

CITY OF BENTON UTILITY COMMISSIONERS MEETING
TUESDAY, JANUARY 2, 2024, 6:00 P.M.,
ELECTRIC UTILITY BUILDING
1827 DALE AVENUE

The City of Benton Utility Commissioners met in regular session Tuesday, January 2, 2024, at the Electric Utility Building, 1827 Dale Avenue.

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Commission Chairman Johnston.

The invocation was given by Commission Member Ponder.

Commission Member Stott led the Pledge of Allegiance.

When the roll was called, 4 Commissioners were present:

Brad Johnston, Commission Chairman
Gary Ferrell, Commission Member
Skylyr Stott, Commission Member
Jerry Ponder, Commission Member

A quorum was declared with 4 members present.

Commission Chairman Johnston asked if everyone had read the regular meeting minutes of December 4th and if so, is there a motion. Commission Member Ferrell made a motion to accept the minutes as presented and be filed for future reference. The motion was seconded by Commission Member Ponder. Commission Chairman Johnston called for a voice vote. All commission members present voted in the affirmative. The minutes were approved with 3 affirmative votes.

Departmental Reports

A. Safety/Personnel Update

Mrs. Terrie Sossamon, HR, gave an update on employee numbers, workers' comp claims, safety classes and new employees as well as a summary of 2023.

B. November Financials

Mr. Jimmy Garrett, CFO, went through the financials for November. Revenues were over expenditures by \$610,416. He then went through the cash balances, franchise fees, revenues versus expenditures by department and bad debts. He talked about the construction work in progress and the recent reimbursements received from the State for the Highway 5 Project as well as the outstanding reimbursement amounts. Commission

Member Ferrell made a motion to approve the November financials as presented. Commission Member Stott seconded the motion. Commission Chairman Johnston called for a voice vote. All commission members present voted in the affirmative. The November financials were approved with three affirmative votes.

C. 2023 Project Updates

The electric, water and wastewater department heads each presented a PowerPoint on the projects completed in their departments in 2023 as well as a cost for each.

Old Business

A. Saline Regional Public Water Authority (SRPWA) Update

Mr. Todd Pedersen, GM updated the commission on the status of the contracts with SRPWA regarding the taking of water from the Ouachita River. They are still working out the agreements and will bring back more information as he gets it. There is a meeting on Thursday, January 4th to discuss the proposed contract that Benton Utilities submitted but he is not going to attend to give them the ability to speak freely regarding the proposal. Alderman Knight said that he planned to attend.

New Business

A. Waving of Bids for AMI Base Station

Mr. Pedersen explained the need for a new AMI Base Station. There are three towers used by Sensus to read our water and electric meters. The base station currently on the Congo Tower is getting older and starting to show signs of going out but there is one on the Frendall Tower which is only about ½ mile away. We would like to purchase a new one and install it on the Hurricane Lake Water Tower which will help us read a little bit further away since we are currently having some communications issues as the city grows. He said it is not a lot of money but we still have to waive bids. Commission Member Ferrell asked if Core and Main were the sole provider and Mr. Pedersen said they were for the Sensus meters. Commission Member Ponder made a motion to authorize staff to send an ordinance to City Council to waive bidding on a new AMI Base Station. Commission Member Stott seconded the motion. Commission Chairman Johnston called for a voice vote. All commission members present voted in the affirmative. The motion was approved with three affirmative votes.

B. ADEQ Corrective Action Plan

Mr. Greg Becker, Wastewater Treatment Plant Manager told the commission that the Division of Environmental Quality is requesting a Corrective Action Plan for the sanitary sewer overflows two manholes at the wastewater treatment plant. This plan has to be submitted by January 19, 2024, by a certified Professional Engineer. He is currently working with McClelland Engineers to have this completed by the due date and would like the approval to submit the plan once completed. Commission Member Ponder made a motion to allow the staff to move forward and submit the corrective action plan once completed. Commission Member Stott seconded the motion. Commission Chairman Johnston called for a voice vote. All commission members present voted in the affirmative. The motion was approved with three affirmative votes.

C. Approval of Bids for Jet Vac Truck for Water/Wastewater Construction

Mr. Dewayne Hood, Water/Wastewater Construction Manager explained the need for the new Jet Vac Truck. It is a smaller truck than the one the wastewater construction department currently uses and would be able to be used in tighter places. He said the water department would probably see more use but both departments can utilize it and the cost would be split between both departments. It is currently in the 2024 budget. The other unit needs to have some work done to it but without a back up they can't afford to lose it to make repairs. Commission Member Ponder made a motion to approve the staff's recommendation and purchase the truck from the 2024 budget with the cost equally divided between the water and wastewater construction departments. Commission Member Stott seconded the motion. Commission Chairman Johnston called for a voice vote. All commission members present voted in the affirmative. The motion was approved with three affirmative votes.

D. Mr. Pederson said he had one other item. It is just something to think about as they move forward. It is regarding the cold weather/hot weather policy. The current policy states that if the temperature is 32° Fahrenheit or below as reported by the North Little Rock Branch of the National Weather Service utilities will not be disconnected. But if the temperature is above 32° Fahrenheit it will be disconnected regardless of the project temperature that night. His thought was if the temperature is going to drop to below 32° at night the utilities should stay on. There is nothing in the current rules and regulations about summer heat temperatures. He said he thinks both of these need to be looked at.

Announcements

Commission Chairman Johnston stated the next regular meeting date would be Monday, February 5th at 6:00 p.m.

Commission Member Ferrell said Mr. Pedersen had asked for a work session to discuss energy concerns. A decision was made to have a work session on January 22nd at 5 p.m. if all commissioners could attend.

Commission Member Ferrell made a motion to adjourn with a second by Commission Member Ponder. Commission Chairman Johnston called for a voice vote. All commission members present voted in the affirmative. The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 p.m.



Brad Johnston, Commission Chairman



Madeline Wilson, Recording Secretary