



City of Columbia, Missouri

Meeting Minutes

Water and Light Advisory Board

Wednesday, October 29, 2025
6:00 PM

Public Input Meeting

701 E Broadway
City Council Chambers

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mrs. Jennifer Coleman called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

Staff: Erin Keys, Utilities Director; Sarah Talbert, Assistant Director Utilities-Rates and Fiscal Planning; Ron Wyble, Power Supply Manager; Todd McVicker, Utility Services Manager; Jason West, Communications and Outreach Supervisor; Matt Nestor, Public Information Specialist; Earl Kraus, Assistant City Counselor; Chelsea Miller, Finance Treasury Manager; Christina Weaver, Administrative Technician II

Public: Christine Doerr, Laird Okie, John Conway, Carolyn Amparan, Peter Schneeberger

II. INTRODUCTIONS

Mrs. Jennifer Coleman led introductions of the Water and Light Board members. She went through the agenda items and noted that 3 minutes will be granted per person at the end of each agenda item for comments.

III. UTILITY CUSTOMER SERVICE SURVEY RESULTS

Mr. Thomas Jensen provided a presentation with slides on the Utility Customer Service Survey Results. The survey was designed and carried out by ETC Institute, and ETC reported a 95% level of confidence in the results of the survey with a precision of at least +/- 3.4%. Input was provided by city utility staff and the Water and Light Advisory Board. All age groups were represented in the survey results. The purpose of the survey was to gain insight into the community's experience with utility services and identify opportunities for improvement. The goal was to receive 800 completed surveys, and the survey was completed in April 2025 with 804 survey responses received. He reviewed the results of various survey questions and the full survey results and supporting details are available at Como.gov.

IV. PAYCOMO UPDATE

Mrs. Chelsea Miller provided a presentation with slides on PayCoMo. The goal of PayCoMo is to consolidate payment services for City customers as a "one stop shop" for Finance transactions. These transactions include autopay for utility bills and home energy loans, one-time payments for utility bills, retiree insurance, and parking citations. In the near future, myutilitybill.como.gov and energov.como.gov payments

will be redirected to PayCoMo. Additional payments that will soon be made on PayCoMo include: Finance business licenses, Community Development, Housing & Neighborhood Services, Utility Assistance Contributions, Cultural Affairs & CVB Events, PHHS permits and licenses.

Ms. Christine Doerr expressed frustration with the PayCoMo platform.

V. COMMUNITY SOLAR & ENERGY EFFICIENCY PROGRAMS

Mr. Todd McVicker provided a presentation with slides on the City's Community Solar and Energy Efficiency Programs. Community Solar is a combination of solar from the Truman and Bernadette Solar Fields and a total combined ~1 MW of solar is allocated to participants which is divided into 1.5 kW blocks. Only residential electric customers are eligible for Community Solar, and it's available for owner occupied and rental properties. The program is designed to run through December 2044. There is an automatic annual renewal and customers can opt out at any time with no cost. There is a one-time \$27 fee for processing the application. The monthly costs will be a combination of two fees for a total of \$24.77; the solar subscription fee is \$14 and the utility operations fee is \$10.77. The solar subscription fee is a fixed rate over the life of the program, and the utility operations fee is a variable cost that may adjust with program costs.

The energy efficiency programs began in 2008 and were revamped in October 2024. Residential Home Performance Loans are available for up to \$15,000 with interest rates as low as 1% for installing energy efficiency measures. Rebates up to \$500 are available for the installation of attic and duct insulation. Rebates up to \$1,200 are available for the installation of qualifying central air conditioners and heat pumps or ground source heat pumps. Rebates up to \$1,400 are available for the installation of qualified heat pumps. Rebates up to \$50 are available for the installation of an Energy Star certified smart thermostat. Rebates up to \$500 are available for the installation of an Energy Star heat pump water heater. Rebates up to \$500 are available for the installation of a Level 2 EV charger and for making new constructions homes EV ready.

Free residential energy assessment are offered at no cost to residential electric and/or water utility customers; the assessment provides energy and water conservation tips specific to the home. Income eligible energy conservation programs are also available to qualifying customers. The Enhanced Home Performance with Energy Star is a whole house approach to energy conservation with up to \$2,400 in rebates. The Income Eligible Weatherization Program is provided by Central Missouri Community Action (CMCA) at no cost to provide weatherization services to eligible electric customers. The Window Air Conditioner Exchange Program is provided by the Voluntary Action Center (VAC) to exchange old window AC units for new efficient units.

Commercial and Industrial Energy Efficiency Rebates are available for: replacing inefficient lighting with LED lighting, installing lighting controls that automatically dim indoor lighting and incorporate daylight, installing efficient Heating Ventilation and Air

Conditioning (HVAC) units and/or ground source heat pumps, installing or replacing variable speed drives, installing a commercial heat pump water heater, and installing electric vehicle charging supply equipment. Rebates are also available for installing Energy Star certified commercial kitchen equipment in schools, restaurants, day-cares, churches, and more. The Custom Rebate Program is offered for energy reduction efforts outside the current program offerings. Commercial Energy Efficiency Loans are available for up to \$30,000 per meter with interest rates as low as 1% for installing energy efficiency measures. Additional commercial services offered include free commercial energy audits, infrared inspections, and compressed air leak detection.

Solar rebates are available for the installation of solar panels at homes and businesses. Water conservation rebates are also available for both commercial and residential customers for installing WaterSense toilets and installing smart irrigation controllers, rain sensors, and/or high efficiency sprinkler heads. The water conservation programs are currently being re-evaluated based on the recent water cost of service study. For more information on the programs, visit ColumbiaPowerPartners.com, email efficiency@como.gov, or call (573) 441-5528.

Mr. John Conway inquired about what security is taken for the energy efficiency loan, and Mr. Todd McVicker informed him that the City takes the first lien on the property.

Ms. Caroline Amparan spoke on behalf of the Mid-Missouri Group for Sierra Club. She suggested expanding the programs so low income individuals can participate since money has to be paid up front in order to get any rebates.

Mr. Peter Schneeberger asked about the \$5 premium for Community Solar. Mr. Todd McVicker explained that with the community solar program, sometimes participants will receive a higher or lower credit depending on the amount of solar production in that time period so most customers will pay an additional \$5 on average throughout the course of the year in addition to the standard monthly fee.

VI. WATER REVENUE INCREASE

Mr. David Switzer provided a presentation with slides on the FY 2026 12% increase in water revenue and adjustments to the rate structure. The Stantec Cost of Service Study was utilized to make decisions on the revenue increase and rate structure adjustments. Recommendations that were implemented include: eliminating non-summer and summer tiered usage and implement the tiered system year around, resetting the tier 1 maximum volume to be 100% of the winter average consumption by user, recovering peak day and peak hour water supply costs in the higher rate tiers, and combining the fire flow charges with the monthly base charges to simplify the rate structure. Under the new rate structure, customers with consistent, steady usage will see their bills decline, while those who drive peak demands will pay more; overall, 65% of annual bills are expected to decrease while 35% will increase or will not change.

VII. ELECTRIC RATE INCREASE

Mr. David Switzer provided a presentation with slides on the FY 2026 2% electric rate increase.

The idea is to have lower, more consistent rate increases in the future rather than having larger rate increases less consistently.

Without any rate increases, the financial expenses exceed financial revenues in FY 2027 and will fall below the cash reserve target in FY 2029. With a 2% rate increase in only FY 2026, financial expenses exceed financial revenues in FY 2028 and fall below the cash reserve target in FY 2030. With a 2% rate increase each fiscal year, financial expenses no longer exceed financial revenues in FY 2028 and no longer fall below the cash reserve target through FY 2030.

Ms. Christine Doerr expressed concern about her water pressure being too high and she asked why the City can't put in a water regulator for the whole neighborhood rather than each person having to install one at their home.

Ms. Caroline Amparan suggested the City create informational videos or tutorials to help people understand their bill and the payment platform. She also supports having smaller rate increases more frequently rather than having large rate increases less frequently, but the rates suggested that they implement the lowest rate increase needed as people are already dealing with inflation.

Mr. Peter Schneeberger spoke on behalf of the Columbia Renewable Coalition and recommended that the City should move towards the goal of replacing Sikeston with renewable energy, and he suggested that the target for 2035 needs adjustment as he thinks 5% is a reasonable target.

Mr. John Conway brought up the cost of service study that was performed by Prime Group Electric Cost of Service Study and thinks it should have been considered as he hasn't heard it discussed in regards to the rate increase. Mrs. Sarah Talbert explained that the study didn't include any personal compensation increases that have been applied by the City Manager in the last several years. Mr. David Switzer explained that there were discussions with Prime Group about pursuing smaller, incremental rate increases to prevent larger rate increases in the future.

VIII. PUBLIC INPUT OPPORTUNITIES**a) Regular Meetings - 2nd Wednesday @ 8 am**

Mrs. Jennifer Coleman announced that the board's regular meetings happen every second Wednesday at 8 am in Conference Room 1A/B in City Hall and are open to the public.

b) Email at wlabpublic@como.gov

The public can contact the board at wlabpublic@como.gov.

IX. VISITOR COMMENTS

Mrs. Jennifer Coleman opened the floor to the public for comments.

Ms. Caroline Amaparan spoke on behalf of the Mid-Missouri Group for Sierra Club and thanked the board for the affordability metric. She spoke in favor of replacing the Sikeston Power Plant with renewable energy and would like to see a goal of much higher than 40% by 2035. She is also in favor of advanced metering infrastructure. She suggested setting up an interested parties mailing list so that people who are interested in being notified when there's a special calendar event could be notified by email.

Ms. Christine Doerr expressed a need for reducing the pollution in the air and replacing Sikeston with renewable energy.

Mrs. Jennifer Coleman said that City staff are currently reviewing the IRP, and then the board will have a plan to review to make recommendations to staff and Council. Mr. Thomas Jensen explained that projects that aren't in the solar interconnection queue and in the process of wrapping up the interconnection queue right now aren't going to be built in time to have a subsidy, which will make it more expensive. Mr. Phillip Fracica stated that looking at the regional transmission organizations, there has been a high capacity value for battery storage that can be more reliable in some cases than what we're seeing from natural gas from nuclear plants, so that could be more feasible in hitting those goals sooner and being able to address the economic concerns.

X. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 7:13 p.m. on a motion by Mr. David Switzer and a second by Mrs. Jennifer Coleman. Motion passed unanimously.

Members of the public may attend any open meeting. For requests for accommodations related to disability, please call 573-874-7214. In order to make appropriate accommodations, please make your request at least 72 hours before the posted meeting date.

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 Jason West at Jason.West@como.gov.