



BOARD OF WATER COMMISSIONERS - MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, June 16, 2021

Via teleconference

The regular meeting of the Medford Water Commission was called to order at 12:14 p.m. on the above date via teleconference with the following commissioners, staff, and guests present:

Chair Jason Anderson; Commissioners Daniel Bunn, John Dailey, Michael Smith, and Bob Strosser

General Manager Brad Taylor; Executive Administrative Coordinator Yvette Finstad; Finance & Administration Services Director Tessa DeLine; Information Technology Manager Kris Stitt; Human Resources Manager Tanya Haakinson; Water Meter & Controls Supervisor Ken Johnson; Water Treatment & Quality Director Ben Klayman; Engineering Supervisor Brian Runyen

Guest(s): Attorney Mark Bartholomew; Medford Council Alternate Liaison Kevin Stine; City of Central Point Councilor Tanea West Browning

2. Comments from the Audience

None.

3. Public Hearings

- 3.1 Consider Resolution No. 1774, A RESOLUTION Prescribing and Establishing Rates for the Use and Sale of Water from the Municipal Water System of the City of Medford, Oregon, to the Water District Customer Group, Repealing All Prior Rates in Conflict Herewith and Shall Become Effective Retroactive to March 1, 2021, and Thereafter

Public hearing opened; no one spoke. Public hearing closed.

Motion: Approve Resolution No. 1774.

Moved by: Mr. Dailey Seconded by: Mr. Strosser

Commissioner Dailey asked for confirmation that Water Rights were 17% of their overall rates; DeLine affirmed the amount and noted that they will be credited the amount from billings as of today back to March 1, 2021. Funds were collected in the former Future Water Rights Development Fund, which is used for purchase of water rights at Lost Creek. Taylor added that when that surcharge was developed, it had a target balance amount based on their projected demand usage. The target has been reached and we do not need to continue collecting money. Obtaining the water right(s) is part of the water rights strategy that is ongoing.

Roll Call: Commissioners Anderson, Bunn, Dailey, Smith, and Strosser voting yes.

Motion carried and so ordered.

4. Consent Calendar

- 4.1 Approval or Correction of the Minutes of the Last Regular Meeting of June 2, 2021

- 4.2 Quarterly Letter to Mayor and Council

The Chair put forth the question on approval of the Consent Calendar.

The Consent Calendar was approved by general consent.

5. Items Removed from Consent Calendar

None.

6. Review of Vouchers

Commissioner Dailey inquired about a payment of \$42,000 to Dan Steve Holdings for oversizing on the horse arena; DeLine responded that this is for oversizing of a water line on the ESHL (was an 8" line, we required a 12" line). Commissioner Dailey remarked that the invoice was dated back in April; since overhead is tight for many small businesses, we should not delay payments on invoices. Invoices are paid when they are received, noted DeLine, so there may have been a delay in our receipt of the invoice.

7. Management Reports

In a change to the Management Reports as a result of feedback, select staff will present information in a topic-focused fashion.

- Water Treatment/Quality Director Ben Klayman – On June 8 gave a presentation to the Providence Hospital Safety Committee providing an update on MWC water quality. He covered the impacts that COVID has/has not had on water, and risks of water stagnation. Feedback was positive.
- Finance & Administration Services Director Tessa DeLine – The group involved in this (which includes Commissioner Smith) met to discuss arrangements last week for those having difficulty paying bills. Will be offered to delinquent customers as a result of nonpayment of water service due to impact of Covid-19. Shut offs are expected to resume once payment arrangements are completely setup and tested. A factor to consider is the dollar threshold for shut off for nonpayment of water service. Delinquent customers to be notified via letter/email offering payment arrangements.
 - Residential Customers – Single Family Residential/Multi Family Residential – Maximum term of 6 months for balances over \$300, 3 months for balances under \$300. 10% of past due amount must be paid at the time arrangement is set up; remaining balance split between 6 (or 3) payments, depending on the original balance. Payments will include the arrangement amount PLUS the current month's charge to be considered "current".
 - Commercial and Industrial Customers – Maximum term of 6 months for balances over \$500, 3 months for balances under \$500. 20% of past due amount must be paid at the time arrangement is set up; remaining balance split between 6 (or 3) payments, depending on the original balance. Payments will include the arrangement amount PLUS the current months' charge to be considered "current".
 - Terms will be included in the arrangement letter sent to the customer: Failure to keep arrangements will make the account ineligible for additional payment arrangements on this balance, and their account will be eligible for disconnect with all past due balances due immediately. Arrangements WILL NOT be printed on the bill. If a payment is returned (NSF, Stop Payment etc.), the account will be added to the following week's collection list without further notice. While payment arrangements are in good standing, urgent, shut off notices and late fees will be suppressed. Landlords that enter a payment arrangement for one of their rental properties MUST pay off any balance due prior to a tenant signing up for service.
 - Options for when an arrangement is broken: all balances will be considered past due, and the account will be added to the following week's collection list, or, the account gets put back on the cycle of collection notices, taking an additional 3-4 weeks until landing on the weekly collection list. This would need to be addressed on the arrangement agreement letter as part of full disclosure and transparency.

DeLine asked for direction from the Board when a customer breaks an arrangement. Commissioner Smith asked what the impacts to staff would be if they went through the process again and eventually land on the collection list again. DeLine confirmed that there are certainly extra steps; they have not decided whether they will be making calls in all of these cases. Thousands of late notices have been suppressed over hundreds of accounts, but the liability from these is relatively small. Commissioner Dailey stated that the bill payment assistance grants can help as well.

If the average residential bill is a little over \$30 per month, Commissioner Bunn observed that it may not be feasible to these people to pay an extra \$100 a month on top of that. Commissioner Anderson suggested giving the six months no matter the balance, and Commissioner Bunn added that then they could go back on the collection list. Three or four weeks is not imperative. The Board agreed that this would give customers more time to make it up, and late fees can be waived if they go back into the cycle; Commissioner Strosser noted that this shows good faith effort on our part and that we are concerned about recovery rather than assessing charges.

- Human Resources Manager Tanya Haakinson – Outsourcing payroll with NetChex; Finance, IT, and HR working on this project, gathering data/submitting info for processing. Highlights include employees can time in/out on their phone, view and submit vacation/sick requests, print stubs and W2s (even after no longer employed), and supervisors can approve time and leave requests via phone. A web-based format is available as well. This is expected to go live in Mid-August.

Commissioner Anderson asked if this would free up time for staff to do other projects. Currently 1.5 employees are work on it, and can be put to use elsewhere. Since the person originally doing Payroll left, those duties and responsibilities have been done by a person with other duties and responsibilities.

- General Manager Brad Taylor – The Board meeting July 7 will be in person at City Hall Council Chambers; we are also working to have meeting available through Zoom. A Study Session topic has not been determined yet.

8. Propositions and Remarks from the Commissioners

None.

9. Adjourn

There being no further business, this Commission meeting adjourned at 12:45 p.m. The proceedings of the Medford Water Commission meeting were recorded and are on file along with the complete agenda of this meeting.

Yvette Finstad
Assistant Clerk of the Commission