



NORWICH BOARD OF PUBLIC UTILITIES' COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING
May 26, 2020

The Regular May Meeting of the Norwich Board of Public Utilities' Commissioners was held on Tuesday, May 26, 2020, by webinar.

Item 1. The Meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Chairman Robert Staley.

Present: Chairman Robert Staley, Vice Chairman Stewart Peil, Secretary Steven Becker, Commissioner Michael Goldblatt and Commissioner William Warzecha. Also in attendance General Manager Chris LaRose, and NPU staff members Steve Sinko, Kerri Kemp, Jeff Brining, Michele Addabbo, Laura Huren, Eric McDermott, Larry Sullivan, Mark Decker, Ruth Swift, Fawn Walker, Marylou Rychling, Chris Riley, Barry Ellison, Jeff Lortie and Rich LaMarche.

Item 2. Fifteen-Minute Public Comment Period. None.

Item 3. Minutes of the Regular April Meeting, held on Tuesday, April 28, 2020. Commissioner Warzecha, seconded by Commissioner Goldblatt moved to approve the Minutes of the Regular April Meeting held on Tuesday, April 28, 2020. Unanimously approved.

Item 4. Leadership Team Update. Informative.

Item 5. Financial Report. Discussion of the Financial Report was held in the COVID-19 Presentation.

Item 6. CMEEC Update. Vice Chairman Peil gave an update to the Board. Discussion followed.

Item 7. APGA SOAR Award. Barry Ellison presented the Board with information regarding the recent APGA SOAR award achieved by NPU. Commissioner Goldblatt, seconded by Vice Chairman Peil moved to approve the following Resolution. Unanimously approved.

NPU Board of Commissioners Resolution

Whereas, in 1904 the citizens of the City of Norwich approved the purchase of the Norwich Gas & Electric Company, believing that establishing municipal ownership was in the best interest of the community; and

Whereas, by establishing municipal ownership of the Gas & Electric Company, Norwich joined the growing list of American communities that benefit from public gas systems, recognizing it as a reliable and responsive service; and

Whereas, as the municipal utility created by the City of Norwich, Norwich Public Utilities (NPU) has the responsibility to meet or exceed expectations by providing utility services in a safe, efficient, reliable and environmental conscious manner to the community it serves; and,

Whereas, In May, 2020, NPU was selected by the American Public Gas Association (APGA) Operations and Safety Committee as having demonstrated excellence in the four areas of system integrity, system improvement, employee safety, and workforce development; and,

Whereas, in recognition thereof, NPU was presented with the prestigious APGA System Operational Achievement Recognition (SOAR) Silver for excellence in operating its natural gas utility.

Now therefore be it resolved, that we, the Board of Public Utilities Commissioners for the City of Norwich, do hereby recognize and commend the men and women of Norwich Public Utilities for the outstanding efforts made in achieving the APGA's SOAR award and all that it represents and for their dedicated service the Norwich community.

Item 8. Strategic Presentations. Special Payment Arrangements (SPA) program. Jeff Brining presented the Board with information regarding the SPA program. Discussion followed.

COVID-19 Actions and Plan Presentation. General Manager LaRose and Laura Huren presented the Board with information on the financial impact of COVID-19 to NPU. Discussion followed.

Retirement Incentive Program. Steve Sinko and General Manager LaRose presented the Board with information on a proposed Retirement Incentive Program. Discussion followed. Vice Chairman Peil, seconded by Secretary Becker moved to approve the third option of the Retirement Incentive Program as presented. Commissioner Warzecha stated he would like the payouts of sick and vacation time for employees extended and a letter from the Pension Board stating it wouldn't affect the overall health of the fund. Voted in favor: Chairman Staley, Vice Chairman Peil, Secretary Becker and Commissioner Goldblatt. Voted against: Commissioner Warzecha. Motion was passed.

Chairman Staley addressed the Board regarding the unions at NPU deferring their contractual wage increases until December 10, 2020 as a means of helping the organization through a challenging financial period related to the Pandemic. Commissioner Goldblatt, seconded by Vice Chairman Peil moved to approve the following resolution. Unanimously approved.

NPU Board of Commissioners Resolution

Whereas, the citizens of Norwich have been impacted by the worldwide Covid-19 Pandemic, resulting in unprecedented business closures, loss of employment and economic hardship; and

Whereas, Norwich Public Utilities (NPU) employees, represented by AFSCME, IBEW and Steelworkers unions, all recognized the significant financial impact that the Pandemic is having on NPU and our community; and

Whereas, as NPU employees remain committed to meeting the needs of our customers every day and, through their unions, have approved numerous Memorandum of Agreement to allow for greater flexibility in scheduling and operations that have benefitted NPU as an organization, and

Whereas, as NPU is likely to experience significant financial challenges into the future, employees quickly and overwhelmingly agreed to defer July 1, 2020 contractual wage increases for a period of six months as a way to support the day-to-day operation of the utility; and

Whereas, this agreement between NPU and the three bargaining units represents another demonstration of the commitment NPU's employees have for the organization and their customers.

Now therefore be it resolved, that we, the Board of Public Utilities Commissioners for the City of Norwich, do hereby formally express our appreciation to every employee for their ongoing contributions to the continued success of NPU and to their demonstrated commitment to the community they serve.

Commissioner Goldblatt, seconded by Commissioner Warzecha moved to enter into the Sewer Authority Meeting at 7:29 p.m. Unanimously approved.

The Board meeting resumed at 7:33 p.m.

Item 9. Executive Session – To Discuss Confidential Trade Secret & Commercially Valuable Confidential or Proprietary Information Not Subject to Inspection or Public Disclosure Pursuant to Section 1-210[5] and 7-232a of the CT. General Statutes. This information is commercially valuable, confidential and proprietary and is not public disclosure, pursuant to Public Act No. 98-212.

Commissioner Warzecha, seconded by Commissioner Goldblatt moved to enter into Executive Session at 7:33 p.m. Unanimously approved. General Manager LaRose, Steve Sinko, Jeff Brining and Kerri Kemp were asked to stay for Executive Session.

The Board came out of Executive Session at 8:06 p.m.

No votes were taken in Executive Session.

Item 10. Other Business. None.

The next Regular Meeting is scheduled to be held on Tuesday, June 23, 2020.

Vice Chairman Peil, seconded by Secretary Becker moved to adjourn the Meeting at 8:06 p.m.

Attest:

Steve Becker
Secretary