



WATONGA PUBLIC WORKS AUTHORITY MINUTES FOR APRIL 19, 2022

In accordance with the Oklahoma Open Meeting Law, this Agenda was posted April 14, 2022 Prior to 5:00 PM. at the Main Street Entrance of Watonga City Hall, located at 410 West Main Street, Watonga, Oklahoma.

The Watonga Public Works Authority (PWA) of Watonga did meet immediately following Watonga City Council Meeting at 6:00 PM on Tuesday, April 19, 2022 in the Conference Room of Watonga City Hall, located at 410 West Main Street, Watonga Oklahoma, for a scheduled meeting.

Council Present: Mayor Bill Seitter, Travis Bradt, Allen Cowan, Adam Tock and Ladina Willis. Also present, City Manager Karrie Beth Little, City Attorney Jared Harrison and City Clerk Verlen Bills

Declaration of a Quorum: at 7:27 PM.

AGENDA

1. **Approve the minutes** of the previous PWA Meeting held March 15, 2022.

Motion to approve the minutes of the previous PWA Meeting held March 15, 2022 was made by Travis Bradt and seconded by Ladina Willis.

Mayor Seitter, hearing no further comment, called for a vote;

T. Bradt aye A. Cowan aye A. Tock aye L. Willis aye B. Seitter aye

Motion carried.

2. **Review and accept the list of Claims** against the Watonga PWA for the month of March 2022.

Mr. Cowan asked, on page 5 under MidState Traffic Control.

Ms. Little: This was an invoice that we had to create because it had to come out of a different account, and then we had to back it out. That is why you see the entries zeroed out. The second part is where we have the \$35,300. If you look all the way to the right side that says Amount Open, that is the total of \$47,500 which is actually the invoice amount from Midstate. We had to do this to get the purchase orders corrected. It looks like \$95,000 but balances back out to the \$47,500.

Mr. Cowan asked about the fence repairs at the Airport.

Ms. Little: The fence has been hit three times. Each time we turned it in to OMAG and it cost us \$1,000 each time. OMAG has gone after the responsible parties and we have received back some of that \$3,000.00

Allen Cowan made the motion to approve the List Claims against the Watonga PWA for the month of March 2022. Motion was seconded by Ladina Willis.

Mayor Seitter, hearing no further comment, called for a vote;

T. Bradt aye A. Cowan aye A. Tock aye L. Willis aye B. Seitter aye

Motion carried.

3. **Consideration, Discussion and Action:** To approve a Memorandum of Understanding between the Indian Health Service and the Watonga Public Works for financial assistance with a Water Treatment Plant.

Mr. Bradt asked Mr. Harrison, have you reviewed all of this?

Mr. Harrison: It's been a little while, but yes, we did go through this. And the big question is, how do we fund it? It is nice to get \$200,000 plus, but on a \$2 million plus project?

Ms. Little: This is a Capital Improvement Line item that is unfunded, but it is a known that is going to have happen. We are under a DEQ Consent Order. It is not, if we can do this, it is a when are we going to get it done. To help secure some funding we need to sign this agreement.

We have asked for two changes. They did change the date of the project to December of 2023 which will give us more time and we are still within compliance of the DEQ Consent Order. This agreement is not set in stone. This project is only a proposal. If the project changes we can still use this funding mechanism. This may not cost us \$2.5 million, but Indian Health Service (IHS) procured this \$213,000 for us. Or they could find more aid for us. Basically we need to secure this funding with IHS so that they won't release it to someone else and that is what this document does.

Mayor Seitter: We are still researching all of our options.

Ms. Little: We have sent the original Monsoon Consultants Engineering Documents to another engineering firm for review and they will come back with some other options. I'm not convinced that we have all of our options on the table just yet. That is what the second firm is going to look at this for us.

Mayor Seitter: It could also be as simple as drilling new wells.

Ms. Little: Or a smaller version of the \$2.5 million project that would still meet DEQ requirements. After some discussions we are kind of leaning that way. We will still have to treat the water, that we know. But it may not require as large of facility as originally thought.

Ladina Willis made the motion To approve a Memorandum of Understanding between the Indian Health Service and the Watonga Public Works for financial assistance with a Water Treatment Plant. Motion was seconded by Allen Cowan.

Mayor Seitter, hearing no further comment, called for a vote;

T. Bradt aye A. Cowan aye A. Tock aye L. Willis aye B. Seitter aye

Motion carried.

4. **Consideration, Discussion and Action:** To approve an agreement with Garver Engineering, Work Order No. 20W0261 for a Rural Economic Action Plan (REAP) Grant BL22-4 for the Watonga Wastewater Treatment Plant.

Ms. Little: This is on both agendas because it needs both factors. The REAP grant is with the City of Watonga. However, the infrastructure of this project is through the Public Works Authority. This is on both agendas so that we can accept the grant on the behalf of both parties.

Motion was made by Ladina Willis and seconded by Allen Cowan to approve an agreement with Garver Engineering, Work Order No. 20W0261 for a Rural Economic Action Plan (REAP) Grant BL22-4 for the Watonga Wastewater Treatment Plant.

Mayor Seitter, hearing no further comment, called for a vote;

T. Bradt aye A. Cowan aye A. Tock aye L. Willis aye B. Seitter aye

Motion carried.

5. **Discussion Only:** Overall operations of the garbage collection service for the City of Watonga.

Ms. Little: Unfortunately, we've kind of reached a bit of an impasse with the City's garbage collections because of staffing. This has to happen every day. It is a citizen provided service. We have not been able to garner staffing for that service. It requires a Commercial Drivers License (CDL) Driver to drive the truck. We all know that changed as of February 1. We can no longer be competitive with salary for CDL Drivers. Right now we're paying \$14.50 and elsewhere they're getting \$25.00. CDL Drivers are not even looking at us as a possible employer. All municipalities in our area are experiencing this same problem. This is not an unknown. In addition to that, this is not the most sought after position in the job market. Most only take this job out of desperation. We are at the point, every day we have to choose, do we want to work on the streets or do we need to get the garbage picked up? Right now we are picking up garbage because that is what has to be done.

And we are short staffed. Right now we are three people short. If we hired those three and moved to a different form of operation, we would need to address their longevity and where to position the staffing. But right now, we just can not even fill some of those positions that have been open since November of last year. Nobody wants the job or they do not qualify for various reasons.

Ms. Little continued: Our contract with Oklahoma Environmental Management Authority (OEMA) is due next year. In 2023 we are talking about garbage service. We are talking about our truck fleet, we have three garbage trucks, one of those is leased and it is in the shop. We continue to have truck problems. They are old and outdated. Our current trucks are rear loaded and requires three personnel to operate. New trucks are front loading and only require a driver to do the complete operation.

I have been talking and reaching out to other municipalities, Kingfisher being one of them. I talked to the Town Manager of Okeene. They have gone to a contract garbage service. He said it was rough at first, but it is smooth sailing now. Geary also does contracted garbage services. Really, we are one of the unique cities around that still operate our own garbage service. We are talking with Ms. Phillips and Mr. Harrison, just superficially, about funding, but we are already paying to run the garbage service, it does not pay for itself.

Mayor Seitter: How much is it costing us?

Ms. Little: about \$30,000 a year, and that is a really rough number. It will probably be more this year because we are replacing more tires and having more breakdowns. We have a garbage truck that they can not even get parts for right now. We are having to work with them just to get it back in operation.

Looking forward, the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) is coming up with more strict standards. We are not in the trash business for residual, we are just in the trash business as a service. So we felt this needs to be talked about. It is the elephant in the room that no one wants to notice. No one wants to address the service because everybody likes it the way it is. But as a City, we need to look at it financially and realistically and set goals. It is time we start having conversations. What is a contract going to cost us? Is that something we can do? But we are at that point.

Ms. Willis: Right now, it takes three guys to run the garbage truck, but the new trucks only require one?

Ms. Little: We currently do not own any of the new style trucks.

Ms. Willis: Do we have any numbers to compare the cost of running our current trucks with three personnel versus a new truck with only one driver?

Ms. Little: If that's the conversations we need to get into, then we can do so. If this is not the road the Council wants then we will continue to try to figure out what we need to do. Potentially, we may need to raise rates, but we have to make the decision.

Mr. Bradt: Are our residential garbage rates the same for everybody? How much is our garbage rate.

Ms. Little: It is \$20.53 for all residential.

Mayor Seitter: Is it the same as other communities?

Ms. Little: I have not looked into that far, I do know for certain, but we are higher than some of the communities around us.

Mr. Tock: We are looking at two options, we either hire a CDL driver that can operate a vehicle that we will need to purchase or we contract of garbage service.

Ms. Little: Do we want to go the contracting route or not? Because if you do not want to go the contracting route and venture into those conversations, then we are definitely going to have to change the budget because it is going to need more funding.

Ms. Willis: I would like to know the reasoning for other communities that have contracted garbage service. What was the thinking behind that?

Ms. Little: These other communities were in the same situation we face now. They were just outdated.

Mr. Harrison: To the question of why, I have Kingfisher as an example. When Kingfisher was going through this we heard the exact same story, the same question you are asking, what would happen if we switched over and went to this other style of garbage truck? Every dumpster in town has to change, every single one because they were all rear load. Every dumpster in town would need to be a front load. It is not just a matter of a new garbage truck.

Mr. Harrison explained the difference between a front load and a rear load. And the front load is all done with one person, poly carts included. So it is not just a matter of whether we can find the funds for a garbage truck or two, but how are we going to change out all the dumpster in town.

Ms. Willis: I just want to look at options. I have seen several different companies with different styles of trucks, but they were all handled by one operator.

Mr Tock: agreed, there are several truck technologies available but we will pay a lot for some of this.

Ms. Willis: We may need to go that way, but we are not seeing any cost comparisons verses the three employees.

Mr. Harrison: I can give you some numbers to start with. In Watonga residential garbage service is \$23.53 per month. In Kingfisher, with our contract service, the citizens pay \$13.89. Kingfisher use OEMA and they provide the large residential poly carts.

Every city will go through a big uproar and anger, we're changing our trash service. It happened in Kingfisher, Okarche and Hennessy. It sounds like it happened in Enid, and if you ask, it probably happened in Geary because it is a change. But once everybody gets used to it, the trash gets picked up regularly, the street department people can go work on the streets and things start to get cleaned up a little bit more. It ends up being a good thing. And I think it ends up being a cost savings to citizens or customers.

Now, the devil is in the details, you need to see what the contract is. It's a longer drive to Watonga than maybe El Reno or Oklahoma City or wherever their main dump is located, the contract will be different for different cities.

Mr. Harrison continued: I think I'm with Ms. Little, you almost have to look at the contracting alternative because it is the way everyone else is going. If you do a lot of garbage, it can be big money. But you only do a little bit of garbage, it's just a money horde and it will not get any cheaper or easier with DEQ changing the rules on us. We just cannot keep up and sometimes it's nice just to let someone else deal with it. I do think we should look at all the option, and that is what this discussion is for.

Ms. Little: It has come to that point. We are short of staff and the City just cannot afford to pay for CDL drivers or other employees. The Insurance Carrier considers this a Safety Sensitive Position and then there are other requirements that go along with that.

Mr. Tock: Do we have any CDL Drivers left?

Ms. Little: Yes, but if we run a holiday schedule then we need two operating trucks to stay caught up. What do we do if a driver wants to take time off?

We are just not competitive in that job market where we can keep the staff for that. 10 years ago, this wasn't a conversation.

Mayor Seitter: We are short staffed and have been so for awhile.

Ms. Little: Yes and we cannot hire the staff because we can not pay the salary required for a CDL Driver.

Mayor Seitter: The other employees on the garbage truck are not the main issue, primarily, we are having trouble hiring and retaining CDL Drivers.

In my opinion we need to start pursuing what it would cost to contract our garbage service and what all is involved. The other thing is, and I would hope that Mr. Dudley with the newspaper (present) will help us with this, is to start educating the community very soon. Not that we are going to do this right now, but why are we looking at this now. We are short of staff, we cannot afford CDL Drivers and then the DEQ requirements that are forthcoming. This is costing the City approximately \$30,000 or maybe more. Staffing has been a problem for some time and now we have other issues coming up that are forcing us to look at alternatives.

There were multiple conversations dealing with who would provided the new dumpsters and poly carts, what would we do with the old containers and who would own the new containers. How would people dispose of their old containers if they were no longer needed. How will the public perceive this. We need to educate our public.

One point came out that this would probably be defined in the contract.

Mr. Tock noted that it may not matter, there are trucks that can deal with all styles of garbage containers.

Mr. Harrison: The Oklahoma Environmental Management Authority (OEMA) is a Title 60 Public Trust, so it simplifies the contracting as a whole. It makes it so we can just go and talk to them. At the same time, I think several other private garbage services have been mentioned and we should talk to them also. They most likely would want a chance to quote something like this.

With OEMA the process is easier, it is an intergovernmental agreement similar to what we did with Blaine County earlier this evening. And the City already has an agreement with them for other services.

Ms. Little: We are currently in a long term contract with OEMA and have been for many years.

Mr. Tock: Do we know the age of the trucks and what the trucks are costing us now, and how much longer is the lease on the one truck?

Ms. Little: The lease is costing us about \$2000.00 a month and it is an open end lease. We just return the truck when we are finished with it.

It was agreed that garbage trucks are expensive and get more so as they get older.

Mr. Harrison: The garbage service contract did include considerations for the trucks, just do not expect to get much.

Mr Bradt: Getting people to change habits will not be easy, it will take time.

Ms. Little thanked the Council for their input and she will continue to move forward with this.

6. **Comments:**

(none)

7. **Adjourn:**

Motion to adjourn was made by Travis Bradt and seconded by Allen Cowan.

Mayor Seitter, hearing no further comment, called for a vote;

T. Bradt aye A. Cowan aye A. Tock aye L. Willis aye B. Seitter aye

Motion carried at 8:02 PM.

Mayor Bill Seitter

City Clerk Verlen Bills