



**BOARD OF WATER COMMISSIONERS  
MEETING MINUTES**

**Wednesday, November 15, 2023**

Medford Police Department Prescott Room  
219 S. Ivy Street, Medford, Oregon 97501

The regular meeting of the Medford Water Commission was called to order at 12:18 p.m. on the above date at the Medford Police Department Prescott Room, with the following commissioners, staff, and guests present:

Chair Michael Smith; Commissioners Jason Anderson, John Dailey, Bob Strosser and David Wright.

General Manager Brad Taylor, Executive Administrative Assistant Amber Furu, HR Manager Tanya Haakinson, Engineering Manager Brian Runyen, Information Technology Manager Kris Stitt, Water Operations Manager Dan Perkins, Water Resources & Customer Service Manager Julie Smitherman, Senior Accountant Jamie Loock

Guest(s): Attorney Mark Bartholomew, City of Central Point City Manager Chris Clayton, Medford City Council Liaison Nick Card, Anna Roeder\*, Beau Belikoff, Ed Olson, Joe Kellerman (\*Via Zoom)

**3. Comments from the Audience**

City of Central Point City Manager Chris Clayton read and provided written comment regarding Medford Water Commission's efforts on future rate adjustments. His letter is attached in its entirety.

**4. Approval or Correction of the Minutes of the Last Regular Meeting of November 1, 2023**

***Motion: Approve the minutes of the last regular meeting as presented.***

***Moved by: Mr. Dailey***

***Seconded by: Mr. Anderson***

***Roll Call: Commissioner Anderson, Dailey, Strosser, Smith, and Wright voting yes.***

***Motion carried and so ordered.***

**5. Leadership Team Reports**

- Julie Smitherman, Water Resources & Customer Service Manager
  - Water Rate Comparison – Single family residential water rate comparison was last updated in September 2023. Each community sets rates based on their financial needs. Some have higher base rates and lower consumption rates; others have lower base rates and higher consumption rates. Some cities include a specific amount of consumption in the base rate and have tiers, and others use a flat rate.  
Commissioner Anderson inquired if there are other municipalities that have a special tier for summer rates like we do. Smitherman confirmed other communities do add a special rate tier during the summer months.
  - Spill Response – Medford Water and members of the Rogue River Watershed Council (RRWC) and Rogue Valley Council of Governments (RVCOG) attended a spill response drill hosted by Eugene Water and Electric Board (EWEB) on October 11th in Eugene. Several local agencies, water utilities, and cities attended including DEQ and the U.S. Forest Service. Working with the Jackson Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC), RRWC, RVCOG and RDWP, Medford Water applied for the Hazardous Materials Emergency Planning (HMEP) grant and the grant request was approved for \$51,800 through the Oregon Office of State Fire Marshal with funding going through 2024. Medford Water and RRWC are to supervise the project and Medford Water will manage the grant. We will work closely with LEPC, City of Medford Emergency Manager, County Emergency Manager, Fire Dist. 3, and Medford Fire. This will include planning, training (On-Scene Incident Command), and exercises (live drills) for response to spills from bridges and roads near the Rogue River and tributaries. Medford Water's Watershed team is working closely with our local partners to create a similar model for the Rogue Valley.

- Calendar Contest – What Does Water Mean to Me, & Why Is It Important to Conserve?  
This year our second annual calendar contest included 4<sup>th</sup> graders from Medford & White City schools. The Water Efficiency team did 16 presentations at 9 schools for 24 classes. We received 150 submissions (deadline Oct. 31st) and will be voting through an online process this year. Minute Man Printing will be printing the calendars and Jackson Creek Pizza is donating pizza to the winner.
  - Human Resources Manager Tanya Haakinson
    - Recruitment Update
      - Positions filled - Brian Burt started November 1 as Utility Person I, Steven Phillips started November 6 as Customer Service Tech I, Jack Camp starts November 27 as Senior Engineer, and Beau Belikoff starts November 29 as Finance Manager.
      - Recent Promotions - Juston Menteer to System Development Engineering Technician, Josh Brown to Engineering Tech II, Tyler Fulcher to Intermediate Accountant, Amber Dell to Payroll Technician, and Arlo Todd to Watershed Coordinator.
      - We continue to seek candidates for the Watershed & Water Quality Specialist (first review on 11/21/2023) and Staff Engineer positions.
    - Brad Taylor, General Manager
      - Upcoming Board Schedule – December 6 - JC/MW Bulk Water Sales Update and Intermediate Water User Update, December 20 - Annual Audit.
6. **EXECUTIVE SESSION pursuant to ORS 192.660(2)(h) - To consult with counsel concerning the legal rights and duties of a public body with regard to current litigation or litigation likely to be filed.**

The Board adjourned to executive session at 12:47 p.m.

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The Board reconvened at 1:37 p.m.

7. **Propositions and Remarks from the Commissioners**  
None.

8. **Adjourn**

There being no further business, this meeting adjourned at 1:39 p.m. The proceedings were recorded and are on file along with the complete agenda of this meeting.



Amber Furu  
Assistant Clerk of the Commission



November 15, 2023

Medford Water Commission Board  
200 S Ivy St, #177  
Medford, OR 97501

**RE: 2023 Cost of Service Analysis & Future Rate Public Comments**

Dear Medford Water Commission,

Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and members of the Medford Water Commission Board.

I am Chris Clayton, City Manager of Central Point, and although my comments today are from Central Point's perspective, similar sentiments are echoed among the group of partner cities.

Firstly, I would like to express our appreciation for the Commission's dedication to the rate methodology we collectively agreed upon. This consistent adherence to our established standards is commendable and has been crucial in maintaining a harmonious and effective partnership.

We also want to acknowledge the Commission's efforts in striking a delicate balance with their rate adjustments. Your approach has been instrumental in managing the political and policy pressures each municipality faces. I believe there is widespread gratitude among the regional partners for this balance, ensuring the rates remain palatable to our constituents.

This year's proposed rate adjustment, we believe, is necessary, reasonable, and, most importantly, it continues to safeguard our infrastructure. This protection is vital for the continued delivery of high-quality water services well into the future.

Looking ahead, we are entering a new era of capital investment for the Medford Water Commission. This significant financial commitment will inevitably influence regional rates. However, it's important to note that the partner cities, including Central Point, advocated for this debt financing-based approach. We understood that a "pay as you go" financial strategy for such substantial capital investments would have led to an immediate and dramatic rate increase beyond what most would deem reasonable.

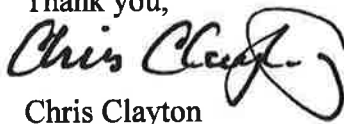
Medford Water has shown commendable foresight and financial planning for their significant capital program. However, we, the Partner Cities, may not have sufficiently assessed how this program will affect our future water rates. The financial implications will become evident only once the improvements are in place, which could be 2-4 years from today. Preliminary analyses

hint at potentially major rate impacts. Therefore, we seek Medford Water's assistance in understanding the long-term effects of your capital program on the water rates for Partner Cities.

As these capital investments begin to affect rates in the upcoming years, we are prepared for discussions on various aspects of rate methodology that have previously remained unnecessary. These conversations are now more relevant than ever. Moreover, the challenge of balancing future rate adjustments, future contributions from new developments, and future education of our customers on the benefits of responsible governance is a task we should all prepare to undertake.

In closing, I thank you for this opportunity to speak and for your continued partnership. We look forward to being a part of the solution and navigating these upcoming challenges and opportunities together.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Clayton". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping flourish at the end.

Chris Clayton  
City Manager