



Meeting June 1, 2022

Chairman Rod Vargo called the meeting to order. Bryan McMillan, Rod Vargo, Elizabeth Garr, Beulah Matczak, Matthew Wirtz and Frank Suárez

Beulah moved for approval of the minutes from December 1, 2021, and Bryan seconded the minutes. The minutes were approved.

Allen County Water and Sewer District (ACRWSO)– Matthew Wirtz and Frank Suárez

Frank shared a bit of history about City Utilities being a "Regional Utility" for nearly 60 years. Since 1960 City Utilities has been providing water and sewer service to other Allen County municipalities as wholesale customers. In 1972 the US EPA designated City Utilities as a regional sewer utility and encouraged other struggling utilities to connect. City Utilities currently serves 16,000 customers - more than 45,000 people outside Fort Wayne in Allen, Wells, and Whitley counties. In addition, three of Allen County's largest employers, GM, Parkview, and Sweetwater, are outside the city limits and served by City Utilities.

Matthew discussed the memorandum of understanding signed by the commissioners to get help from City Utilities to push down rates for their customers. The ACRWSO had significant debt for fewer than 1,000 customers. With the agreement, City Utilities bought down some of the debt while still treating their customers outside the City like those of current City Utilities' employees. To do so a package was put together with the Indiana Finance Authority through the State Revolving Fund to contribute \$5 million to City Utilities and then refinance the debt left through the utility at zero percent for 35 years, with no interest.

Of the 3,100 customers, 100 are inside the city limits, where customers will save \$57 a month. Those families outside the city limits will save about \$40 per month with the merger.

The plan was taken to the City Council and defeated in late 2021, partly because of a concern that the ACRWSO rules force people to disconnect from septic and connect to a sewer pipe or pay a fine. City Utilities' approach was to not move connections for fines but to offer incentives to those residents to get them to connect, such as waiving the \$3,000 connection fees and offering financial incentives. That was spelled out in the proposal to the Council in May 2022, where the merger was approved 5-4.

Bryan McMillan commented that the Allen County Department of Planning Services approves news houses with septic systems daily. Rod Vargo asked if it was true that 20 years out, a person will have to connect to the sewer system. Matthew shared that a waiver could excuse some customers, but that City Utilities will not force customers to connect.

Matthew reiterated that City Utilities already directly serves 16,000 customers or 45,000 people outside the city limits.

Frank and Matthew shared that there seems to be a lot of confusion as to City Utilities having customers outside of the city limits through the entire merger process. With customers in three counties, maybe it's time to change the name of City Utilities to reflect the regional services better. Elizabeth Garr commented that we should be careful with a rebranding because, as a Tri-State University grad, she's aware that several people felt left out when the university changed its name to Trine. Frank and Matthew said they would keep that in mind and return to the group later for further input and discussion on the naming issue.



Solar Power, Wholesale Customers – Matthew Wirtz

Matthew shared the upcoming solar energy project and new wholesale customers in Grabill and Maysville. The solar panels will be on the wet weather storage ponds and will provide additional power to the Wet Weather Pump Station, the Water Pollution Control Plant, and the Water Filtration Plant.

The plants need constant power 24/7, 365 days a year, to keep the pressure up in the system and drinking water for customers. The Water and Wastewater plants are some of the most significant power users in the area, spending around \$3 million in power this year.

The Solar project will involve six megawatts of solar panels installed on top of the ponds. The solar panels will float on top of the pond. The pond's water will help keep the panels cool and run at 15-20% better efficiency. The panels will also help eliminate some of the algae buildups from the pond, reducing the treatment needed when it gets to the Plant.

Rod asked what happens with the panels on the pond when the wind kicks up. Matthew explained that the panels would attach to an anchor and have a high wind rating.

Matthew also discussed new wholesale water customers to the Allen County communities of Grabill and Maysville.

Both areas are sewer customers already, but Grabill has a water plant. The town's Plant was at capacity and needed \$5 million in upgrades—Grabill sells water to the Maysville Sewer District -- which is the town of Harlan.

When Grabill applied for State Revolving Funds (SRF), the State told them to talk to Fort Wayne first. After looking at the options the Grabill Town Council voted to connect to Fort Wayne as a wholesale customer.

SRF is providing grant funds to all three of us for this partnership. Grabill will make distribution system improvements, as will Maysville/Harlan.

The connection will see about 230,000 gallons sent to Grabill per day. Our Three Rivers Filtration Plant can easily handle that amount as it can produce 72 million gallons of drinking water daily. Current City Utilities' customer usage averages around 34 million galls per day.

The project will cost approximately \$700,000 to construct and will bring in about \$100,000 in revenue each year.

Other Business / Items

Frank discussed how the suggestions of the UAG members helped fill positions needed to help fill the positions for installers. As a result, our contractor, Tribus, brought on 25 new installers, with an additional 28 in training sessions. As a result, the number of meter installations doubled in three months with the additional installers, from 4,000 to 9,800.

Frank invited the UAG members to the news conference about the capping of the new water tower built for the central pressure zone by the Catholic cemetery off Lake Avenue. The water tower will offer more reliability for the largest pressure zone in the city.

Rod motioned for adjournment, and Bryan McMillan seconded. The meeting was adjourned.