

**CITY OF BELLEVUE  
ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMISSION  
MEETING MINUTES**

Thursday  
May 6, 2021  
6:30 p.m.

Zoom

**1. CALL TO ORDER:**

The meeting was called to order by Chair Knezevic at 6:30 p.m.

**ROLL CALL**

**COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:** Vanja Knezevic (Chair), Diann Strom (Vice Chair), Neal Hines, Anne Howe, Negin Khanloo, Ken Wan

**COUNCIL LIAISON:** Conrad Lee

**COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:** Ling Zhuang

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Brian Bartle, Utilities Deputy Director; Linda De Boldt, Utilities Engineering Assistant Director; Brian Landau, Utilities Engineering Planning Manager; Cherish Jackson, Utilities Senior Administrative Assistant; Joe Harbour, Utilities Operations and Maintenance Assistant Director; Todd Dahlberg, Utilities Business Services Manager; Tony Marcum, Utilities Operations and Maintenance Manager; Ryan Shelton, Utilities Engineering Construction Manager; Debbie Harris, Utilities Engineering Project Management Manager; and Laurie Hugdahl, Minutes Taker

**2. TEMPORARY SUSPENSION OF BYLAWS**

Chair Knezevic and Deputy Director Brian Bartle read an introductory statement regarding online meetings and procedures.

**3. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

**Motion made by Commissioner Wan, seconded by Vice Chair Strom, to approve the agenda. The agenda was approved unanimously (6-0).**

**4. ORAL and WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS**

Cheryl Pietramonaco, 3445 92<sup>nd</sup> Avenue NE, Yarrow Point 98004, explained that she would like to opt out of a Smart Water Meter because of her concern about potentially harmful harmonic signals going through the water.

**5. COMMUNICATION FROM CITY COUNCIL, COMMUNITY COUNCIL, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS**

Councilmember Lee gave an update on Affordable Housing efforts in Bellevue. He explained that staff is very busy despite the challenges associated with COVID-19. Housing prices have always been a challenge in Bellevue because of the high demand. Additionally, Amazon coming to Bellevue will exacerbate the situation by bringing 25,000 more people to the City in the next year or two. More housing options are needed. Also, there is pressure to provide appropriate housing options for seniors who are downsizing and want to stay in Bellevue. Sound Transit coming to the City provides an opportunity to create transit-oriented development and related resources. All of these things are creating an increased demand for housing with not a lot of land available. Staff is working on providing a streamlined process to help keep down the cost for development as well as economic incentives. Housing is one of the primary focuses of the City. He welcomed commissioners to reach out with any questions.

**6. STAFF REPORTS**

None

**7. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**a) 4/1/21 MINUTES**

**Motion made by Vice Chair Strom, seconded by Commissioner Khanloo to approve the 4/1/21 minutes as presented. Upon a roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously (6-0).**

**8. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

None

**9. NEW BUSINESS**

**a) Non-Communicating Water Meter Service Program**

Todd Dahlberg, Utilities Business Services Manager, explained that staff was seeking the ESC's recommendation on the proposed Non-communicating Water Meter Service Program. The purpose of the program is to provide existing customers a transitional exception to the Smart Water Meter program. This would address a small number of residential customers who do not want a communicating Smart Meter on their property.

Mr. Dahlberg reviewed some background and the status of Bellevue's Smart Water Meter program. The new water meter standard will include a digital meter plus a cellular transmitter. Previously this was a radio transmitter that would relay information to a new network; however, technology has changed, and it will now be using a common cellular transmitter. This means the City will not need to create and maintain a new network to collect this information.

Benefits to the Smart Water Meter program include understanding and managing water consumption, detecting possible leaks earlier, eliminating manual meter reading, simplifying and improving billing, and improving water system management. Installation of 10,000 residential meters and field testing of cellular transmitters has begun. Cellular transmitter installation is scheduled to begin in Q3 of 2021.

A small number of customers have communicated that they do not want Smart Water Meters. Mr. Dahlberg discussed the potential Non-Communicating Water Service including customer impacts, eligibility, application, and fees. The Non-Communicating Water Service would still require a new digital meter, but it would not include the cellular transmitter. Customers who choose Non-Communicating Water Service would be unable to receive timely water consumption data to manage bills. They would be unable to receive AMI continuous flow alerts to identify potential leaks and would be ineligible for leak adjustments. Additionally, they would be subject to new fees in order to recover the costs of the program. This service would only be available to existing single-family customers through mid 2022. The long-term goal is to have no non-communicating meter service. This is intended to only be a transitional exception to the standard water meter service.

#### Commissioner Comments and Questions:

Commissioner Wan asked for a response to Ms. Pietramonaco's concerns voiced earlier in the meeting. Mr. Dahlberg expressed confidence that the devices are safer than many usual household devices like a personal cell phone or microwave. The meters are located outside at the curb, in a box underground with a heavy lid, and only transmit for a few seconds a day.

Commissioner Wan asked why Bellevue is considering the transitional exception at all for such a small number of people when the department is trying to streamline. Mr. Dahlberg explained that opt-out programs for water AMI is not a common practice across Washington, and Bellevue Utilities cares very much about customer satisfaction. This is a step along that path. He agreed it would be easier not to offer this, but staff

understand concerns that some customers have raised. Deputy Director Bartle invited commissioners to weigh in on their opinion of this.

Commissioner Wan asked if the terms and conditions for those opting out are flexible enough to result in a net zero cost for the City. He spoke to the importance of the City not incurring any costs as a result of this program. Mr. Dahlberg confirmed this was the intent.

Commissioner Hines recommended creating materials to help people understand the impacts of this compared to other household items including the dosage and frequency. Mr. Dahlberg agreed.

Commissioner Howe expressed appreciation for the sentiments of Commissioners Wan and Hines. She emphasized that the Utility should not cover any costs at all as a result of any customers opting out. She asked why they were allowing renters to participate in the exception program. Mr. Dahlberg explained that renters would need approval of the property owner to not install a Smart Water Meter. Commissioner Howe expressed concern about what would happen when the renter moved out. Mr. Dahlberg noted that when the renter moved out it would trigger a communication with the property owner. Commissioner Howe suggested exploring this a little more.

Commissioner Howe agreed with getting information out to property owners so they have the best information about this technology. Mr. Dahlberg agreed and noted there is also information on the website about this. He noted that only a few customers have expressed concerns about health impacts. Of the 25 who have indicated they want to opt out, most would just like to know more about it. Commissioner Howe also questioned why they were doing this program at all for such a small group in the population.

Commissioner Khanloo asked about the process for communicating with new property owners about transitioning to Smart Water Meters. Deputy Director Bartle explained that when the new owner registers for water service it will trigger staff to install the new meter.

Commissioner Wan asked if there would be a time limit for this transitional program. Mr. Dahlberg explained that as intended there is no time limit for current property owners who have chosen to opt out.

Vice Chair Strom spoke to the importance of making sure that this program pays for itself and isn't paid for by other customers.

Motion made by Commissioner Khanloo to move forward with the plan as presented. The motion died for lack of a second.

Motion made by Commissioner Hines to move forward with the plan but with a cap on the number of years and a cost-benefit analysis for looking at the manual meter reading. Deputy Director Bartle suggested having a discussion first to hammer out some of the details before making a motion to simplify the process. The motion was withdrawn.

Chair Knezevic asked why Bellevue was doing this when no other cities are. Deputy Director Bartle explained that this came about when customers heard the City was planning on using radio frequency (RF) technology with collectors on street poles. Since Utilities has decided to change technology to use the existing cellular networks they have not come back to the ESC to ask if the Commission still supports the option to opt out. They have also not had in-depth communication or conversations with customers about this change. Mr. Dahlberg thought that the customers who were against this would feel the same regardless of the technology used. Deputy Director Bartle added that the 25 who have opted out have not seen the proposed fees yet, so that number could change if they aren't willing to pay the monthly fees.

Commissioner Khanloo disagreed with putting a cap on time limit for having the exception. She felt the City should provide the option to opt-out for people who for any reason do not feel comfortable using the technology.

Commissioner Hines noted that with the brief transaction of cellular data he was challenged to think that there was any additional risk to what already exists in people's homes. He also expressed concern about dedicating city staff to potentially decades of manual reading for an unknown number of customers.

Commissioner Howe expressed concern about the cost effectiveness of this. She worried that the efficiency of the Smart Water Meter program could be lost if too many people want to opt out.

Commissioner Wan summarized that the Commission appears to be concerned about the lack of a time limit for those who opt out and also the potential cost to the City.

Chair Strom agreed and suggested a two-year time limit and also a recommendation that any fees should change to reflect any changes to costs to the City.

Commissioner Wan spoke in support of the two-year limit. After further discussion it was determined that most of the commissioners did not support the program.

**Motion made by Chair Knezevic, seconded by Commissioner Howe, to recommend against this Non-Communicating Meter Service to Council. Motion passed (4-2).**

**b) Life Cycle of an Asset - Informational Briefing**

Assistant Director Linda De Boldt presented an informational briefing on the work Utilities does to manage infrastructure assets. She presented background about why the life cycle of infrastructure assets is important and discussed the components of Utilities Water, Sewer and Stormwater infrastructure assets. The Water Utility serves about 40,000+ accounts. It has 606 miles of water main pipes, 24 water reservoirs, 22 pump stations, 63 pressure zones, and 5,800+ fire hydrants. The Sewer Utility also serves about 40,000+ accounts and covers 13,000+ maintenance holes, 516 miles of mainline pipe, 120 miles of lateral pipes, 47 pump and flush stations, and 34 major connections to King County wastewater system. The Stormwater Utility serves about 33,000 customer accounts and covers 81 miles of open streams, 864 acres of protected wetlands, 21,385 public storm drains, 408 miles of pipes, 86 miles of open ditches, 11 regional detention facilities, 350+ residential detention facilities and 900+ privately-owned facilities.

In general, there are six phases that an asset travels through during its life cycle. These include Operations & Maintenance; Planning; CIP Budgeting; Project Management & Design; and Construction. Utilities performs various functions in each phase of an asset's life cycle. Asset management involves implementing leading best practices to effectively and efficiently deliver reliable and sustainable service to customers and community at the lowest costs. Utilities Asset Management Principals include adopting a life cycle approach; balancing risk, cost and performance; emphasizing environmental and financial stewardship; maintaining robust systems to manage and analyze information; and committing to continuous improvement.

Tony Marcum, Operations & Maintenance (O&M) Manager, described the work his division performs to operate and maintain the utility infrastructure. He explained that most of what they do extends the useful life of the city's assets through preventative and corrective maintenance programs. Data analysis is critical as an indicator of performance and efficiency. This helps to make informed decisions and to meet regulatory and safety requirements.

Key programs for the Water Utility include the hydrant and valve survey; , maintenance and repair programs (water main & service line repair, hydrants/valves, , reservoirs, pumps and backup generators); SCADA analysis; and regulatory compliance. Wastewater key program areas are condition assessment using CCTV/video inspection, system cleaning, manhole inspection, and the repair program. Surface and Stormwater key program areas include inspection, system cleaning, construction, condition assessment (CCTV/video inspection) regulatory compliance (NPDES permit) and special projects such as large-scale stream excavations to remove sediment or projects to rehabilitate storm infrastructure. O&M meets with Engineering quarterly to review issues that have arisen. Those issues are prioritized for repair or replacement. O&M is also very involved with any CIP project and regularly coordinate with Engineering on larger projects .

Brian Landau, Utilities Planning Manager, explained that the Utilities Planning section plans for short-term and long-term operational sustainability and capital improvements that protect public safety, human health, the environment and meet customer service levels for the city's utilities. Additionally, the Planning section develops and tracks the implementation of the system plans, monitors and models Utilities systems to analyze capital improvements and operations to help make informed system recommendations, leads the coordination of system improvements for city and regional projects, and engages with regional and regulatory efforts to inform system planning. Utilities system plans update utility policies and recommend future engineering planning studies and capital programs to maintain or improve the performance of utilities. More specific planning studies address system risks and recommend capital and operational improvements to meet service levels.

In the Water Utility, current studies underway address the Seismic Vulnerability Assessment & Resiliency Plan, the Emergency Water Supply Plan, Reservoir Structural & Seismic Study, and the West Operating Area Reservoir Siting Study. In the Wastewater Utility, current planning studies include the Lake Washington Lake Lines Management Plan; Sewer Force Main Condition Assessment; and Medina, Somerset, and Fairweather Infiltration/Inflow Analysis. In the Storm and Surface Water Utility current planning studies include the Watershed Management Plan and the Stream Culvert Condition Assessment.

The Planning section is responsible for leading the development of the Utilities 7-Year Capital Investment Program (CIP). This involves identifying problems, identifying projects to address those problems,

prioritizing projects, identifying resources, and proposing budgets for those programs.

Debbie Harris, Project Management Manager, explained that Project Management provides Business Case Analysis (BCA), design, construction documents, and obtains permits and property rights for the CIP projects. Their work includes developing, controlling, and monitoring the project. The BCA allows staff to review the problem in more detail, develop alternatives, collect data & develop life cycle costs, perform Triple Bottom Line (TBL) economic analysis and select the preferred alternative. Once the alternative is selected the design process begins followed by advertisement, bid and award of the project.

Ryan Shelton, Construction Manager, explained that the construction team manages the construction project to make sure the project is built according to scope, schedule and budget. The team ensures adherence to the design plans and specifications, ensures adherence to the permit requirements, performs quality control and coordinates with the community members, external agencies, O&M, other departments, etc. Mr. Shelton highlighted some of the complex types of construction the construction team regularly oversees and examples of infrastructure from development projects. Assistant Director De Boldt gave an update on the Pike's Peak Reservoir Replacement project and wrapped up the presentation. There were no comments or questions following the presentation.

#### **10. REVIEW OF COMMISSION & COUNCIL CALENDARS**

Deputy Director Brian Bartle reviewed the calendars. There were no questions regarding the Council Calendar. The ESC Calendar has a full agenda for June. Staff is proposing to move the recess from August to the July meeting. Commissioners expressed support for the change in date for the recess.

#### **11. ADJOURNMENT**

**Motion made by Chair Knezevic, seconded by Commissioner Khanloo, to adjourn the meeting. Upon a roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously (6-0).**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:53 p.m.