



**CITY OF RIVER FALLS WISCONSIN
UTILITY ADVISORY BOARD
VIRTUAL WORKSHOP REGARDING RFMU UPDATES
August 17, 2020**

Utility Advisory Board Present: Patrick Richter, Scott Morrissette, Kevin Swanson, Tim Thum, Mark Spafford and Kellen Wells-Mangold

Utility Advisory Board Absent: Robert Lillo

Staff Present: Utility Director Kevin Westhuis; Utility Administrative Assistant Lanae Nelson; Electric Operations Superintendent Wayne Siverling; Wastewater/Water Superintendent Ron Groth; Conservation & Efficiency Coordinator Mike Noreen; Electric Meter Technician/Hydroelectric Operator Brian Hatch; Finance Director/Controller Sarah Karlsson; Assistant City Administrator Jason Stroud; Community Development Director Amy Peterson; IT Tech Assistant Jon Smits and City Engineer Crystal Raleigh

The meeting was called to order by Utility Advisory Board Vice Chair Patrick Richter at 6:30 p.m.

TRC Senior Consultant Lesley Brotkowski gave an update on the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) Hydroelectric Relicensing update. She went over the FERC Schedule Review, USACE Planning Assistance for States (PAS) program involvement, study overview, study updates, budget updates, and the overview of the next steps.

The FERC study schedule is in its second season, running from May through October 2020. The next step in the process for the licensees and stakeholders will be updated study reports, meetings and stakeholder comments which will run from January – May 2021.

Brotkowski and the board reviewed the study overview on the following studies:

- Hydrologic and Hydraulic Evaluation
- Water Quality
- Lake George Shoreline Habitat Assessment
- Aquatic Invasive Species Survey
- Mussel Survey
- Wetland, Riparian, and Terrestrial Resources Survey
- Riverine Habitat Evaluation below Powell Falls
- Recreation (Recreation Facility Inventory and Recreation Use Assessment)
- Cultural Resources (Architectural Resources Survey and Archaeology Resources Survey)
- Decommissioning Plan
- Sediment Study

Brotkowski and the board had discussion on the study budget differences for 2019 and 2020. The 2019 studies were \$5,850 under budget. The 2020 studies are higher due to the PAS program than the Revised Study Plan (RSP) estimates. There was a newly required FIREC study which added \$40,000 and the PAS program contribution to the studies is higher than estimated. The current PAS program study contribution

estimate for the studies was \$170,550 with USACE Administrative costs of \$39,450 for a total contract value of \$210,000.

Wells-Mangold, Swanson, Morrisette, Westhuis and Brotkowski discussed the possible need for a bond for the dam removal and an increase to the rate payers at the subsequent removal of the dam.

Electric Meter Technician/Hydroelectric Operator Brian Hatch gave an update on the dam inspection report on the June 29, 2020, flood. He gave details on the impact on the with the water levels, flooding in the old Power Plant, Junction Falls and Powell Falls. The height of the flood was seven feet above the crest of the Powell Falls dam.

Electric Operations Superintendent Wayne Siverling reviewed the project updates on the South Fork and University of Wisconsin – River Falls (UWRF) Substations. At the South Fork Substation, the old transformer was removed along with removing its radiators and draining out the tanker's oil. There was installation of new low voltage breakers, new feeder cables and the new transformer was brought in and was installed by the second largest crane in Wisconsin. The UWRF substation had an installation of a new vista switch.

Utility Director Kevin Westhuis gave an update Electric Rate Implementation update. A new published Public Service Commission (PSC) rate adjustment has been requested and directed to RFMU. This rate increase is the second increase in RFMU's published rates in 20 years with, the last increase in 2008. Twelve years ago, the rate adjustment was increased by 4%. This current rate adjustment is a 6.94% overall increase, this increase does vary by rate class.

Wastewater/Water Superintendent Ron Groth gave an update on the Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) construction update. Construction began on the demolition of the north building on the east ditch at the WWTP. The grit classifier, which removes sand and grit out of the water was moved to the headworks building. The WWTP operators cleaned out the 50 years of debris in the intake of the east ditch. The new air delivery blower system was installed, and the old rotor was removed. The new pipe bridge was installed to run pipes from the blowers to the new diffusers (the diffusers are an aeration system). Groth also reviewed the comparison of the new screener drum with the previous one of the improvements and safety of it.

Groth reviewing the next steps of the construction will be the installation of the new screen, stainless piping between blowers and diffusers and the mixer in the ditch. The WWTP team will operate a new screen for two weeks before starting the first ditch. Once the first ditch is running, the second ditch will be drained, and the construction will begin with the goal of the second ditch to be operation by the end of November 2020.

Conservation and Efficiency Coordinator Mike Noreen gave an update on the Green Block tariff and Line Voltage Smart Thermostat program. The Renewable Energy Block program has approved changes from the WPPI Executive Committee and RFMU submitted a PSC rate filing in August 2020. The PSC plan changes will be implemented in the third quarter of 2020 and will reduce the City's annual investment. The City's seven facilities and streetlights run with renewable energy will have an annual savings with the annual cost going from \$21,000 to \$10,000. The cost to power all the city and utility infrastructure with renewable energy is estimated to be less than \$15,000 annually. The cost for blocks will be revamped to have a discount in pricing. Current price structure is a threshold for discount pricing is 100 blocks and the future program will be 20 blocks. Current cost per block in purchased quantities less than 20 is \$3 per block and it would change to \$2 per block. Current cost per block in purchased qualities greater than 20 is \$2 per block and will be changed to \$1 per block.

Noreen gave details on the Smart thermostat for electric baseboard heat rebate program for RFMU customers. They can receive a Mysa Smart Thermostat for electric baseboard heaters for \$25 per unit of a savings of \$114 until August 20, 2020. This is a partnership program between WPPI Energy, Focus on Energy and the American Public Power Association's (APPA) Deed Program.

Westhuis gave an update on COVID-19 Utility Stats and revenue impacts from 2019 to 2020 with max on-peak demand (max city peak), total energy used, water pumpage, wastewater flow, and pounds of wastewater Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD).

Finance Director/Controller Sarah Karlsson gave a brief utility financial update on electric, water and sewer from 2019 to 2020. Karlsson reviewed reports in Northstar on all the utility services year over year, cash and investments of the past seven months, July year-to-date revenue and expense comparisons.

The workshop ended at 8:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lanae Nelson, Utility Administrative Assistant