



City of Columbia, Missouri

Meeting Minutes

Water and Light Advisory Board

Wednesday, March 13, 2024
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 Director Utilities-Rates and Fiscal Planning, David Sorrell, Utilities Director, Erin Keys, Acting Assistant Director-Electric, Todd McVicker, Acting Utility Services Manager, Steve Hunt, Assistant Director-Water, Ron Wyble, Power Production Superintendent, Earl Kraus, Assistant City Councilor; Chris Kisch, Administrative Technician II; Kim Wolfmeier, Administrative Technician II.

Zoom: Chelsea Miller - Treasurer, Manny Teodoro- Affordability Metrics Expert

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

Present: 4 - Thomas Jensen, David Switzer, Gregg Coffin and Amanda Jacobs

Absent: 1 - Philip Fracica

II. INTRODUCTIONS

A round robin was done for introductions.

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The February 14, 2024 meeting minutes were approved with changes with a motion by Mr. David Switzer and a second by Ms. Amanda Jacobs. Motion passed unanimously.

Attachments: [Meeting Minutes Draft 02 14 24](#)

V. FINANCE PAYIT UPDATE (via zoom)

Auto Payments were said to be about 65 percent of 17,000 customers enrolled in the auto payment plan. The original deadline was March 1, 2024, but was expanded until the end of March. Utility Customer Service (UCS) reps were worked with.

Information was also mailed out to customers to notify enrollment, along with

information on all payment plans. Auto Payments were just one option customers have to choose from. Auto Payments will require an email to generate PayComo. Customer service in City Hall can fully assist customers. Last continuing date was said to April 17, 2024. Mr. Coffin asked about customers on Auto Pay and paperless billing; if they would be subject to late payments. He wanted to know if there would be fees for services, i.e. credit and debit cards. Mr. Coffin also asked if the history of usage would still be available to the customers. Ms. Miller replied it was possible that customers would receive a late fee, but there was a grace period during the transition. They did send out a stand-alone letter to these customers as well. She also stated there would be a pop up on the website to notify the customer of no fee for credit and debit cards. Ms. Miller stated customers would be able to get their historical usage data on the “My Utility Bill” page, which was separate from PayComo.

VI. RATE AFFORDABILITY (MANNY TEODORO via zoom) 8:30 A.M.

Mr. Teodoro introduced himself advising he had been working with Rate Affordability Metrics and Utilities for the past twenty years. He noted he was a professor at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. He had examples from across the country on how we could use these metrics. Mr. Teodoro began working in Finance and Budgeting in the water sector in 1996. He has worked with Water finance, regulations, various policies, and utility rates. Going forward, he said that “water” would mean water & sewer. Mr. Coffin stated that the challenge was could people afford the metrics, and hoped to hear some methodology to face this challenge. He also wondered if Rate Affordability Rate could be applied to other utilities. Mr. Teodoro replied, it could be and hoped his presentation would help with that. He said affordability was only partly about rates. It was about tradeoffs; what you can’t afford because you have to pay for water and sewer. There was a difference if you can’t buy a boat, or some other luxury versus healthcare or food. Mr. Teodoro stated this was a real issue for low income. He asked what sacrifices should a low-income household have to make to pay the water bill. There was no official standard of affordability, or EPA authority over utility rates. Mr. Teodor next discussed Policy. He said Phoenix was one of the first to implement these measures. In 2017 they were under pressure to attain affordability, and they turned to a Citizens Water Rate Advisory Committee which was a group similar to this group. They agreed upon:

- AR20 less than or equal to 10.0%.
- HM less than or equal to 8 hours of pay for water.
- Plans to recalculate at this time.

In 2019, Mr. Teodoro said Austin Water in Austin, Texas delivered a report that included the metrics of AR20 less than or equal to 5 percent. Even as rates raised they made sure they stayed at 5 percent. In Taunton Valley, they built measures of affordability into a 1.6 Billion dollar supply project. Next discussed were the Pillars

of Affordability. Mr. Teodoro explained the Pillars of Affordability; noting these were a Statement of Strategic Challenge. He said there were five pillars:

1. **Quality:** To insure affordability, water and sewer systems have to be maintained and modern.
2. **Efficiency:** If money can be saved on labor and utilities, that cost can pass savings on to customers.
3. **Rate Design:** Uniform rate (neutral) /Volume
4. **Income-Qualified Assistance:**
 - Common Programs:
 - Discounts (Including income based rates
 - Lifeline Rates
 - Emergency Relief
 - Debt Forgiveness

- Common Problems:
- Administrative Cost
- Administrative Burden
- Low Participation
- Poor Subsidizing Poor
5. **Manage Shutoffs:** Shutoffs represent failure for both the customer and the utility. Options could be payment plans, extending the due date, and forgiving late fees. The debt could be shifted to county tax, and resolve the shut offs.

Mr. Coffin asked if this would cause a change to the base fee and how that would factor in with affordability rates. Mr. Teodoro replied there could be a fixed charge by building an affordable allowance, which could include the first 3000 gallons. It was noted higher fixed charges were not good for affordability. Mr. Coffin questioned whether Advance Metering Infrastructure (AMI) could help with affordability. Mr. Teodoro stated that he was not aware of any issues and felt it could only be a good thing. AMI could help find issues before they can become costly on bills. Mr. Switzer asked about rates compared to other utilities. Mr. Teodoro cautioned about benchmark affordability. He said we need to look at our own community. Mr. Coffin stated this would be a multi-step process and suggested more data be compiled for the next meeting. Ms. Talbert requested Mr. Teodoro to forward a copy of his presentation for reference.

VII. FINANCIAL REPORTS as available

a) Monthly Financial Reports

Ms. Talbert provided an overview of the Monthly Financial Reports. She explained expenses on the electric side were up due to January's salaries and wage increases along with materials, supplies, and Power Purchase. Rates were also higher due to the week of cold weather in January. She noted operating revenues for electric was currently at 31.40 percent and operating expenses were currently at 27.84 percent.

On the water side, overall revenues were up due to the base fee increase that took effect November 1, 2023. Expenses were up, again, this was due to salaries and wages increases. Water operating revenues were currently at 29.45 percent and operating expenses were currently at 25.98 percent.

Attachments: [Electric Statements-January 2024](#)
[Water Statements-January 2024](#)
[Summary Change in Billed usage for Water and Electric](#)

VIII. DIRECTOR'S REPORTS

a) Annual NERC Compliance Report

Mr. Jeff Liesmann, NERC O&P Compliance Officer, explained the Annual NERC Compliance Report. He explained NERC had the authority to create regulations for safe and reliable generation transmission, and distribution of electric energy in North America. To allow for a more efficient and streamlined operation, NERC delegated compliance verification tasks to nine Regional Reliability Organizations (RROs). Since June 2007, Columbia Water and Light Department (CWLD) had undergone several audits to ensure compliance outline in the NERC Standards. He noted since the last advisory board update CWLD O&P did not have any open items. CWLD had completed all 2023 NERC required annual System Operator training. There was one new standard effecting City of Columbia for 2022; NERC Standard PRC-002-4 with an implementation date of April 1, 2024.

Ms. Smith discussed the CIP Compliance and Monitoring Program. She noted since the last Advisory Board Update: CWLD had no open items at this time, as well as no open enforcement actions. The SERC audit for 2022 was completed successfully without any concerns. CIP Requirements subject to future enforcements. *CIP-003-9-Security Management Controls*, which will go into effect April 1, 2026. She advised NERC had begun forming a drafting committee to work on a NEW CIP Standard 015 - Internal Network Monitoring. She explained this standard would address network traffic that happened within the Electronic Access Perimeter of the Control Centers.

Attachments: [2024 Water and Light Advisory Board NERC Compliance Report](#)

b) Introduce FY 2025 Water and Electric CIP

Ms. Talbert advised this was an introduction only with more detail at the April meeting. She noted the breakout was done by Fiscal year, (FY). She asked the board to review the information for further discussion at the April meeting. Mr. Coffin requested the new projects be highlighted.

Attachments: [Electric - Proposed FY 2025 CIP](#)
[Electric - FY 2025 CIP Projects with changes between FY 2024 budget and FY 2025 budget](#)
[Water - Proposed FY 2025 CIP](#)
[Water - FY 2025 CIP Projects with changes between FY 2024 budget and FY 2025 budget](#)
[Water and Electric CIP balances 12-31-23](#)

c) Introduce Proposed Energy Efficiency (EE) Program Revisions.

Ms. Talbert advised this too was an introduction only as well with more information coming at the April meeting. She asked the board to review the information to provide feedback as staff planned to present the information to Council for their feedback as well.

Attachments: [2024 USD Program Revamp WLAB Summary](#)

d) Council Item Updates

Ms. Talbert noted at the February 5, 2024 Council meeting there were two bills and one resolution presented. At the February 19, 2024 Council meeting there were two scheduled public comments presented. One Council Bill was approved, two Council Bills introduced, and one Resolution approved. At the March 1, 2024 Council meeting, two Council Bills, and two Resolutions were approved.

Attachments: [Council Item Updates - February 2024](#)

IX. CHAIRMAN'S REPORTS

a) Review Renewable Ordinance

Mr. Coffin advised the board needed to do their due diligence to present the proper recommendations regarding the renewable energy plan. He asked the board to review the information for further discussion. Next, the board discussed the renewable energy ordinance recommendations. Mr. Coffin advised this was a draft only. After a brief discussion, Mr. Switzer felt the need to find a way to prevent rate increases. Mr. Coffin noted this could be a long discussion and felt the board needed to allow more time on the agenda to continue.

Attachments: [2023 Renewable Energy Plan FINAL](#)
[City Renewable Energy Ordinance](#)
[Staff Challenges & Recommendation with Renewable Ordinance](#)
[WLAB - Renewable Ordinance Review](#)
[WLAB Renewable Ordinance Recommendations](#)

b) Rolling Calendar

Added to the Rolling calendar for April was the discussion regarding the proposed EE programs as well as the Water Rate Affordability Financial Metrics.

Attachments: [WL Rolling Agenda March](#)

X. PUBLIC EMAIL COMMENTS

The board noted the information from MISO, submitted by Mr. Windsor. Mr. Coffin agreed there were challenges. The next information was submitted by Ms. Amparan. Mr. Coffin asked if she would be able to provide a presentation. Ms. Amapran replied she could. Ms. Talbert requested any information that required uploading to be submitted beforehand.

Attachments: [WLABPublic - MISO Warns of Immediate and Serious Challenges Regarding Reliability - Windsor 2-26-24 #2](#)
[WLABPublic - MISO Warns of Immediate and Serious Challenges Regarding Reliability - Windsor 2-26-24](#)
[WLABPublic - NEW Sierra Club Input on Renewable Energy Ordinance - Amparan 2-13-14](#)

XI. GENERAL COMMENTS BY PUBLIC, MEMBERS AND STAFF

Mr. Parker noted everyone was thinking in linear projections. He said the climate issue was increasing at a super high rate. He said from 2000 to 2024, the temperature increased 0.545 percent which was up over half what it was from the 1900s. He stated we were exceeding greenhouse gases.

XII. NEXT MEETING DATE

April 17, 2024

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 11:25 a.m. on a motion by Mr. Tom Jensen with a second by Mr. David Switzer. Motion passed unanimously.

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

All media inquires should be submitted to Matt Nestor at Matthew.Nestor@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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