



Utilities Commission
Commission Meeting

Minutes

January 5, 2021
8:30 AM

CALL TO ORDER

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Brian Ball	City Engineer	Present	
Richard Dzik	Safety Service Director	Present	
Mathias Orndorf	Director of Public Utilities	Present	
Keith Burley	Alternate Member	Present	
Elizabeth Doolittle		Present	

Others in attendance: Tammy Woods, City Council; Kenneth Griffith, Assistant Director of Public Utilities; Rob Broeren, Director of Law; and Lindsay Hoar, Recording Secretary.

MINUTES APPROVAL

- Utilities Commission - Commission Meeting - Dec 1, 2020 8:30 AM

Mr. Burley did not vote due to Ms. Doolittle being present.

RESULT:	ACCEPTED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Elizabeth Doolittle
SECONDER:	Mathias Orndorf, Director of Public Utilities
AYES:	Ball, Dzik, Orndorf, Doolittle
EXCUSED:	Burley

ADJUSTMENT JOURNAL

- Adjustment Journal
- Motion to Approve the Adjustment Journal

Mr. Burley was excused due to Ms. Doolittle being present.

RESULT:	APPROVED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Richard Dzik, Safety Service Director
SECONDER:	Brian Ball, City Engineer
AYES:	Ball, Dzik, Orndorf, Doolittle
EXCUSED:	Burley

NEW BUSINESS

1002 W. Gambier Street - Sewer Lateral

Mr. Griffith says this all started last year, prior to the pandemic. The homeowners notified Mr. Griffith last year saying that their sewer lateral was connected with the neighbor's sewer lateral. They called because the sewer lateral would back up and the neighbors would not help pay to get the lateral cleaned. Both neighbors knew that this lateral was connected at some point. Our Engineering records don't show when the connection was made. We went out to camera it. 1006 W. Gambier is definitely tied into 1002 W. Gambier, so that's the one that needs removed. There's no Engineering records and the taps that are on the main, they were pre-tapped for each unit, for 1006 and 1002's property. The pre-taps aren't even being used. The taps that they are on we have no record of when they were installed and who they belong to either. We don't know what course of action we can take to get 1006 disconnected from 1002's lateral.

Mr. Dzik is guessing that this would normally be the property owner's responsibility to run this to their house from the pre-tap.

Mr. Griffith said yes, we make the tap, they run the lateral. But, we also inspect the lateral and make sure that it matches our codes and ordinances.

Mr. Ball said basically from the main to the house, it's the homeowner's responsibility. When they pay their tap fee we will, for a small charge, drill the hole in the pipe. All of them are required to be inspected before they are backfilled. What Ken's referring to is when the sewer main was installed, the city went ahead and did all of the taps knowing that the neighborhood was going to develop. Our understanding is one of the two houses was there first.

Mr. Griffith says the sewer line was installed in 1890, they were pre-tapped for each one of the units. The house at 1006 was built first, in 1930 maybe. There's two houses on 1002 and originally there was one pre-tapped for that property. Both houses have an individual lateral now but the second lateral, the one in question, I don't have any record of when it went in. It was not a pre-tap on the main when it was installed. That's the one that 1006 and 1002 ½ are both tied to.

Mr. Ball adds that it's right on the property line. We have sent them a notice because there's been several complaints and disputes so we sent them a notice that they needed to take care of it last fall.

Mr. Griffith says that is correct. The letter we sent stated that they had an illegal connection that they needed to remove and make their own connection.

Mr. Dzik asks which one.

Mr. Griffith answers the 1006. They are the ones that are tied into the lateral at 1002.

Mr. Dzik says that's weird since their house was there first.

Mr. Griffith said right, but their pre-tap is not being used. I was told that something happened with their line, they happened to build a garage over their sewer lateral. When that line failed, instead of running a new line, they tied in with the neighbor's sewer lateral.

Ms. Woods asked if the expense would be entirely on 1006.

Mr. Griffith said he would think.

Mr. Ball points to the facts again. The 1006 lateral physically leaves their property and goes onto 1002's property.

Mr. Griffith said it does, they verified that with the camera.

Mr. Ball said they should be going to the back of the property and connecting to the public sewer that runs the entire length of their property.

Mr. Griffith said we did send them a letter. We also told them that if they didn't get it done that the city would do it and then we would assess that back to them.

Ms. Woods asked if that would then fix the problem for the people at 1002.

Mr. Griffith said it would. The rest of their lateral might not be good but that would be their problem. What's our course of action? I've gotten quotes from RCI, I've looked at what it would cost for us to do it.

Mr. Dzik said we notified them in the fall and after that...

Mr. Ball said the homeowner said that he had no intention at all of doing it. If we made him do it he was going to default on the loan and walk away from the house.

Mr. Griffith said the homeowner is telling him that they do not have the \$3,600 to do it. What would we charge them, what would we assess back to them if we come out?

Mr. Ball said this leads to the next question, we run this thing called the 95 accounts. Let's use Dixie Drive as a separate example. We put in the new water main, we had a public meeting, they came back to us at the public meeting with a concern that they need to pay \$3,300 for a tap and they need to hire a plumber to run a waterline to their house and I have (inaudible) from my well. Most of the people there were retired or young families, they asked for some consideration. We worked with Mr. Scott, he created a 3 year, 5% loan. You could take out a loan, if you wanted to put \$1,000 down you could, you didn't have to.

Mr. Broeren joins the meeting.

Ms. Woods asks if the people at 1006 owned the house when this tap was made?

Mr. Griffith does not know when that connection was made.

Mr. Ball said we believe that when the taps were made that both houses were owned by the same person or same family.

Ms. Woods asks if they own it now.

Mr. Griffith said at 1002, there are two house on that property, Linda Rains owns both of those. At some point in time the house at 1006, according to Misty, which is Linda's daughter, she told me her grandparents lived next door. I don't know if it was a family ordeal. They brought it to our attention. Both neighbors knew that this connection was made. I don't know when.

Mr. Dzik said as soon as the property is sold, the problem with that property becomes the problems of the new owner. Asks Mr. Broeren if that is correct.

Mr. Broeren said yes, unless there's something in the contract that would retain liability for the seller. It's the new owner's problem.

Mr. Dzik catches Mr. Broeren up on what is being discussed. We're talking about the issue with the lateral tied into another homeowner's lateral. It is possible the homes were owned by the same family at one point, which is how this happened. Now it has created a neighbor dispute. It also ties into these 95 accounts that we've created in the past where if correcting an issue becomes too expensive, it sounds like the city has assumed the cost in the past and allowed the owner to pay back. I know you've looked into what we'd liked to do with the mobile home park, getting them on our system and getting their system up to standard.

Mr. Broeren said his understanding of the sewer lateral is that was installed after the houses were owned by different people. That was based upon a discussion I had with the lawyer for the affected homeowner rather than the one doing the affecting. That's my understanding rather than they were put in at the same time by the same person which I think would change the analysis a little bit but not a significant amount. In the end, it's the person who owns the property, it's their responsibility. There is a tap right there for them, they've chosen not to use it because it would require them to dig under the garage. It's my understanding that the garage was there originally, the lots were split and then that house was built. Then they put the sewer line in.

Mr. Griffith said the house at 1006, which is the one that is connected to the neighbor, that house was there first and their sewer lateral was there first. I don't know what date their sewer lateral failed and they made the connection to 1002. I do know they did work in 2014 but they just connected to the existing pipe that was already illegally connected. I have photos of that and it just barely goes past the foundation of the house, it doesn't go to the lateral on 1002. I don't know when they made the connection to 1002.

Mr. Dzik says when the houses were built they could have been connected correctly, and most likely were, at some point after they were built somebody did some work and created this illegally.

Mr. Broeren said it sounds like the original connection failed. Then they established this new connection.

Mr. Dzik thinks where it ties in, I think we're going to either have to force the homeowner to correct it or correct it and charge it back or place a lien on the property.

Mr. Broeren said to him the two situations are vastly different. 1006 W. Gambier is the problem property?

Mr. Dzik said yes.

Mr. Broeren went on to say; with that one we've issued the notice of violation. Then we follow up with that, if they don't do it we can do the work and then we put it on their bill. If they don't pay it, then it goes on their taxes and we deal with it normally. That's very simple. To me that's a very straight forward issue with our current rules. The one that I'm struggling with is the mobile home park and with whether or not we have the authority. I did not get back to the legislation, which I have to get to in regards to the authorization, that may mute what we have to do with that because that may give us the authority. In general, I don't see authority in the codified ordinances for the commission to do that. I'm not aware of the commission adopting rules allowing them to do it, have they?

Mr. Dzik said he's not sure. I don't think we've dug into it because clearly we've been loaning money for projects.

Mr. Ball said he did a quick look when this first came up and I did not see any fee

terminology in the regulation code.

Mr. Orndorf has not seen it either.

Mr. Broeren said the one thing he started on Thursday is checking the general rules for utilities in the State of Ohio to see if there's some way that we would be granted that authority under that sort of operating. In addition to us having the authorization from the city, we also are a utility as specified under the Revised Code and there may be something that we can work with in there. That's something I did not get very far on. Those are the couple of areas I think we need to be looking at.

Mr. Dzik asked if there's an easier path forward. He's guessing the utility today couldn't just pass an amendment today allowing us to participate in these types of projects like we always have in the past.

Mr. Ball says we need to have it drafted so that it correctly ties in with the city and state ordinances.

Mr. Broeren said in setting up the utility, I think council would have delegated you the authority to do something like that but do we know if other utilities do this?

Mr. Dzik clarified; we're talking loaning for projects.

Mr. Ball said there are other utilities that will allow people to make payments with interest on tap fees. I don't know about projects. I was talking with someone about a development where a county run utility on the initial construction did the exact same thing that we did on Dixie Drive. Some utilities have a \$10,000 or \$12,000 tap fee, so there are instances where the tap fees have been able to take out a loan for other utilities. The ones that I'm aware of were not in the state of Ohio.

Mr. Broeren says before we would have the Utility Commission pass something I really think that we need to do some more looking so that we're on firmer footing. The next utility meeting will be in 28 days or a month?

While Mr. Dzik checks the date, Mr. Ball clarifies his statement.

Mr. Ball states rules and regulations for water and wastewater can be amended anytime at a meeting. The stormwater rules and regulations require 28 days of public notice.

February 2nd is the next meeting

Mr. Broeren would suggest we could have a path forward, whether it be just the utility to adopt the rules or something to go to council to then have council adopt it and utility to adopt the rules.

Mr. Dzik is going to call around to see if anyone else is doing this.

Mr. Burley says the most straightforward path for the W. Gambier situation is to do the work and place a lien on the property.

Mr. Broeren recommends do the work, bill the homeowner, the homeowner refuses to pay the bill, then we stick it on their taxes pursuant to the authorization under the Revised Code for wastewater rates.

Mr. Burley agrees. That is the most straightforward path to remedy a situation that the resident at 1002 W. Gambier Street shouldn't have to endure. What I heard is the owner already said, "I'm not going to pay for it", right? I think our best course of action is to pursue the work, bill the owner and then go through the process of a lien if it's not paid because I don't think it's going to happen any other way. The nice thing to do is to make a loan but with a stated intent of not paying for it, having a bill, putting a lien on the property at some

point is the only way to remedy this situation. And it's expedient, we're not waiting another month to (inaudible).

Mr. Griffith asks how do they go into this guy's yard. We don't own the sewer lateral; we don't have easements on the property. How do I go about sticking a crew with equipment in the guy's yard?

Mr. Broeren said we very clearly have the right of entry to fix work. It's clearly stated in both the ordinances and the rules. I don't have the exact citation but I could get that. You show up with a shotgun when AEP comes out to look at the wires, you're going to eventually end up in jail.

Mr. Dzik said we should schedule the work, send him a notice that we're coming out, that way he doesn't think we're sneaking out there. If he does threaten you, you call the police and you leave.

Mr. Griffith is concerned because we do not own the sewer lateral.

Mr. Dzik asks if we just had this situation and asks if this is the same one.

Mr. Burley said we talked about this last meeting as it related to the waterline up off Sychar Road. We actually have the ability to go in and repair that but again, how do we get paid for that. That's the Hawthorne Apartments?

Mr. Broeren said water is very different than wastewater.

Mr. Burley asks if a remedy is that we shut off water to the house.

Mr. Dzik responds if we have the authority to go in there and correct the problem, then we go in there and correct the problem. You can turn water off to the house, it doesn't mean they're going to go fix problem. I would recommend that we send the letter to 1006 W. Gambier with that date that we're doing the work, go in and do the work and let the process play out.

Mr. Broeren said to make sure to copy him on that letter.

Mr. Burley asks if we'd do a registered letter.

Mr. Ball said yes, we will have Rob review it. Normally we send a registered letter and regular letter because some people refuse to accept registered letters.

95 Accounts and Loans

Mr. Dzik says hopefully we'll have more information come next meeting.

Mr. Broeren said as he finds out stuff he will send it to Brian and to Rick and Mathias and they can go about making sure that it's shared with the rest of the commission members. I suspect that the authorizing legislation for the loan may give us our out on that one.

Mr. Orndorf says we've already done Dixie Drive and they all have 95 accounts, not all of them - there's five left. But we also have one in the works that has already put his permits in, can I go ahead and build that 95 account for that one and then we'll go forward from here with whatever.

Mr. Broeren asks what a 95 account is.

Mr. Orndorf explains that it is another account that we put on that sends them a bill every month telling them what their balance is. They're making the payments and it goes into the

account later.

Mr. Dzik says it's an account where we pay for the work up front and the customer pays us back.

Mr. Ball says that's incorrect. The 95 accounts are the taps. We are paying to install a waterline on Dixie Drive, but for each person to tap there is \$3,308.10 and that goes to buying the meter, paying the capacity fee and paying the permit fee. Instead of making a lump sum payment, this account adds another line to their bill. So, instead of Water, Wastewater, Stormwater, Clinton Twp. Fee, they have one more fee and that's the payments with interests on their tap. If you want to make your payments first before you get your tap, those are payments without interest. If you say I want water but I don't actually want you to turn it on until I pay for my tap, they don't have to pay interest. So when they take out the loan, that's when Mathias creates a 95 account. The situation we have now, a land owner with four properties, three of them being rentals, his well has gone bad so he has to come up with three tap fees immediately. His well is dry he needs water right now. He's called us in desperation. He needs water immediately because he's got housing that is affected by a well. That's where he's come to us to get the process started. He'll make a down payment of some sort and set up a three year loan payment.

Mr. Dzik says his point is that the 95 account is the same as a loan. It's no different than what we're doing for the trailer park. A 95 account is a loan, Rob.

Mr. Ball says one's for construction. I don't think we've been doing any construction loans, we're doing tap loans, is that correct?

Mr. Orndorf says not that he knows of since he's been here.

Mr. Dzik explains to Rob's point, a loan is a loan. The authority needs to be there to make the loan.

Mr. Broeren says the question is, does the utility have the authority to effectively extend credit. That's the question. I know that we have been doing it; the question is under what authority we have been doing it. What I want to do is make sure that if one of these goes bad and we end up in a legal (inaudible) with these people and should we lose because of lack of authority suddenly everybody else will stop paying and stick the city. That's what I want to avoid here.

OLD BUSINESS

Wastewater Utility Rates

Mr. Dzik knows this has been going through council; it will be addressed again at the end of January. Is there more to talk about? I know I saw an email go out, because council's likely going to consider not having a persistent rate increase, we wanted to make sure we could cover the next four years of projects with what we have so Brian did send out some updated numbers.

Mr. Ball said he's going to look at Tammy and basically say, we've gotten a lot of feedback from a couple people. Most people on council have been completely silent. What will council accept?

Ms. Woods responds, based on the projects you've presented, council completely understands the need for the 15, 15, 15. They're bulking at the continual increase, which I understand. They want to face the justification for the increase after year three based on what's presented to them. I've spoken to you that should this legislation pass and we get the 15, 15, 15, I would like quarterly reports to give to them as far as here's what's come in, here's the projects that's funded. Keep them up-to-date over the course of that time so when it comes time to determine what that next increase, if there needs to be one, what it is - they're up-to-date on what's been accomplished and how those things have cost out over the course of those three years. I don't see a continual increase passing with council.

Mr. Ball gets that. Realistically, after three to four years the project list becomes uncertain. I was just reading an article, it's called the PFAS, where they made us test the water for certain polymers and plastics. In two years, they could require us to remove that from wastewater. It's always a moving target.

Ms. Woods said we talked last week, you had said there are known projects that you had to leave out of there to make it work. I think that's the point, they need to know what these projects are that are having to be deferred. Until the council and the public knows how critical some of these things are becoming, they don't understand the need for the increase. Here we are with two rather large projects that have to be done. To your point, you don't know what you don't know. You guys seem to discover something every other day or something implodes under our feet every other day.

Mr. Ball asks Mr. Griffith what his estimation would be of the percent of the sewer system that they have been able to camera with the new camera and trained staff.

Mr. Griffith replied with limited personnel, we probably haven't seen 15%.

Ms. Woods asked how many miles of sewer we have.

Mr. Ball said 120 miles. The problem we had, when we started this we did a very detailed inventory of water. We were telling everybody we had 120 of water and then we found another 200 miles of waterline. The thing about the sanitary, it's a different animal of water because it has to follow gravity.

Ms. Woods thinks that the point, the council and the public is going to need those continual updates of what's been accomplished, what else have you found and to get us back on where we need to be.

Mr. Ball asked Ms. Woods if she thinks council would support three years, 15% each, obviously for 2021 we're going to probably defer two of those months, would that be 15% times 10/12 or do we make that number slightly bigger to make up for the lost two months.

Ms. Woods said she thinks it's going to be 10/12, in my conversations with them.

Mr. Dzik said we don't need it to be perpetual, but would it be possible to get those 15's and a 10 or another 10. I say this because if we're going to start talking again in three years, I fear that the problem is that we fall off a cliff because either the conversation didn't happen or it stalled. If we have another fourth year or fifth year of 10's and we can assess those two years and the future.

Ms. Woods explains council's comfort level. Based on what Brian's presented and the need

for those 15%. I'll be honest with you, what I hear from the public is, why is it such a round number. Well we sat here how many months ago and said it needs to be a 45%. We needed an instant 45%. The point of the 15's was to defer that hit. What council is comfortable with is language being in that saying that council will address the rates on an annual basis. I think that puts the onus on them to be part of the team. Making sure if it needs to be a zero, if it needs to be reduced or if it needs to be increased then it'll be based on data.

Mr. Ball said what we've got to do is say we get three years, in the middle of the second year, this model run needs to be getting hot and heavy and serious. To Ms. Woods's question, the 15% is not the real number because 15% gives you half a penny so the number in the ordinance is 16.89732568. The 15%'s don't give you an actual even number.

Ms. Woods said she thinks in our public meeting that needs to be a part of the conversation because whether it's due to a lack of a newspaper, whatever that lack of communication piece is, people have not heard that message of what needs to be done, why it needs to be done now and what the actual cost is. Brian and I had a conversation this last week, I finally have an understanding of that second project, that second project's cost is going to be determined on what that first project does to the system. That makes sense to me, that'll make sense to the public. Like you said, the 15's are quite frankly a guess, probably low but at least it allows us to get done immediately what we do. There's going to have to be that continual message to council that we can get the information to the public of here's what's happening, here's what else needs to be done and here's what the actual cost is.

Mr. Ball said the two projects we're referring to would both be at the wastewater plant. That doesn't have anything to do with the system. That's your digester rebuild phase one and then your phosphorus and solids processing would be phase two.

Ms. Woods said she thinks that so needs to be part of the message in this meeting. We are only talking about that wastewater line on your bill. I don't even think people have a complete grasp of that.

Mr. Ball said he went back through the newspaper articles and the majority of the comments were related to water. It seems like there's a lot of confusion out there. I do want to bring some good news, I sat down with Mr. Scott last year when he was closing the books and it does appear that we will be bringing in more money into 2021 than we had forecasted in the model. And the other thing we did is he gave me the exact amateurization so I've re-programmed in the model, the loan pay-offs. We do have a loan paying off at the end of 2022. I will send that out to everybody. The other thing, there was one error where one of the income lines was not being adjusted by the percentage so I'm going to have my staff do a detailed quality control to make sure things are being added and subtracted correctly. The other thing I wanted to do, we could run 600 scenarios but if we want to focus on three 15% and then maybe one 10%, maybe not, then I can create two versions of this or I can email it back out and folks can make those adjustments turning the 10% on and off.

Ms. Woods encourages Mr. Ball to include in there what he knows. If your four is ugly - it's the truth.

Mr. Ball said the other thing he and Mr. Scott did with the model is they know that these phosphorus treatment devices is going to be adding multiple machines. These machines are going to incur maintenance costs, so what we've been doing in previous model runs was leaving the O & M at a zero percent increase for the life of the model and Mr. Scott and Mr.

Ball went through and added a 3% per year increase in O & M cost. Based on union negotiations and his view of trends of health care and labor cost, we've added approximately a 2% per year labor to the model that previously had just been zero. Mr. Ball spent several hours with Mr. Scott, and at least an hour with Mr. Griffith and Mr. Orndorf, re-checking the project input because when you look at the list of projects that's obviously becoming one of our bigger expenses that's driving the model. So we did a bare bones, ignored everything in the system except the mandatory projects and we ignored everything at the plant except the mandatory projects. We had a higher version and we picked the middle of the road where we're still getting money to Mr. Griffith to do proactive things outside of the mandated and we're hopefully taking care of some of the issues at the plant. It looks like the 15% will work. Mr. Ball needs to check if that will get us through 2024 and 2025. If it doesn't, then we know in 2022 we have got to start going back to council. If we already know the model's only going to run three years but the other thing that could happen, our consultants could miraculously come up with a cost savings on the digester or these other things. If it's a \$5 million project, I don't see that cost savings being more than half a million or $\frac{3}{4}$ of a million. If we cut out $\frac{3}{4}$ of a million dollars from a loan that makes a difference every single year.

Ms. Woods said those quarterly updates to council - they'll be thrilled.

Mr. Ball thinks the public doesn't quite get the first project is in design and we have a preliminary estimate based on design work. The second project only exists in that planning report and it has not been designed. We've interviewed other plants and other places to see what they've paid for similar systems. We've visited those plants so the planning estimate is not made up but depending on the efficiency of the digester; the more efficient that digester is, the less product we have to handle, the less effort we have. If we get that digester in A1 shape and get it sustainable for another 40 years, everything we do after that is more efficient.

Ms. Woods thinks the public will understand that. They know you get what you pay for. If we can get good it's a lot cheaper in the long run. They'll understand that.

Mr. Ball said it's kind of the same thing as if your car's not running very well it uses a lot more gas. We're seeing problems at a lot of neighborhoods with backups.

Mr. Burley said his read of the room as he watches council meetings is that everyone understands the need for 15% increases; the real rub comes with handing over money for something that they don't know they're getting. I think the need by council is well understood of the need for 15% increases to fund the major projects we know of. They don't want to fund projects that they don't know of. It's giving up that authority that they're not quite ready to do. My opinion from my read of the zoom room is we will be okay to stick at 15% if it still makes the financial sense and we'll have the support of council. I don't sense a need to vary that course, they have the confidence in what has been presented to this point. It's clearly about the 10% and having it go on forever. I understand that. My next question is what's the plan for the public meeting on the 19th, what are we doing to get ready, what's the approach?

Mr. Dzik asked if Mr. Orndorf is able to join because Mr. Ball is going to be out.

Mr. Orndorf said he'll be there for the meeting on the 19th.

Mr. Dzik asked if Emily will be available.

Mr. Ball said yes, we have to do a contract amendment for Emily because I only gave her a

little bit of funds to work on wastewater but we're writing that up. She will be fully available. Mr. Dzik said our team will be there. We have our information, our slides. He suspects half of the meeting or comments will be people's feelings, thoughts and opinions on it; there may be some questions that come out of the public comments. That's what we want to be prepared for. There is no more information we need, we have what the projects are, what they will cost, how costs will go up over the next three years. It's just being prepared for the questions that arise out of it.

Mr. Ball said we're going to create a justification sheet, a one page per each of the critical projects. We do it for the whole portfolio that's going to be presented to council but we'd start with wastewater, get this to Ms. Woods and everyone on the commission to review. I would imagine at the public meeting that the administration would give a very short version of the slides that we've been giving to council. Say the administration takes 12-15 minutes to give a 'here's what we're talking about'. If people want to talk about water or other things, as a chair

Ms. Woods may want to say 'let's stay focused on wastewater'. We would have the meeting recorded. His office could print comments sheets.

Mr. Ball also gave an email that public could send questions to eng4@mountvernonohio.org.

Ms. Woods said in talking to some people, most of who is senior citizens who don't understand the zoom world, I'm assuming this meeting is on our website. Ms. Woods asked for the fact sheets to be posted on the website somewhere. Also asked to have the email address set up and have it out so if people can't get onto the meeting we could at least have those questions in advance.

Mr. Ball looked to Lindsay in regard to making changes to the website so we could have easy access. The slides that we presented to city council and some of the documents that have been asked for we'd like to get those up.

Ms. Woods said in a perfect world it'd be great to get it in the paper or Knox Pages. I've got a lot of people that don't understand the zoom world and have already said they won't be logging in because they don't know how but at least they can get questions to us.

Mr. Ball asked if it is possible to have a video station set up and limited occupancy in council.

Mr. Dzik said if people want to come in person that is possible. Our plan with Public Health allows us 15 people in addition to council.

Discussion on a venue for public to attend the public meeting and watch it on a screen.

Mr. Dzik said we will make space at City Hall. If we end up with more than 15 people then we can scatter them throughout the building.

Mr. Ball looking to Ms. Woods says he assumes we don't want to scramble and try to answer these questions as they're being asked. We could distill everything down, sit down create a written response to all the questions. Anyone who puts their name on the list their questions can be mailed or emailed directly to them and put on the website.

Ms. Doolittle asked if we could make the question/answer sheet available on the website.

Mr. Ball said we would type up the question to make sure we understood it correctly and then give a response. There would be a period of time for folks to double check that we actually answered their question.

Ms. Doolittle said she could see that becoming a version of the frequently asked questions sheet. Then it's available after it is passed and people start being vocal when they start seeing the rate increase on their bill if they haven't been paying attention to the conversation leading

up to the rate increase.

Mr. Burley said he thinks you have to answer the questions that can be answered there. Just collecting questions, if all anyone does is ask questions, I don't think that helps people who have made the effort to participate to get the information they're looking for. I think most all of the questions we already have answers for so we shouldn't limit ourselves and say we're just going to take questions. We should answer the questions that we can. The purpose of the meeting is to provide information and I think that interaction is what people are seeking. I really disagree with saying we're just going to collect questions and send out an email with response. I think our responsibility is to answer the questions that we can and defer those that we can't. They should leave with as many answers as we can provide after participating. The timeframe is short. This meeting is on a Tuesday, the council meeting is only the following Monday where it's up for action. We're really only talking Wednesday, Thursday, Friday as three working days prior to the council meeting.

Ms. Woods corrects what Mr. Ball said, this meeting is the 19th and she only deferred it to the 25th meeting. So it is going to be a short turn around.

Mr. Burley said that's why we have to answer questions then.

Mr. Ball said you could have some heated situations and you can end up with some arguments. What we have found a lot of times is people just make statements, they don't actually ask questions. We would have to be very careful to only respond.

Mr. Burley said that is correct. He was involved in the stormwater and most of it wasn't questions. Most of it was statements.

Mr. Dzik said he thinks we're right on a number of fronts. I have been in a few public hearings, very rarely have I gotten asked a question. I think we could be prepared for answers we absolutely know the answer to. I don't think we need to try and think on the spot to come up with something.

Ms. Woods said here's the question we have to be able to answer, the statements will be they can't afford increase, the city's position is we can't afford not to do it.

Mr. Ball said if you look at Centerburg, they're utility rate for wastewater is 5 times the City of Mount Vernon.

Ms. Woods said it doesn't change the need. Somebody just has to be prepared to answer those questions of what is the need and why.

Mr. Dzik said he's lived in three different places, he's never paid this low of wastewater and I think people are going to need to hear that. You're going to pay more in Fredericktown, you're going to pay more in Centerburg, Columbus, Indianapolis. I'm sorry.

Ms. Woods said she wants somebody there to answer those questions of 'what if I can't afford it'. That situation exists.

Mr. Ball said in this community Mr. Starr is probably really good at that because he very well in touch with the Interchurch, etc. We probably have more people to help you here in Mount Vernon than a lot of other cities. You have Interchurch, Salvation Army. Mr. Orndorf and the ladies in the billing office work with them on a regular basis for lots of customers. Mr. Ball asked Mr. Orndorf how many people do you have typically get help from those services.

Mr. Orndorf said he's not sure of those numbers. He's talked to a couple of people and sent out direct emails. Anybody that the girls saw the account when they went through and they saw the numbers; they tried to get ahold of those people by phone or by an email. We couldn't personally do everybody but we tried to do as many people as we could see. We put

the information out; if they don't find it then we also try to help get it to them. Some people aren't looking for the help. They aren't looking in the right place. We've made the extra effort, especially knowing that this money was there to help them pay that bill. Anybody that was behind, we tried to let them know about it.

Mr. Burley said he thinks the controversy is in the continuum 10% and his question to the commission is are we going to stick with that for the public meeting based on the sentiment of council or do we back off that continuum of 10%. He has the opinion that will change the tone of the meeting and allow us to really focus on the clearly identified needs of 15% for three years.

Mr. Dzik said the feeling among all of them is that that's not a hill we're interested in dying on. The 15% at least gets us through the next three years. We can continue to talk about what needs to happen in future years.

Mr. Burley said if that's the case then he's in favor of let's take a position now, even prior to the meeting, that we're willing to back off of that. Then work two years from now to make sure we've got the money we need for continued projects for the following three years. It's not the 15% increases that are causing the major heartburn, it's the continuum of 10% increases for unidentified needs. We know there's needs, that's not the issue but people want to know what they're getting.

Mr. Ball asked Ms. Woods if she feels that a revised recommendation would help significantly.

Ms. Woods said she does. There's a lot of information being passed around in the community that's showing what our rates will be in twenty years based on those 10s.

Mr. Dzik said the only hesitation he has is he doesn't want there to be some perception that we dropped the 10s so we didn't need it. The truth is, we need them. I get that it's not easy to stomach for people.

Mr. Ball said if we look at a sensitivity analysis, if we say 10% and then we get to 2025 and that's the wrong number, that creates an enormous uphill battle for that council to correct that to say 17% or 18%. The other situation is, if it only needs to be a 5% then that council looks great but the risk is that upside where we said 10%, it's locked in, the EPA slams us with PFAS, some other chemicals, then you're not going to be at 10% - you're going to be at some huge number. We know that we have phosphorus now and we know that the EPA is working on the next thing but we have no idea what the next thing is.

Ms. Woods said the perception with some council members and people in the public is 10's a nice round number, where'd you pull that from. Is there data to back that up? My comment to them has been we don't know what that number is, it could be 8%, it could be 18%. We don't know that and that's the point. That's the hesitation on council. Give us the good information and we'll set it at what it needs to be to make the city have the money to do what we have to do. It needs to be communicated.

Mr. Ball said he spent quite a bit of time rerunning this and very helpful, I want to give Mr. Scott a lot of credit, give the utility staff a lot of credit - the carry in number was originally forecasted at about \$350,000 that forecast is coming in closer to \$700,000.

Ms. Woods said every department was extremely frugal this year because of the pandemic.

Mr. Ball said there's a couple of things that have changed the model, both of which have been positives. The other thing I did to balance, I did cut projects after 2023 we've cut back on our proactive work by a good amount. I'm comfortable supporting the three 15's. The real number would be what's written in the ordinance based on the 100 cubic feet of water

treatment. It'll be close to those.

Mr. Burley said cutting back on proactive work gets us exactly into the situation we're trying to avoid.

Mr. Ball said what he's already done is we have set in 2021 the next model run. We know that this will crash so what we want to state publicly on the record is these three 15% stopping there, the model does go negative rapidly after that.

Mr. Burley asked if we know that there are other things that will be needed.

Ms. Woods said that's why she wants quarterly updates to give to council that basically says here's the money that came in, here's what we spent it on, here's what it costs and here's those projects that we can't fund yet. That's never happened. There's never been that official list of here's the things that still need to get done.

Mr. Ball said what we're looking at now with two assistant directors and the future mandate of asset management, if you don't open the manhole and look in it you don't know if it's full of sewage or collapsed. So Mr. Griffith's assignment has been to start the asset management system process of knowing what we own, what the condition of each segment of pipe, each manhole, each water valve. We've done a great job on the water side, we're going to have an updated project, we'll have an updated list for water sooner than wastewater because we've been focused on the plant and the immediate orders by the EPA. In two years, Mr. Griffith and his staff are going to have a really good idea of the master plan. More than we do now.

Ms. Woods said with Mr. Orndorf told her when he took the job he thought there was 91 miles of waterline and it turns out that there is 400 something. We don't have that picture of the wastewater side, is the eye opener.

Mr. Ball said the stormwater is half of that. The stormwater is in another third behind all of these utilities. We don't have a good idea of the total length or the condition. A lot of stormwater we can't camera because it's either collapsed or full of debris. This is a three-step process and Mr. Griffith's team has really got a good start but he says 15% of our collection system has been videoed and inspected at this point.

- Motion to Amend the Recommendation to Council to Remove the 10% Increases Starting in 2024.

RESULT:	APPROVED [3 TO 1]
MOVER:	Richard Dzik, Safety Service Director
SECONDER:	Brian Ball, City Engineer
AYES:	Ball, Dzik, Burley
NAYS:	Orndorf
EXCUSED:	Doolittle

Project Updates

Mr. Dzik asked what major project updates need to be discussed before adjournment.

Mr. Orndorf said one of the things that was done was already brought up. Hawthorne Apartments, they had a plumber come in and they have taken care of almost every leak out there. I need to go out there and reassess but they did a major effort out that. Mr. Griffith was out at the other apartment complex that has a leak. He was out there for three hours helping

them determine where their leaks are. It's hard to tell but we're still working on that issue out there.

Mr. Griffith said he has not heard anymore from them. We spent three hours doing pressure testing and isolating each one of the units.

Ms. Woods asked where it is.

Mr. Griffith advised Hillside. We did isolate it to one of the units maybe being the culprit for the water leak that's over there. They were supposed to bring in another contractor and do some more investigating on that unit. He has not heard back from them.

The address location for Hillside is 100 McGibney Road and Hawthorne is 10 McGibney Road.

Mr. Burley asked if there is an update on leak detection within the city.

Mr. Orndorf said they came back and did leak detection on the lines that were put in at the same time. They did not find anything on what they sounded. They did find that there was one valve that was covered up. Mr. Griffith was having the guys work on uncovering that valve. Leak Detectors are supposed to stop back by when they are in the area. They will check that valve to see if there is any sound on it that's abnormal. Mr. Orndorf is also trying to set up a meeting with one of the industries that is affected by these last two water breaks.

Mr. Burley said we were looking at amount billed versus amount put through the water plant. Can we get that and look at that every month going forward? That's our only measure to see if we're making measurable progress.

Mr. Orndorf said he thinks that can be done.

Mr. Burley said that's money that we're spending to treat water that we don't know where it goes.

Mr. Orndorf said yes, customers have to pay for that. That's why it's been a focus here. We could not focus on that before because we did not have that ability. We just got that ability this past year.

Mr. Burley said having a metric to look at and say we've gained. I recall Gambier was in a similar situation, now it's us. I'm glad we're getting it looked after. Ours doesn't show up the same way as Gambier did. It's probably a little more hidden in terms of they get a very distinct bill, ours doesn't quite show the same. Mr. Burley asked if there's anything from Hazen & Sawyer, the other is ERU calculations as it relates to re-determining some of them.

Mr. Ball said Hazen & Sawyer is under contract to work on the stormwater service areas. They have not started. As far as ERUs, we don't have the ability to re-calculate those until probably sometime in the fall. Our utility locate person is on worker's compensation leave so I don't have the staff to do any of that work right now.

Mr. Burley thought we had Kenyon students approved right after our last meeting.

Mr. Ball said we do not have any Kenyon interns; we missed the boat on that because the vote was delayed to hire them and then they were not available because it was too far into the term. We have our name in the hat for Kenyon students for next term. It has been authorized for this year and next year by city council.

Mr. Burley has other questions.

Mr. Ball said the next meeting we should make sure we have time to go through projects or we can set up just a meeting to discuss projects.

Mr. Dzik suggests having a special meeting in 2 or 3 weeks.

Mr. Ball has to re-run the model with the 15% and then take it to Mr. Scott to see if we will be able to borrow the money for the phase one project. I'll go back to Mr. Orndorf's reservation, if the 15% doesn't give us the bond rating that would allow us to borrow the money for the phase one project, we're hosed.

Special meeting was scheduled for January 26.

ADJORN

- Adjourn Motion

Mr. Dzik made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Mr. Ball, second and the meeting was adjourned at 9:54 a.m.

RESULT:	ADJOURNED ES MOTION [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Richard Dzik, Safety Service Director
SECONDER:	Brian Ball, City Engineer
AYES:	Ball, Dzik, Orndorf, Burley
EXCUSED:	Doolittle

Rick Dzik, Chairman

Lindsay Hoar, Recording Secretary