



**CITY OF RIVER FALLS WISCONSIN  
UTILITY ADVISORY BOARD  
MEETING MINUTES  
September 21, 2020**

The meeting was called to order by Utility Advisory Board Member Mark Spafford at 6:30 p.m.

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

**Utility Advisory Board Absent:** Patrick Richter and Robert Lillo

**Staff Present:** Utility Director Kevin Westhuis; Utility Administrative Assistant Lanae Nelson; Electric Operations Superintendent Wayne Siverling; Wastewater/Water Superintendent Ron Groth; Assistant to the City Administrator Brandt Johnson and IT Tech Assistant Jon Smits

**Approval of Minutes:**

Regular Meeting Minutes: 02-17-2020

Workshop Minutes: 08-17-2020

**MS Morrissette/Swanson moved to approve minutes.** Board Member Spafford asked for discussion. **Wells-Mangold moved to amend the workshop minutes** to reflect discussion the UAB had regarding the possible need for a bond for the dam removal and an increase to the rate payers at the subsequent removal of the dam. **Thum seconded the amendment.** Spafford asked for discussion. Morrissette asked Nelson if there was a recording of the meeting and Nelson confirmed yes. Morrissette advised to amend the minutes to reflect the discussion about the potential for the bonding and the potential of ratepayer impact and Wells-Mangold agreed. **As there was no further discussion, Spafford asked for a vote on the amended minutes. The amended minutes passed unanimously. Spafford asked if there was further discussion on the minutes. As there was no further discussion, Spafford asked for a vote of the minutes. The minutes passed unanimously.**

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

Patricia LaRue, 489 Marcella Court addressed two comments regarding the discussion at the Aug. 17, 2020, UAB workshop. The first was whether renewable energy is required in the dam removal process per the resolution from the Kinni Corridor Committee plan. At the workshop, there was discussion that it wasn't required and there was some confusion over green and renewable energy. LaRue said the resolution states that the City needs to create new forms of renewable energy to replace the hydropower energy that will be lost due to the dam removal. LaRue provided an overview of this process. The proposal was to keep Junction Falls with no time limit and to remove Powell Falls in the future. The Kinni Corridor Committee was told there were organizations that would fund dam removal, but they required a removal date. The Kinni Corridor Committee wanted a consensus and agreed to put dam removal dates in exchange to have required renewable energy forms replacing the loss of the existing renewable energy in the resolution.

The second comment LaRue addressed was regarding the dam removal fact sheet in the Kinni Corridor Collaborative (KinniCC) Report from the September 21, 2020, UAB meeting. The third paragraph states the hydroelectric facility generated revenue around \$26,270 per year which is approximately \$525,400 over 20 years; that is the profit amount, not the revenues. The hydros made revenues of \$3,228,122. The revenue money paid for the reconstruction of the dams; the hydro facilities paid for themselves. They made over

\$3 million and the \$500,000 is a profit. None of this includes the over \$500,000 of the production of the dams paid into the general fund. It went from the ‘pocket of the Municipal into the City’. There is over a million in funds to go to the City from the running of the generation.

### **CONSENT AGENDA:**

Acknowledgement of the following minutes:

West Central Wisconsin Biosolids Facility Commission – 01-23-2020, 03-05-2020,  
05-21-2020 and 07-23-2020

POWERful Choices Committee Meeting – 02-13-2020

**MS Wells-Mangold/Morrisette moved to approve the minutes.** Swanson asked for discussion about the West Central Wisconsin Biosolids Facility Commission (WCWBFC) minutes and if RFMU is looking at the hauling contract expiration to haul to Ellsworth. Utility Director Westhuis said RFMU is working with Trilogy Consulting, LLC and they are reviewing options of signing the contract or to do this internally at the RFMU Wastewater Treatment Facility. **With no further discussion, Spafford asked for a vote. The motion passed unanimously.**

### **NEW BUSINESS:**

Ord. No. 2012-01, § 1, 1-24-2012; Ord. No. 2018-12, § 1, 8-28-2018, Election of Utility Advisory Board Officers

Westhuis introduced the annual election of the Utility Advisory Board Chair and Vice Chair offices.

**Spafford opened nominations for Board Chair. MS Morrisette/Wells-Mangold moved for the nomination of Richter.** Westhuis mentioned that Richter sent an email to Westhuis stating that he would be absent from this meeting but would accept all nominations that he was motioned for. **Spafford asked for a vote on the nomination. The nomination passed unanimously; Richter was elected as Board Chair.**

**Spafford opened nominations for Vice Chair. MS Morrisette/Thum moved for the nomination of Spafford. Spafford asked for further nominations; there were none. Spafford asked for a vote on the nomination. The nomination passed unanimously; Spafford was elected as Vice Chair.**

### **REPORTS:**

#### Kinni Corridor Collaborative (KinniCC) Report

Westhuis introduced KinniCC Fund-Raising Committee Chair John “Duke” Welter. Welter gave a report reviewing the assistance in raising funds and increasing public awareness for the Kinni Corridor Plan and the June 2020 storm flood damage with a possible drawdown.

Welter reviewed the long-term funds needed for the Powell Falls dam removal and restoration. The total rough estimated cost of dam removal is \$1,230,949 with engineering at \$264,895, permitting at \$20,000 and construction at \$946,054 with the cost average of +/- 50%.

The short-term goal of the KinniCC is working on raising \$65,000 toward the City’s share of \$493,000 for the pre-removal studies of the City and the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) costs. There was discussion about public education on other urban dam removals, grants and funding. The KinniCC has received a river planning grant from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) to help fund informational materials to present to the City, leaders and residents about other dam removals in Wisconsin. Another grant that was received was from the River Falls Community Foundation to help river users work together with recreational users and the KinniCC will be organizing meetings with these user groups.

Welter reviewed the Powell Falls dam removal project’s current schedule. The drawdown to be in the late summer of 2023 followed by demolition and corridor restoration. The major fundraising applying efforts for grants will happen in relationship to the drawdown timeframe. The focus on applying for grants will be between 2023-2024. Many of the grant programs are intended for projects to be done within the next

year. The deadlines for submitting grants will be late 2022 or early 2023. The time of this could change if there is an earlier drawdown which might allow work to be done.

Welter reviewed the fundraising opportunities the KinniCC is working on. An example of the funding process the KinniCC is undertaking is with the 2021-2023 Wisconsin State budget; that concludes June 30, 2023. The KinniCC would like to present a request from that budget to set aside funding for this project from the Knowles Nelson Stewardship funding. Other possible funding sources are agency grants, government budgets, the dam owner, foundations, businesses, Trout Unlimited (TU), individuals and civic groups. The KinniCC board and volunteers have been contacting funding sources and writing grants. There is an opportunity for a grant with the WDNR small dam removal program that provides \$50,000 to any qualifying dam that is thought to be removed. Another funding source opportunity would be Patagonia, Inc. as they have been a good supporter of grants for our dam removals and similar projects, but their grant program is temporarily suspended due to COVID-19. Patagonia, Inc. has requested the KinniCC to have a grant proposal ready this fall once they are available to consider grants again. There are other interested funding source groups the KinniCC has been in contact with in supporting the dam removal, but they are not interested in supporting the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) preparatory required studies before the dam removal. The KinniCC is preparing a WDNR River Planning grant request submission in November 2020 for support in the required FERC studies. The KinniCC intends to make a request this fall to Cabela's Bass Pro as they have been a significant supporter of conservation projects.

The KinniCC is looking at Winona Canoe, Inc. as a strong potential funding supporter of the project as the river is also a paddling site. The KinniCC has also talked about other possible sources of getting support from the State of Wisconsin and the City of River Fall Municipal Utilities as they are the dam owner. The USACE has already strongly supported the City in funding the preparatory studies and the KinniCC hopes their help will continue when the dam removal time comes. The KinniCC is hoping that Pierce County would be supportive in the funding process as it would help River Falls economic development and recreational opportunities on the Kinnickinnic River.

Another funding source is Trout Unlimited Kiap-TU-Wish Chapter, which covers Pierce, St. Croix and Polk counties. The Kiap-TU-Wish has been recognized as a strong chapter among the State's 21 TU chapters and in the country. Kiap-TU-Wish Chapter, the Wisconsin State Council and the Regional restoration group of TU of the driftless area restoration effort have asked for endorsement of the dam removal and all of them have endorsed the project. They are committed with financial support and volunteer time. They have asked the TU's national leadership council to make the dam removal project a part of the national conversation agenda and a priority of investment of the TU dollars and donors. In the past 20 years TU has supported larger dam removals in the country. Examples of TU's dam removal support is the opening up of 1,500 miles of the Penobscot River in Maine to help the migration of the anadromous fish, the Elwha River in the State of Washington's peninsula and the coming up dam removal of the Klamath River in Northern California and Southern Oregon. The dam removal in River Falls would be the first for TU in the Midwest to become a restoration priority.

There was discussion from the UAB. Morrissette asked if the KinniCC group's timeframe has been on track since the inception of the KinniCC to the implementation of their original plan. KinniCC President Judie Foster Babcock said that the group has developed an agile approach and had hoped to be further ahead but there is a setback due to COVID-19. The KinniCC is encouraged that there might be an earlier drawdown as that would change the group's timelines and have opportunities to raise funds earlier. Foster Babcock reviewed the group's progress on becoming an established group that formed a year ago, they continue to meet and continue to move forward with working on the plan. Morrissette said the KinniCC has made good progress and are in a positive direction in their plan. He expressed the urgency for fundraising with a timeframe and details on who will be paying for the dam removal. Welter reviewed that once the drawdown happens it will show the need for funding with the physical reminder of the needed progress to be made and the protective impact for the river on how it would be less likely to have another breach with a big rain event. By having the drawdown, it will show the State the need for providing stewardship funding in the budget. Foster Babcock reviewed once the drawdown timeframe is established it will aid in the requests for the several funding sources to happen. Having a recognized

partner in TU, who is with the dam removal process at all levels, helps to bring in other funding groups and the State as well. Foster Babcock reviewed the State requires a matching fund and they will commit as they see that the KinniCC has a matching public funding source in TU. The goal is not to have a bond for the ratepayers.

Spafford asked for further discussion. Wells-Mangold expressed the need for list of grant amounts or estimates of each funding source. He asked if the KinniCC could provide a list of the funding sources and their amounts they will be securing or at the very least an average of the amount that they have given in the past. Welter said some grants give average amounts and the KinniCC can get this. Some of the other funding sources the KinniCC is still working with and do not have the amounts yet. Welter went on to say one of the corporate supporters are ready to do an annual grant that comes in with a range between \$20,000-\$40,000 with an average of \$30,000. The KinniCC wants this corporate supporter funding source to support the preliminaries and then come through with a much bigger grant for the main project. Welter was unable to give specificity as this group is suspended temporarily, because of COVID-19. Once the KinniCC receives the numbers from these groups, they will be bringing this to the UAB. Wells-Mangold commented that there was not a range of primary planning for the grant opportunities besides the WDNR grant, and we need this to help with planning.

There was further discussion. Wells-Mangold reviewed questions on the KinniCC fact sheet that happened during public comments on the financials. Foster Babcock mentioned that Welter and Amanda Hanson drafted the revenue/net revenue. Wells-Mangold expressed the need for a source on this document and further details on the gross revenue versus the net revenue. Morrisette asked if this could be adjusted to compliance of Payment In Lieu Of Taxes (PILOT) as the new income doesn't reflect free flow of cash. Westhuis said he will work to get clarification of the numbers. Spafford asked Westhuis and Ayers Associates, Inc. Senior Project Manager Peter Haug if the \$1.7 million was on the high-end for the January 2017 estimate for the dam removal, what would those numbers be before 2020. Haug said it's a range of \$1.8 million, looking around \$2 million.

#### Powell Falls – FERC Dam Inspection Response Letter Discussion

Westhuis introduced TRC Senior Consultant Lesley Brotkowski and Haug to review the FERC Dam Inspection Responses Letter on a possible drawdown due to the June 2020 flood. The letter was open ended with the FERC and the WDNR and the following up of what can be done is October 9. WDNR has dates of May 1 – September 30 of when a possible drawdown can be done due to the hibernation of the amphibians and the trout spawning in mid-October. There will be a meeting with FERC and the WDNR regarding the potential opportunity for an earlier drawdown. Haug reviewed the draft that was sent with a \$1.8 million +/- 50% until the contractor sees the dam and this is more than the \$1 million and less than the \$2 million due to the sediments from the flood.

Haug reviewed from a dam safety perspective having an earlier drawdown is positive as the City wouldn't have more damage to the dam due to another winter/spring flood. Having the drawdown allows for inspection of the dam's lift joints and the bedrock damage. The construction of the dam is made of lift joints which means the dam was built in layers and these layers have friction between it. Around 1989 the dam was found not to have enough friction between the layers. To create more friction there was huge bolts put into it and they are tensioned to 50,000 pounds of force. The bolts are screwed into the dam from the top down. Drawing the dam down allows to inspect the lowest lift joint that was bolted together.

In addition to the dam safety piece of the drawdown there is an opportunity to inspect the sediment. There are three reasons to look at the sediments with the drawdown: 1) it will compact the sediment 2) it will dewater the sediment and the sediment will be less likely to slump and 3) there will be an opportunity for vegetation on the lakebed. Haug went on to review examples of other drawdowns of Grim dam and Gordan dam. Grim dam was drawn down for 10 years, he reviewed the size of the willow trees along the bank in the impoundment and the sediment. Gordan dam was a WDNR ordered drawn down in 2013 and removed in 2017. The Gordan dam drawdown is similar to the Powell Falls dam preemptive drawdown, where the banks can start to regrow, and sediments can compact. There may be sediments that go down stream, but it will be a natural slow process unlike if the whole dam was taken out and we let everything go during a big flood event. The opportunity is: 1) to reduce the dam safety risk because

we will know what is out there and 2) we are going to greatly reduce the sediment risk by allowing it to compact, vegetate, stabilize and de-water. Westhuis reviewed Haug has been doing our decommissioning plan and we put this on hold for three months due to the flood as the plan will look different now.

Brotkowski and Westhuis reviewed the FERC and WDNR drawdown meeting will be on September 30. At the meeting, they will review drawdown process, timing, safety, concern of natural resources, inspection and sampling. Three short term constraints of a fall drawdown is: 1) have it happen before the hibernation of the amphibians and reptiles in the sediments with still water as it could cause damage and or mortality to them, 2) the need for additional sampling of the sediment as there is a couple of areas that have some concern with prior to the flood and 3) timing of the agency approval of the draw down will need to happen quickly. The long-term challenge is that we are in the middle of the FERC decommissioning process and it has agencies and stakeholders that need to know if we are changing something with the plan. The dam safety inspection report of the drawdown will guide the process on this.

There was discussion after the report. Westhuis reviewed by having the drawdown of the lake there will not be production of electricity. There is also potential financial savings of not having to potentially getting rid of some the sediment. There would need to be a cost analysis of the how much money are we saving with drawing down the lake and not refilling it versus producing electricity. The follow-up of the dam inspection and what would be needed to be fixed or not and the cost. Spafford reviewed his experience of civil engineering structures and reviewing the how a structure handles an event happen to them. Having another flood as we did in the spring maybe unlikely. In the initial review of the flood damage wasn't there was one damage of the wing wall and we didn't notice any cracks in the dam itself. Westhuis said there is three thing that we do know of the damage: 1) one wing wall is chipped off at the top but we don't know if there is additional damage to it, 2) there is a gouge out of the front face of the dam and we don't if there is additional damage to it and 3) we don't know the stresses that are on foundations and how it was bolted together. Haug reviewed Spafford's comment on the dam structure. This dam is designed not to not take ice on the upper lift joints, it's designed to always be spilling in the winter. There is a concern with the water flowing through the right abutment and this could have the flows potentially headed through one part of the dam. If this happened through the breach with little to no flow passing over the dam it could create ice, which would be a catastrophic load to the post tension anchors. The abutment is visual and the dam inspection will review the cracks that we can not see but the big concern is to look at the dam if it can handle ice or if we want to keep the lake up we need to aerate it or agitate it to keep the ice form forming against the dam. Morrissette asked Haug what he would envision as an aeration system for the winter. Haug reviewed two options: 1) an aeration system with bubbles that is installed but it needs a good compressor and 2) the other option is cascao vein propellers which is vein that shoots and directs the warmer water on the bottom of the river back up toward the surface and creates a boil and keeps the ice from forming quickly. The Powell Falls doesn't have the probable circuitry that we could use to run either of these options and it is costly. Westhuis will send an email update to the UAB after the FERC and WDNR meeting.

#### COVID-19 UW Madison Wastewater Study Participation Report

Westhuis and Wastewater/Water Superintendent Ron Groth presented a brief overview of the COVID-19 UW Madison Wastewater Study that RFMU Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) will be participating in. The first sample will be taken September 22 morning from WWTP and will be mailed to UW Madison. There is no cost involved in this study for RFMU.

There was some discussion from the board. Morrissette, Groth, and Westhuis reviewed whether this will be testing from the whole City or a specific location. It will be the whole City, and it is a volume wide sample like how the E. coli testing is taken. Spafford wanted to know if UWRF will be sending their findings to RFMU WWTP. Groth said yes and was not sure on when the results will be given.

#### 2019 Annual Consumer Confidence Report (CCR)

Westhuis and Wastewater/Water Groth presented the 2019 Annual Consumer Confidence Report (CCR). This water quality report is required by the federal government and is reported to the WDNR annually. It

is distributed to the consumers to show water quality. The City's water meets and or exceeds the required water quality guidelines and is safe and consistent.

#### 2019 CMAR Report

Westhuis and Wastewater/Water Groth presented the 2019 Compliance Maintenance Annual Report (CMAR) Report. This annual report is a self-evaluation of the City's wastewater treatment system and reported to the WDNR. The City's WWTP graded at 3.68 on a scale of 4.0. The City Council approved and authorized the report to be submitted to the WDNR on the July 28, 2020 meeting.

#### Finance Report

Westhuis gave a brief overview of the finance report, which was included in the packet. Electric is down income verses the expenses. Spent over \$200,000 in hydro relicensing and taking front ending that out of the reserves to pay that, which should balance out some of that deficit. That money will be made up over time with production over time through electricity. UWRF is down 12% with usage which has affected us with our income generation. Westhuis and Wells-Mangold reviewed the UWRF ice rink building is not in operation and all athletic competition is suspended due to COVID-19 resulting in lower energy use in the buildings.

There are around 100 utility customer late fee bills extended until April 2021. In 2019, there was more activating with using helpful resources to pay bill versus 2020. In 2020, there is less funding as there is a lack of motivation due to the extension to the late fee payments. Property owners are aware of this. Morrissette and Westhuis reviewed that this is residential only, not commercial, and it's focused on bills that are \$500 or more behind. RFMU directs the customers who are in need to the agencies to help them with their payment needs and the goal is to help customers.

Water and sewer funds are doing well.

RFMU has no training, travel or meals planned in the budget and only doing capital improvement projects.

RFMU received a \$500,000 WPPI 0% interest loan a week ago to help the electric bottom line.

#### Utility Dashboards

The 2020 August utility dashboards were included in the UAB packet for review.

#### Monthly Utility Report

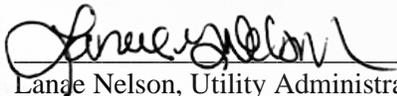
The 2020 August monthly utility reports were in the UAB packet for review. The South Fork Substation is finished and working. Sewer lining is currently happening in the City.

#### **ADJOURNMENT:**

**MSC Wells-Mangold/Swanson to adjourn. Unanimous.**

**Spafford announced meeting adjourned at 8:14 p.m.**

Reported by: Utility Administrative Assistant Lanae Nelson



Lanae Nelson, Utility Administrative Assistant