

# STOUGHTON UTILITIES COMMITTEE REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Monday, July 20, 2020 – 5:30 p.m.

Stoughton, WI

Page No. 1

**Location:** Online Attendance: GoToMeeting ID 993-247-837.

**Members Present:** Citizen Member David Erdman (Chair), Alderperson Ben Heili (Vice-Chair), Alderperson Regina Hirsch, Alderperson Greg Jenson, Mayor Tim Swadley, Citizen Member Dustin Thoren

**Excused:** Citizen Member John Kallas

**Absent:** None

**Others Present:** Stoughton Director of Finance & Comptroller Jamin Friedl, Stoughton Utilities Assistant Director Brian Hoops, Stoughton Utilities Director Jill Weiss

**Call to Order:** Utilities Committee Chairperson David Erdman called the regular Stoughton Utilities Committee Meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

**Utilities Committee Consent Agenda:** Stoughton Utilities staff presented and discussed the Stoughton Utilities Committee consent agenda items.

Motion by Jenson, the motion seconded by Hirsch, to approve the following consent agenda items as presented:

- a. Draft Minutes of the June 15, 2020 Regular Utilities Committee Meeting
- b. Stoughton Utilities June Payments Due List Report
- c. Stoughton Utilities May Financial Summary
- d. Stoughton Utilities May Statistical Report
- e. Stoughton Utilities June Activities Report
- f. Communications

The motion carried unanimously 6 to 0.

**Status of the Utilities Committee recommendation(s) to the Stoughton Common Council:** Stoughton Utilities staff presented and discussed the following items from the Stoughton Utilities Committee that were approved and/or placed on file by the Stoughton Common Council:

**Consent Agenda:**

1. Draft Minutes of the May 18, 2020 Regular Utilities Committee Meeting
2. Stoughton Utilities May Payments Due List Report
3. Stoughton Utilities April Financial Summary
4. Stoughton Utilities April Statistical Report

**Business:**

1. Reallocation of 2020 Water Capital Improvement Project Funding
2. Determining that Threatened Damage to the Public Water Service Lines by a WDOT Construction Project Has Created an Emergency in Which the Public Health or Welfare of the City is Endangered
3. Award of 2020 Water Service Line Replacement Construction Contract 5-2020 to Parisi Construction Co., Inc.
4. Revised Agreement with WDOT for USH 51 Rehabilitation from Page Street to Hoel Avenue

Discussion followed.

# STOUGHTON UTILITIES COMMITTEE REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Monday, July 20, 2020 – 5:30 p.m.

Stoughton, WI

Page No. 2

**Award of the Telecommunications Make-Ready Work Contract to Hooper Corporation:** Stoughton Utilities staff presented and discussed the ongoing citywide telecommunication system deployment currently being undertaken by TDS Metrocom, Inc. As the owner of the utility poles in our service territory, Stoughton Utilities is obligated by our active licensing agreement for communications attachments and regulatory requirements to complete the construction work necessary to make the poles make-ready for new communications attachments.

All costs associated with this effort is billed to the owner of the communications attachments, and there is no rate impact to Stoughton Utilities ratepayers. To accommodate this work, Stoughton Utilities staff solicited bids for an overhead line construction contract. Bids were tabulated and evaluated, and our electrical engineering consultant that facilitated the bidding process has recommended that the contract be awarded to Hooper Corporation of Madison Wisconsin.

Motion by Heili, the motion seconded by Thoren, to approve and enter into an agreement with Hooper Corporation for the Electrical Distribution Line Pole Replacements Project S22-19F, conditioned upon approval as to form following attorney review, and recommend adoption of the corresponding resolution to the Stoughton Common Council at their July 28, 2020 meeting. The motion carried 6 to 0.

**Status Update: TDS Metrocom Fiber Deployment Project:** Stoughton Utilities staff presented and discussed the ongoing citywide telecommunication system deployment currently being undertaken by TDS Metrocom, Inc. SU has significant involvement in this project, as staff receives and approves pole attachment permits and facilitates boring operations. Staff has also been discussing the potential for obtaining a secured fiber optic communication network to our remote facility locations. Discussion followed.

**Stoughton Utilities Round-Up Program:** Stoughton Utilities staff presented and discussed the Stoughton Utilities Round-Up Program. A brief description and history of staff's efforts to recruit new organizations to apply for funding was provided to the committee. This is the second of two donations to be made using 2020 program funding, with an applicant pool of 18 local non-profit organizations. Discussion followed.

Motion by Erdman, the motion seconded by Heili, to donate \$1,000 from the Stoughton Utilities Round-Up Program fund to Stoughton Area Resource Team, Inc. (START). The motion carried unanimously 6 to 0.

**Wisconsin Public Service Commission Electric Billing Audit:** Stoughton Utilities staff presented and discussed the recent billing audit of the electric utility conducted by the Wisconsin Public Service Commission (WPSC). The WPSC conducts these audits to ensure that proper billing and collections procedures are in place and being followed so that customers' bills are accurate and processes are consistent with the WPSC Administrative Code and Wisconsin State Statutes.

The WPSC billing audit of Stoughton Utilities began in February 2019 and recently concluded, with one deficiency reported. This deficiency was that billing statements for street lighting did not detail the quantity and type of each street and security light and pole being billed. Updates have been made in our customer information system software to address this requirement, and such details will be included on future billing statements. Discussion followed.

**Customer Collections Status Report:** Stoughton Utilities staff presented and discussed an update on the current status of customer collections as a result of the COVID-19 public health crisis, and the status of current customer delinquencies.

The customer payment and delinquency data available at this time appears to indicate that although customer balances continue to increase, the number and amount of payments are increasing and the number of delinquent customers is decreasing. Delinquent balances are largely being accrued by the same customers that also do

# STOUGHTON UTILITIES COMMITTEE REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Monday, July 20, 2020 – 5:30 p.m.

Stoughton, WI

Page No. 3

not make payment whenever collection efforts are suspended, including annually during the winter cold-weather disconnection moratorium.

Staff also discussed available energy assistance funding. Staff has been proactively reaching out to delinquent customers by phone to inform them of expanded assistance availability, and as a result have noticed a significant increase (1,531%) in assistance payments received from the state program compared to the same period last year.

Staff discussed our future collections efforts as we recover delinquencies resulting from the suspension of collection activities. All collections were suspended in March, and the Wisconsin Public Service Commission has issued an order allowing utilities to resume collections as of July 15, 2020. SU intends to make numerous attempts to contact delinquent customers, leading up to service disconnections of severely delinquent customers on August 26, 2020. Special considerations will be given to all customers that experienced a household COVID-19 infection at any time since March.

Staff discussed our ongoing Community Recharge Customer Incentive, partnering with the Stoughton Chamber of Commerce. Through the end of September, SU will double all Chamber Bucks purchases up to \$50 per customer to help encourage spending at local businesses that may have been negatively impacted by COVID-19. This program is also available to assist with payment of Stoughton Utilities account balances.

Discussion followed. At the committee's request, staff will continue to provide updates on customer delinquencies and cash flow on a quarterly basis.

**Status Update: Lead Service Line Replacement Programs:** Stoughton Utilities staff presented and discussed efforts that have occurred in the past year since the utility was notified of the lead action exceedance. Many efforts have been completed or are currently underway as staff proceeds with the creation of a program to replace lead service lines throughout the City of Stoughton. Efforts include:

- Ongoing discussions with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) regarding potential financial assistance programs.
- Lead service line identification and inventory record updates.
- Submittal of parcel and lead service line data to the WDNR for the completion of an environmental impact study.
- Council approval of an ordinance declaring lead service lines a public nuisance and mandating their removal.
- Completion of the request for qualifications (RFQ) process for licensed plumbers and utility contractors interested in participating in the private lead service line replacement program. This list of qualified contractors will be provided to property owners with lead service lines.
- Completion of the replacement of publicly-owned lead service lines along West Main Street in the Wisconsin Department of Transportation construction project area.
- Completion of the replacement of publicly-owned lead service lines in the Prospect, McKinley, and Grant Street neighborhood, and partnership with home owners replacing their privately-owned lead service lines as part of the same project.
- Continuation of a public education program, including distribution of our annual Consumer Confidence Report that highlighted lead service lines and sampling results, and other educational and informational communications to the community on lead service lines.

# STOUGHTON UTILITIES COMMITTEE REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Monday, July 20, 2020 – 5:30 p.m.

Stoughton, WI

Page No. 4

Discussion followed.

**Stoughton Utilities Environmental Sustainability:** Utilities Committee Vice-Chairman Heili presented this item and discussed that discussions have been ongoing at the City of Stoughton Community Affairs and Council Policy (CACP) Committee as well as at the Stoughton Utilities Committee related to environmental sustainability. This topic was to discuss topics that were discussed during the July 7, 2020 meeting of the CACP

Stoughton Utilities staff discussed several topics related to environmental sustainability, including answers to questions that had been raised at the July 7, 2020 meeting of the City of Stoughton Community Affairs and Council Policy Committee related to renewable energy and green tariffs. Staff informed the committee that WPPI Energy was preparing to take the rate tariff for the optional Choose Renewable Program to the Wisconsin Public Service Commission to modify and reduce the customer participation costs. Discussion followed.

**Utilities Committee Future Agenda Items:** Staff informed the committee that upcoming meeting topics include the annual wastewater collection system maintenance annual report (CMAR), updates on the lead service line replacement program, and updates to the Stoughton Utilities Choose Renewable program. Discussion followed.

**Adjournment:** Being no further business before the committee, the Chair adjourned the regular Stoughton Utilities Committee Meeting at 6:51 p.m.

Respectfully submitted

Brian R. Hoops

Stoughton Utilities Assistant Director