

**February 9, 2026**

**UTILITIES COMMITTEE**

**8:30 a.m.**

Chairperson Larry Grisen called the meeting to order with the following members present: Randy Brommer and David Earney via Zoom.

Also present: Mayor Richard Champeny, Foreman Joe Wick, Calvin Loewenhagen, Bernie Bartz, and Clerk-Treasurer Sharaya Reed.

Citizens present: Brad Kremer and Orland Hoksch.

Agenda Item 3: Citizen comments.

None.

Agenda Item 4: Auditor presentation on Fire service charge to users.

Eric Davidson from Bauman Associates gave a presentation on ways to alleviate the City general fund which is being levy funded, from taking on the full amount of the Fire protection service charge at \$48.174.

Davidson gave some background on the City's history with dealing with user charges. The last time the City did a full conventional rate case was 2017. The Public Service Commission (PSC) manages what we can do with our water rates. There is a fixed charge based on meter size and volume charge.

Since 2012 the City has not charged taxpayers for the fire charge.

The PSC is currently suggesting a 6.7 rate on return and provide 6% increases on operation of maintenance.

If the utility will have a major water project that will not be completed in 2026, but completed in 2027, could apply for a two-step rate application.

We could switch some or all to be charged to users on their bills and this would not be a requirement to reduce the tax levy.

If we looked at doing a property tax equivalent it would be calculated using mill rates and the value of the water plant.

When going over the five year average of PSC reports it calculated a projected 50% increase in rates from 2024 to get to where we should be. Costs should be spread with all users regardless of water/sewer hookups.

Davidson let the committee know that most communities he works with do not waive the property tax equivalent. Most will let it calculate and that will be revenue to the general fund and it will be an expense to the utility.

Earney asked if there have been situations where they did a 50% increase and how it was received by the public? Davidson responded with a community not too far from us doing a 66% rate increase. It was not received well.

The PSC has the authority to make us adjust our rates, but the sewer is not regulated. Davidson said that both our utilities should be self-supported.

Agenda Item 5a: i. Brad Kremer concerns on snow removal billing

Brad Kremer received a bill in the mail for snow removal, and he didn't get one last year, so just wondering what has changed. The bill stands as it is to be paid, but discussion on moving forward with procedures will be put on next month's meeting.

Discussion was held on the issue of snow removal and how it is billed out. Kremer said he won't push the snow out to be scooped up anymore, he will keep it in his lot.

Agenda Item 5a: ii. Overtime used so far.

Foreman Wick told the committee he feels this is under control. He watches the time.

Agenda Item 5a: iii. County Road E plowing by Buffalo County.

This will now be done first.

Agenda Item 5b: Reminder that chipseal bids are due March 6

Orland Hoksch asked the committee how the roads get picked for fixing. Grisen let him that the committee goes over the roads that needs fixing in a list. Foreman Wick said a road rating is done and the committee works on a list.

Agenda Item 5c: Equipment/tool inventory draft from (Michaela) review

Michaela presented what she and Foreman Wick have been working on so far. She is working with an Excel spreadsheet to keep things in order.

Agenda Item 6a: Generator purchase update.

This is still in the process. The credit application has been sent in.

Agenda Item 6b: Update on John Shiefel catch basin.

Foreman Wick let the committee know that he hopes to revisit this this week.

Agenda Item 6c: Update Report on Alma's WPDES permit schedule.

This is due by April 1<sup>st</sup>.

Agenda Item 6d: Chemical building construction update.

Continuing to work with Davy on this.

Agenda Item 7a: Waterlines freezing concerns.

Certain places are running their water to prevent freezing. There will be an adjustment on their bill.

Agenda Item 7b: Second street testing updates.

Bernie is still doing his monthly tests. Grisen asked if we were keeping an eye on the courthouse water temperature. Foreman Wick said it has been about the same. Average temperature is about 56 degrees.

Cal Loewenhagen presented a report from 2012 from Ayres Associates on a list of where water main valves should be added in because it is so far between the main valves. It is supposed to not be over 800 feet and some are closer to a mile.

Earney wants to see if there any avenues of revenue assistance whether grants are even available or not.

Earney wanted to know where we would start to know the age of some of these systems.

Foreman Wick said for the 5 year plan for Hwy 35 that we need to start looking into a new engineer to develop definitive plans and cost for this plan. Because the project cannot begin until the grants and engineer are in place.

Agenda Item 8: Sidewalks/Stairs/Retaining Walls.

Sidewalk shoveling has been doing good. Whomever doesn't clear their own gets done by the City and then billed.

Agenda Item 9: Citizen comments on non-posted agenda items.

None.

Next meeting will be March 9, 2026 at 8:30 a.m.

Special Meeting set for March 4, 2026 at 9am.

Motion by Earney seconded by Brommer to adjourn. All members voting yes.