



City of Columbia, Missouri

Meeting Minutes

Water and Light Advisory Board

Wednesday, September 13, 2023
8:00 AM

Regular

701 E Broadway
Conference Room
1A/1B

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Coffin called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.

Staff: Sarah Talbert, Assistant Utility Director; David Sorrell, Utilities Director; Shawn Carrico, Engineering Supervisor; Erin Keys, Acting Utility Director - Electric; Brandon Renaud, Energy Services Manager; Steve Hunt, Acting Utility Director - Water; Matt Nestor, Public Information Specialist; Kevin Wiggins, Water Production Manager; Ben Edes, Energy Service Supervisor; Aubrey Turner, Public Information Specialist; Chris Kisch, Sr. Administrative Support Assistant

Public: Mike Murphy, Carolyn Amparin, Jim Windsor, Mark Haim, Dick Parker

Present: 3 - Gregg Coffin, Philip Fracica and Amanda Jacobs

Absent: 2 - Thomas Jensen and David Switzer

II. INTRODUCTIONS

A round robin was done for introductions.

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mr. Philip Fracica made a motion to approve the agenda as submitted with a second by Ms. Amanda Jacobs. Motion passed unanimously.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The August 9, 2023 meeting minutes were approved with changes with a motion by Mr. Philip Fracica and a second by Ms. Amanda Jacobs. Motion passed unanimously.

Attachments: [Meeting Minutes Draft 08 09 23](#)

V. PUBLIC EMAIL COMMENTS

Mr. Coffin asked if staff had information about what was presented by Mr. Windsor. Ms. Talbert noted the City no longer had a Project Management Officer (PMO). It was currently the NERC Officers and they had been working of NERC items; at one time they had also worked on Capital Improvement Projects (CIP). Mr. Coffin asked about funding. Ms. Talbert stated funding was only for the NERC items being worked on. Mr. Sorrell advised the PMO would be moving to the City Manager's

(CM's) office beginning in the new Fiscal Year (FY) and would be used throughout the City but the utilities department would not fund that. Mr. Windsor stated he felt it was important for the Water and Light Advisory Board (WLAB) to understand the concept of project management, time, funding, people involved, etc. and the WLAB needed to manage that. He said when he and Mr. Williams pushed this, there were a number of problems and they were not all internal. Mr. Windsor said there still needed to be project management and water and electric should be the priority. He said projects were not done effectively and he encouraged the WLAB to ask for water and electric to be the focus. Mr. Coffin noted things had changed since Mr. Windsor left the City, there were different ways to solve project management. The WLAB would need to defer to the team that manages this. He said IT had come in and provided explanation, as well as Mr. Storvick. Mr. Coffin ended by thanking Mr. Windsor for his comments.

Attachments: [WLABPublic Microsoft Project and Power BI - Accountability and Transparency](#)

VI. FINANCIAL REPORTS as available

a) Monthly Financial Report

Ms. Talbert noted the financial reports were through the month of July, 2023 for both water and electric. Beginning with electric, Ms. Talbert said the Month to Date operating revenues were down as was the operating expenses. The Year to Date operating revenue was also down as was the operating expenses. The Year to Year comparisons were higher than expected, which was up slightly compared to what was budgeted. Mr. Coffin asked if the changes were due to changes in the market. Ms. Talbert noted it was due to purchased power. On the water side, the Month to Date revenues were up from July, 2022 as was the operating expenses. It was noted operating expenses were up due to lime and sludge hauling. The Year to Date operating revenue was also up from July, 2022 as was the operating expenses. Again, the operating expenses were up due to lime and sludge hauling. The Year to Year comparisons were up for operating revenue but was below budget for operating expenses. The billed usage for water was up from both last month (June) and from this same time last year. It was said this was the highest usage for July since 2016. The billed usage for electric was noted to be lower than this same time last year. Mr. Coffin stated he would like to see a summary on what was being budgeted for and how items were budgeted. He also requested a summary of vacant positions for water and electric.

Attachments: [Electric Statements-July 2023](#)
[Water Statements-July 2023](#)
[Summary Change in Billed usage for Water and Electric](#)

VII. DIRECTOR'S REPORTS

a) Financial Impact on 100% Renewable Energy Study

Mr. Coffin noted this had been requested after The Energy Authority (TEA) Study.

Ms. Talbert advised that she, Mr. Sorrell, and Ms. Keys had met and was able to create cumulative costs for the different case alternatives with each year having cumulative increases. She reminded everyone of the case alternatives:

- Alternate Case #1: 100 percent renewable by 2030
- Alternate Case #2: 100 percent renewable by 2030 using Renewable Energy Credits (REC's)
- Alternate Case #3: 100 percent renewable by 2030 and divest coal resources
- Alternate Case #4: 100 percent renewable by 2030 and divest coal resources and retire natural gas resources
- Alternate Case #5: 100 percent renewable by 2030 and retire Sikeston only

Ms. Talbert felt this presented a good picture of what the cumulative increases would be through 2043. Ms. Talbert stated Alternate Case numbers 1 and 2 would be the cases presented to Council, as the other cases were not feasible. Mr. Coffin asked if any had met the three percent cap and the escalators TEA had recommended. Ms. Talbert stated staff had confirmed with TEA all calculations agreed. It was noted the next step would be to put this information into a report for Council. A work session with Council was discussed as the best option for presenting the information. Ms. Talbert advised the intent was to have TEA present the information to Council as they did for the WLAB. Mr. Coffin noted this information was very beneficial and for staff to keep them informed.

Attachments: [WLAB Financial Impact](#)

b) AMI Status Update

Mr. Coffin asked for verification this was ready for a consultant. Ms. Keys advised staff was wanting to get a contract signed and returned; with the hopes of getting this on the Council agenda for October, 2023.

c) Council Item Update

Ms. Talbert said this update included information from the August 7th, August 21st, and the September 5th meetings. She said at the August 7th meeting, there were two scheduled public comments, four public hearings with three being approved, one Council bill approved, and one Council bill introduced. The August 21st meeting there was one public hearing and the Council bill introduced at the last meeting was approved. The September 5th meeting there was one public hearing, this was for the FY2024 Annual Budget for the City of Columbia. This was noted as not being adopted, but should be at the next meeting. One Council bill was introduced. This was for the issuance of Water and Electric System Revenue Bonds sale. It was noted the sale should be approved in October. Staff was working with the Legal department on the Community Solar Program Ordinance. It was noted this was a goal to be presented to Council in October for an effective timeframe of January, 2024.

Attachments: [Council Item Updates - August 2023](#)

d) Water Well Update

Mr. Coffin noted at the last meeting the WLAB had been informed there had been some vandalism to some wells. Mr. Sorrell advised a well had been shot up. It had been repaired and it happened again. He said a security update was being done, new cameras, etc.; adding this would not stop it but it would help identify those responsible. Mr. Sorrell advised this type of activity was required to be reported as Terrorist Activity. Mr. Fracica asked if the increased expenses for the updated security was included with this month's financials. Mr. Sorrell replied they were not.

e) Upcoming Training

Ms. Talbert reminded the WLAB the deadline for the Missouri Public Utility Alliance (MPUA) annual conference was tomorrow. Any member interested in attending needed to register. The Electric Vehicle (EV) training was scheduled for December 12, 2023 in conference room 1A/1B. Council had been invited as well, this would be a training very similar to the TEA training.

VIII. CHAIRMAN'S REPORTS**a) Follow-Up Rate Affordability**

Mr. Coffin advised this was being rescheduled for some time in late September or early October. He noted Mr. Switzer was more informed on this so the WLAB wanted to wait for him. Mr. Coffin stated he wanted to clarify what the WLAB would be doing here was not to re-look at rates but to develop a standard rate increase for the utility. Many municipalities were already doing this he said.

b) Public Input Meeting Agenda Discussion

The WLAB discussed items for the Public Input meeting scheduled for October 25, 2023. It was noted there would be a community solar presentation with Mr. Renaud being available for any questions. Mr. Switzer would be available for any questions regarding the utility rate affordability metrics. Energy efficiency and demand reduction opportunities was suggested by Mr. Jensen. AMI was removed from the agenda until approval from Council was received. Added under public input opportunities was the purpose of the WLAB. Mr. Coffin stated he would discuss this more later. At the October meeting, there would be more discussion on who would speak on which topics.

Attachments: [Public Meeting agenda](#)

c) Update on FY 2023 WLAB Goals

Mr. Coffin noted the WLAB had some ambitious goals with not much progress. He suggested the goals going forward should maybe focus on goals for the year, but also goals that were realistic. Mr. Coffin felt the October meeting would be a good time to begin drafting their FY 2024 goals. He noted he would be willing to begin the draft for critique at the October meeting. The WLAB agreed.

Attachments: [WLAB FY23 Goals 9-6-23](#)

d) FY 2024 WLAB Goals

It was agreed Mr. Coffin would draft some goals for FY 2024 for critique at the October, 2023 meeting.

e) WLAB Annual Report

Mr. Coffin noted the WLAB was due to submit an annual report to Council, adding goals helped do that and Mr. Switzer was working on a draft report. Mr. Coffin had one question, when the report was supposed to be submitted. He noted there were no rules on that. Mr. Coffin felt the report should be a collaborative effort suggesting the WLAB review the information together. He advised he would continue to work with Mr. Switzer with the hope for a draft at the October meeting. He felt the report should be no more than two pages that highlighted the WLAB activities and progress over the past year. The WLAB agreed.

f) WLAB Purpose

Mr. Coffin said there seemed to be some confusion between the task force and the WLAB on the purpose of the WLAB. He stated the WLAB was an advisory board not a decision maker. The WLAB members were all volunteers that served without pay.

Attachments: [WLAB Purpose](#)

g) Rolling Calendar Update

FY 2024 Goals, Rate Affordability Follow-Up, Annual Report to Council, and Finalize Public Input Agenda was added to October. Removed from the calendar was Solar Supply Chain Traceability, Quarterly Report to Council. Board of Education/Development Process Update was moved out until after the EV training.

IX. GENERAL COMMENTS BY PUBLIC, MEMBERS AND STAFF

Ms. Amparin referred back to the rate comparison and the TEA scenarios asking for verification that alternate case #1 came from selling excess energy. Mr. Coffin replied any excess would be sold. Ms. Amparin said the chart needed more evaluation as the TEA presentation showed a different timeline for solar. She felt it would be best to get this cleared up before the work session with Council. Alternate case #5, she said there was something wrong, asking for more study to be done. Ms. Talbert advised Alternate case #5 was based on the spreadsheet provided by TEA. Ms. Amparin replied TEA needed to re-do their spreadsheet. Next, Ms. Amparin discussed rate affordability adding Mr. Coffin's comments were well made however the name should be changed from Rate Affordability to Metrics Reliability. Ms. Amparin then noted the Sierra Club had an individual that did presentations asking if the WLAB would like for them to come and give a presentation. Mr. Coffin suggested she contact the Climate and Energy Commission (CEC). Ms. Amparin stated the CEC had declined, they did not want all the people in their meetings. Last, Ms. Amparin asked about the status on a new IRP on a future agenda. Mr. Coffin noted this had been discussed and the WLAB felt the need to pause and watch the market. Mr. Sorrell said staff was also waiting on feedback from Council on the 2030 renewable energy.

Mr. Parker advised he was concerned about rates and how they were being applied. He asked what the rationale was. He said he listened to Council on the electric rates, they stated what the consultants had recommended, on the water side Council totally ignored what the consultants recommended. Mr. Parker advised it was known what caused the increase in cost - irrigation. He said there were meters for that, staff knew where the costs should be applied. He said it seemed in general, there was someone in the system that applied pressure to keep the cost down for the customers who use more but put more on those who use less. Mr. Parker noted Council made decisions based on two sources and the CM's recommendation to Council. He felt the WLAB should be very clear on their recommendations, then show the rationale for their recommendations. He ended saying Council listening to the consultants when they wanted to was not acceptable.

Mr. Haim stated Council met in the evenings but the WLAB met during the day. He said this kept people who worked or attended school from attending, asking if the WLAB had given any thought into holding their meetings in the evening hours. Mr. Coffin advised there had been discussion, the issue was staff was involved in these meetings and evening meetings would require staff after hours.

Mr. Windsor asked if there had been an update on the contract for the Green Belt Express (wind). Mr. Coffin noted there had been an update not too long ago. Next, Mr. Windsor stated he wanted to revisit rates. He said the base rate needed to be kept low and the first tiers lower. This would help the low income customers. Mr. Windsor said in the past, the city had kept to neutral rate changes. He advised he had done some research with other utilities and found the highest rate in Missouri was \$13.00. Mr. Windsor stated he hoped the WLAB would revisit this issue and recommend Council revisit this issues as well as this rate increase was rushed. Next, Mr. Windsor advised the WLAB purpose also stated the "Powers of the board shall be solely advisory. It shall be empowered to visit and to inspect the operation of the water and light system, to have access to all financial and other records pertaining to the said system, and to require from any city department or officer any information available concerning the same. The board shall report at least annually its findings and recommendations to the people and to the Council." Mr. Windsor said the Utility department contributed \$28 million yearly around the city. Last, Mr. Windsor stated the costs did not explain how they related to the utilities. In the past, the utility department paid 80 percent of the Legal department's employees. Then there were the PILOTs. The impact was a two percent rate increase to customers, Mr. Windsor said this was hidden in the PILOT. He ended saying he hoped part of the WLAB's goal was to get into the details on allocations, deposits, and transfers.

Mr. Parker said the Water Treatment Plant (WTP) produced what was needed for much of the year as it stood without any improvements. The improvements would bring the WTP up to the level that was now needed for summer irrigation. Mr. Parker stated the entire cost for the WTP improvements should be in that.

X. NEXT MEETING DATE

October 11, 2023

XI. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:40 a.m. on a motion by Mr. Philip Fracica with a second by Ms. Amanda Jacobs. Motion passed unanimously.

To submit questions or comments to the Water & Light Advisory Board, please email wlabpublic@como.gov.

All media inquiries should be submitted to Matt Nestor at Matthew.Nestor@como.gov or Brandon Renaud at Brandon.Renaud@como.gov

Members of the public may attend any open meeting. For requests for accommodations related to disability, please call 573-874-CITY (573-874-2489) or email CITY@CoMo.gov. In order to assist staff in making the appropriate arrangements for your accommodation, please make your request as far in advance of the posted meeting date as possible.

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