



April 6, 2021
Meeting No. 02

**PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION BOARD MEETING
OPEN SESSION MINUTES**

Date and Time:	Tuesday April 6, 2021 – 4:30 p.m.	
Location:	Via Zoom Conference	
Members Present:	Mark Howson David Zuccato Sandra Hollingsworth	Christian Provenzano Musa Onyuna
Regrets:		
Staff Present:	Rob Brewer, President & CEO Kevin Bell, VP Customer Engagement & Business Development Jairus Patterson, Communications Coordinator	Trina Avery, Executive Assistant Claudio Stefano, Chief Operating Officer Carla Buckner, Manager, WTO Andrew Hallett, Director, WTO
Guests:		

1.0 CALL TO ORDER

M. Howson, past Chair called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m.

2.0 APPROVAL OF AGENDA

On a **MOTION** moved by S. Hollingsworth, seconded by D. Zuccato, and carried:
The Board approved the Agenda as presented.

3.0 CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No conflicts were declared.

4.0 SAFETY MOMENT

Addressed in the President’s Report.

5.0 OPEN SESSION MINUTES – February 17, 2021

On a **MOTION** moved by M. Onyuna, seconded by D. Zuccato, and carried:
The Commission approved the open session minutes dated February 17, 2021.

6.0 BUSINESS ARISING FROM MINUTES



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There was no business arising from the minutes.

7.0 OPEN SESSION ITEMS

7.1 2020 Audited Financial Statements

K. McLellan provided opening comments and acknowledged M. Faught and the team in preparing the audit process and working through it virtually.

M. Faught reviewed the statements and acknowledged KPMG and their team working through the virtual audit process as well.

Highlighting:

- Results for 2020 were impacted by Covid-19 Pandemic. Decline from commercial customers as compared to plan. Offset by residential customers.

Question regarding Admin Expenses, were these increased because of Covid 19 costs? Admin expense was up but Operating expense was down.

- Capital Report
 - Largest portion is the Watermain lining project.
 - Distribution System renewal attributed to the new technology of the SIPP project.
 - Another major item was the Zone 2 Booster Station. Intent is it would be completed in 2021.

Questions/Discussion:

Watermain lining project - Did we have to purchase any equipment?

Staff advised that PUC joined forces and partnered with various companies that had the technology and piloted it on a select street. It is seen as a business opportunity. PUC will probably do this through a separate company which will hold the equipment and I.T. Then would contract out the services. We will be waiting on the testing to ensure we have the correct structural rating to finish the business plan. From a Commission perspective, it would come in as a low-cost service without any capital.

With Covid, has there been discussion about any more covid relief or rebates in terms of expenditures?

Staff advised that we have kept the rate increase to a CPI adjustment. We continue to work with customers, waiving interest fees, service charges etc. on more of a one off rather than a global approach. In terms of significant benefit to the customers the City did an unbelievable job with the sewer surcharge.

On a **MOTION** moved by D. Zuccato, seconded by M. Onyuna, and carried:

In accordance with the recommendation of the Board of Directors for PUC Services Inc., the Commission approved the 2020 audited financial statements of The Public Utilities Commission of the City of Sault Ste. Marie.

7.2 SSM Drinking Water System – 2020 Annual & Summary Report

C. Stefano provided opening remarks. C. Buckner presented to the Commission via PowerPoint presentation. Highlighting:

- Sampling programs
- Major Works/Programs
- Compliance – final inspection rating of 100%.
- Very good year.

Questions/Discussion:

Is there an internal lab for lab testing samples?

Staff responded that an external lab is used in Sudbury and alternatively in Thunder Bay.

Sodium, when approaching the limit is there anything the PUC has in case it goes beyond?

Staff noted that it could be considered in the future. The 20 mg/liter is quite low. Bottled water off the shelf in the store can have higher levels than that.

Is there a regulatory authority that can do an audit without a heads up?

Staff noted that the MOE has 2 types of inspections. Announced and unannounced. They can do spot checks with inspections.

Regarding Sodium – were letters sent out to those East end constituents or is this just included on the website?

Staff noted that the information is in our annual report. PUC communicates to APH and they communicate to the community as needed.

7.3 Drinking Water Quality Management Standard (DWQMS) Report to Owner for 2020

C. Buckner presented to the Commission.

Highlighting:

- Executive Summary
- Capital Works in 2020
- Distribution Events
- 10-year Water Production History – declining and stabilizing rate.
- Consumer Feedback – 73 Water Quality calls in 2020. 34 taste/odour, 39 discoloured water.

Questions/Discussion:

Are calls received from all over the city or in one area?

Staff noted that they are from all over the city. We are finding we have some historical issues/educational issues regarding chlorine being put in the water. We are looking to better inform and educate customers on how the water is treated.

During flushing – feedback from residents is if they are given a heads up there is not an issue with the flushing – the main source of calls to city councilors is following flushing.



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Staff noted that maintenance is required on the system, areas where flushing is taking place are notified for regular maintenance.

What is the audit standard?

Staff noted that the system is audited on 21 elements. It is a moving target; have to ensure we update our documentation. Must ensure it is upkept with changes in the system and planning for the future. 3-year cycle for onsite audit and have to recertify every 3rd year.

Are watermain failures is it investigated to pinpoint why they fail?

Staff responded that we have an inventory of 450 km of pipe in the ground that varies in age. Most breaks are occurring in cast iron watermain. Most occurring in thin wall cast iron. Some of the 100-year-old cast iron pipe were cast with a thicker wall. Over time they cast with progressively thinner wall. Such that by the 50's and 60's that is the thinnest walled we have and that was also subject to stresses from soil movement, frost heave, trench conditions etc. 1950's pipe would be coming on over 70 years of service. That particular pipe is relatively normal to be reaching end of life. By today's standards would have designed and installed differently. Not practice years ago.

What part of this monitoring in part of the water quality is automated? What are check and balances for ongoing water quality.

Staff commented that, on the treatment side, all production facilities have monitor for flow, pressure and goes back to SCADA. Also have handheld equipment as well that must be calibrated. There are alarms set. But we do have to check on every single piece of equipment.

Risk assessments are done annually. Every 3rd year, comprehensive ones, and monitor hazards all the way from the raw water source and review everything from vandalism to cyber-attacks. Also discuss consequence if something happens and monitor the frequency.

With respect to cyber risk, there will be a briefing coming at a future meeting. We have an Information Security Manager who looks after all of this and is in the process of integrating all our systems.

It was suggested that when feasible that the new Commission members be provided a tour of the plant to review and see the system.

7.4 President's Report

R. Brewer reviewed the report for the Commission. Highlighting:

- Health and Safety
 - 758 days without a LTI to date.
- PUC In the News
 - SIPP Featured by CTV and SooToday
- In the Community
 - Sponsored lunches for 2 weekends at the Covid Vaccine Clinics.
 - Sponsored t-shirts for volunteers



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- New Signage
 - Mission/Vision/Values and Brand promise placed in areas around 500 Second Line East.
- Covid-19 Response
 - Education – APH rep, J. Buoma has attended some of our weekly covid update calls with staff.
 - Extended Work from home policy to September 1st. Looking to make it easy for staff to receive vaccine.
- Watermain Breaks
 - Running around the 5-year average currently. Trending a bit higher than 2020.
- MyPUC Mobile App
 - Features and benefits reviewed.
 - Outage reporting, news updates, easy communication, billing information, track, and conserve usage/reduce cost
 - Supports paperless initiative
 - Instant updates
- Collective Bargaining Update
 - Dates – union requested May/June 2021
 - Negotiating strategy finalized.
 - HR is conducting internal and external factor research
- Financial Summary
 - February 28, 2021

Questions/Discussion:

Health and Safety – Near Misses discussed. Staff noted that we are encouraging reporting of near misses. A healthy safety culture is one where we have near misses recorded where we can learn from and improve on.

Discussed replacement of lead pipes. PUC continue to search out lead pipes that need remediation. In 2020 rehabilitated everything that was discovered in the previous year. In 2020, staff could not go into homes and conduct testing. There are some identified. The goal is to remediate all that is discovered. Lining technology discussed.

Discussed watermain breaks and that remediation of old end of life watermain is a long-term project. Capital programs are ramping up over the coming years and has ramped up to this point.

A Commission member commented that it was noted that PUC is well known for excellent customer service. The customer focused environment is commendable. Kudos to the team for a wonderful approach. Well done.

8.0 NEW BUSINESS



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None noted.

9.0 NEXT MEETING

Orientation Session – April 22nd, 2021
Commission Meeting - May 6, 2021

10.0 CLOSED SESSION WITHOUT STAFF

Not required.

11.0 ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 5:50 p.m.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'M. Howson'.

Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'R. B.'.

Secretary