. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 1:04 p.m.

Approved by the board on June 24, 2025
/s/ Bahiyyah Layton, Board Coordinator