

# CITY UTILITIES

200 E Berry Street, Suite 270  
Fort Wayne, IN 46802



## UTILITY ADVISORY GROUP MEETING – Meeting Notes

Wednesday, June 6, 2018 – 5:30 p.m.

City Utilities Biosolids Handling Facility – 6202 Lake Avenue

The meeting began with a tour of the Biosolids Handling Facility given by Water Pollution Control Plant Superintendent Brian Robinson and BHF Manager Travis Medina. Using a bus provided by Fox Contractors, UAG members toured areas where biosolids are stored and dried in windrows. They visited the public year waste drop off area and saw the areas where the City's yard waste and leaves are mixed with treated sewage sludge to make the biosolids product that is given away in small quantities and sold in large quantities.

### Attending

David Kohli, Northeast Area Partnership  
Pone Vongphachanh, Upstate Association of Realtors  
Beulah Matzack, Southwest Area Partnership  
Bryan McMillan, Southwest Area Partnership  
Elizabeth Garr, Hacienda Village  
Justin Brugger, Deputy Director for Finance and Chief Financial Officer, City Utilities  
Andrew Schipper, Manager of Water Engineering  
Joe Johnson, Superintendent of Water Pollution Control Maintenance  
Brian Robinson, Superintendent, Water Pollution Control Plant  
Kurt Roberts, Superintendent of Water Maintenance and Service  
Mike Gierscher, Superintendent, Water Filtration Plant  
Mary Jane Slaton, Program Manager, City Utilities

### David Kohli called the meeting to order at 6:25 PM.

Residents and staff members introduced themselves.

David announced that he has moved and will be resigning as co-chair of Northeast Area Partnership. He will stay on as a member of UAG.

### Water Rate Proposal Being Introduced

Justin Brugger and Andrew Schipper gave a presentation on City Utilities plan to increase water main replacement as a means to reduce water main breaks. The investments that City Utilities was able to make following the water rate increase that was approved in 2012 and implemented in 2013 has shown results with the number of main breaks trending downward. However, increasing costs of construction and inflation has reduced the amount of water mains CU has been able to replace for the past couple of years. No water rate increases were implemented in 2016, 2017 or 2018, but City Utilities is proposing a 5-year rate plan with increased proposed to be effective in 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023. Increases average 5.8% each year or between a \$1.30 and \$1.70 per month increase in water bills each year. The increase is expected to generate \$145 million in new revenue – the majority of which will be invested in distribution system improvements, including water main replacement. Distribution system improvements will be done via “pay-as-you-go” and



borrowing.

The rate increase plan will be presented to news media on Thursday, June 7, will be discussed at Board of Works on June 12 and introduced to City Council on June 12. Once Council approves, the rate case will be filed with the Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission (IURC). They have 300 days to consider and rule, so the first phase of the increase is likely to go into effect in 2019.

UAG members asked several questions including:

- What is the lifespan of plastic pipe? 75 – 100 years
- Is there a fixed portion of each water bill or is the entire bill based on consumption? Should City Utilities consider going to Council with a bigger adjustment to the fixed cost side of the rate (the monthly meter/service fee) or would City Utilities consider breaking out a charge that would be denoted on the bill as a “pipeline replacement” charge? There is a fixed cost portion to the bill but it does not cover all of the fixed costs of maintaining the entire water distribution system, especially when consumption per customer is going down but the Utility must still maintain the entire 1,403 miles of pipe.
- Has EPA hurt water utilities by mandating low flow appliances? The EPA mandates are good in some areas – especially where water supplies are limited. What drives rates differs between the west coast and the Midwest. Where water is in short supply, rates are driven by the need to develop new water sources. In the Midwest where water is more plentiful rates are being adjusted to compensate for increasing costs of construction and inflation.
- How will the additional revenue being generated by this increase be used? All of the additional funds will go into capital – much of it for water main replacement.
- Do you know yet how much sewer rates will be going up? A sewer rate increase of about 8% is already programmed to go into effect on Jan. 1, 2019.

### **Update on New Contract for Printing Bills**

City Utilities continue to work with the new bill print vendor – Wells Fargo – to get programming done so that bills can be printed by Wells with full details. An interim solution is being implemented as of May 31. A local company – PostMasters – will temporarily take over printing and mailing bills until Wells Fargo completes programming. Bills printed and mailed after May 31 will have details of usage.

Changes in bill printing has no impact on methods customers use to pay their bills. AutoPay arrangements are still in place and are unaffected, although it is uncertain if customers will be able to pay automatically using a credit or debit card. Currently that option is not available.

### **Departmental and Project Updates**

Brian Robinson, Water Pollution Control Plant

- Plant is wrapping up some small capital projects.
- Plant is working with dentists’ offices on implementation of the Dental Amalgam Rule – a new federal requirement that dentists offices install and maintain a separator to contain mercury-containing dental amalgam (fillings) that are removed from teeth. Dental offices are required to submit information to City Utilities about the equipment they have installed and how it is being maintained.
- Had approximately 300 people visit the Plant during tours offered this spring – several visitors commented that it is an amazing operation, they never realized the complexity of sewage treatment and they appreciate the fact that we have maintained the architectural style through all of the additions



- City Utilities has 10 or 20 interns for the summer. The plant has 4

#### Mike Gierscher, Filtration Plant

- Plant doing annual summer maintenance and doing work on the limestone masonry on the outside of the building
- Fort Wayne won the 2018 regional water taste contest sponsored by the Association of Rural Water
- As a result of some of the changes in the mix of disinfectants we use and going to a different grade of carbon that focuses more on reducing taste and odor in water, the Plant has been able to minimize taste and odor complaints this spring. In a typical year we may have some 200 calls about taste and odor – in spring 2018 we only received around 20.
- Plant had about 400 visitors during spring open house events.

#### Kurt Roberts, Water Maintenance and Service

- Lots of work underway including repair of main breaks
- City Utilities benchmarks to improve performance. Goal is to keep water interruptions due to main breaks to a minimum – hope to keep outages to 2 hours or less.
- Encourage motorists to slow down around crews when they are working to help us avoid accidents and injuries
- Kurt has hired 4 people who interned with City Utilities.
- UAG members would like to hold next meeting at FLP.

#### Joe Johnson, WPC Maintenance

- Challenge for sewer maintenance crews has been cave-ins
- Stressed reporting issues and concerns to 311
- Stormwater concerns always increase during and after rains. Encourage residents to report drainage issues to 311.

#### Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 PM

**Next Meeting: Wednesday, September 5, 2018 at 5:30 PM at the Three Rivers Water Filtration Plant.**

(Please contact Karen Salge at 427-5065 or at [karen.salge@cityoffortwayne.org](mailto:karen.salge@cityoffortwayne.org) if you are unable to attend. Thank you!)