



## Marion Utilities

1540 N Washington St.  
Marion, IN 46952  
[www.marionutilities.com](http://www.marionutilities.com)

## Service Board

### **BOARD MINUTES OF THE MARCH 7, 2024 MEETING**

The Marion Utility Service Board held their meeting on Thursday, March 7, 2024 at 5:30 p.m. in the L.E.A.D. Center, Building 101, at Marion Utilities, 1540 N. Washington Street, Marion, Indiana.

Roll was called and those board members present were: Robert Logan, Chairman; Doug Carl; Bill Dorsey; Al Green; Von Jackson; Herschel Lewis; and Jayda Monteiro.

Also present at the meeting were: Chuck Binkerd, Director; Pat Pinkerton, Assistant Director for Engineering & Solid Waste; Mike Conner, Attorney; Tiffany Snyder, Accounting/Billing Coordinator; and Misty Humphries, Secretary.

#### **CONSIDERATION OF AGENDA ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS**

There were no additions or deletions to the agenda.

#### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Mr. Lewis moved, seconded by Mr. Carl, to approve the minutes of the February 15, 2024 meeting. All board members voted aye. Motion carried unanimously.

#### **FINANCIALS**

Mrs. Snyder presented the January 2024 financials. Mrs. Snyder said due to water consumption patterns, bill estimating, and some adjustments that an increase was not seen. Water sales matched January 2022 sales. Wastewater sales were also below pattern so a consumption pattern explanation was likely. Stormwater and Solid Waste sales were both in line with last year's numbers as well. Mrs. Snyder added that Water operating expenses were lower than this time last year while Wastewater, Stormwater, and Solid Waste were in-line with last year. Overall, the revenues did exceed expenses for all Utilities so there was a cash in-flow for all. Mr. Lewis moved, seconded by Mr. Carl, to approve the January financials. All board members voted aye. Motion carried unanimously.

#### **UPDATE ON PROJECTS**

Mr. Pinkerton said that paperwork on the South Adams Storm Sewer Project was still needed in order to send it out for bids. On Tuesday, the IFA Contract Approval letter was received so those SRF projects could move forward. Mr. Pinkerton stated that there was nothing that the Board needed to do since the projects were approved subject to the SRF approval. Mr. Logan reminded everyone that the bond was for \$11.7 million but \$1 million was forgiven.



### **TRANSFERS & PAY REQUESTS**

Mr. Pinkerton presented a two pay requests for the cured-in-place sewer lining project to Visu-Sewer. The first pay request was for the sanitary sewer in the amount of \$280,253.90 with \$10,960 in retainage. The second pay request was for the storm sewer in the amount of \$14,652. Mr. Lewis moved, seconded by Mr. Carl, to approve the pay requests as presented. All board members voted aye. Motion carried unanimously.

### **SPONSORSHIP REQUESTS**

Mr. Binkerd presented two sponsorship requests. The first request was from the Babe Ruth Baseball League. This was their annual request in the amount of \$300. Mr. Binkerd said that the Board had sponsored the Babe Ruth League in years past at the \$300 level which covered the sponsorship of a team. Mr. Binkerd recommended sponsoring at the \$300 level again. The second sponsorship request received was from Historic Marion for the Eclipse-a-Palooza event on April 8<sup>th</sup>. This was a new event and related directly to the eclipse. Mr. Binkerd said that his understanding was that there would be a viewing party and some food trucks as well as other vendors. There were three different levels of sponsorship. Mr. Binkerd said that if the Board chose to sponsor the event, he would recommend the \$250 level. Mr. Dorsey asked what organization submitted the request. Mr. Binkerd said that it was from Historic Marion. Normally, a request like this would come from Mainstreet Marion but that organization was no longer functioning. Mr. Dorsey asked if the group was an individual or several individuals. Mr. Binkerd stated that he believed Historic Marion was a non-profit organization working to revitalize and promote downtown Marion. Mr. Dorsey asked if this was a new group or if they had an established presence. Mr. Binkerd explained that this was first time he had seen the request and did not know a lot about the organization. Mr. Carl asked if this was the same organization as Save Our Stories. Mr. Logan said he did not believe it was. Mr. Logan asked if it was known how the sponsorship funds would be spent. Mr. Binkerd said unfortunately that information wasn't provided. The only information provided was the flier. Dr. Monteiro said that the City was already hosting an event, and it sounded like this group might be using funds for marketing. Dr. Monteiro added that she wasn't sure if the visibility as the Utility would be important to some of those coming to town for the eclipse viewing. Mr. Carl added that Historic Marion was self-described as a non-profit organization empowering the future through the preservation and celebration of its rich history, fostering a sense of place, economic growth and enhancing cultural vibrancy in downtown Marion. Mr. Lewis said he believed the group had been around for a while. Dr. Monteiro said she likes the description of the group, but it doesn't give information about how the funds will be spent. Mr. Logan suggested tabling this request until some additional information could be gained about the organization and how funds would be spent. Dr. Monteiro moved, seconded by Mr. Carl, to approve the \$300 sponsorship for the Babe Ruth Baseball League and to table the Historic Marion request until more information could be gathered. All board members voted aye. Motion carried unanimously.

### **STORMWATER TO SOLID WASTE LOAN**

Mr. Pinkerton reminded that Board that there had been conversations regarding the financial situation in Solid Waste. Jennifer Wilson had modeled a couple of different ways to do a rate increase. There was a 4-4-1 model which meant a \$4 increase the first year and second year with a \$1 increase in 2026. In order to do that, the Solid Waste group would need to borrow \$260,000 from Stormwater. Mr. Pinkerton asked for approval of a \$260,000 from Stormwater to Solid Waste. Mr. Binkerd said that it would be more than a loan for a year. Mr. Binkerd said that the loan would carry Solid Waste through the phases of the increases. The loan would then be paid off in the fourth year so that revenue can be generated. Mr. Logan asked if we wanted to do the loan without the rate increase or wait until a rate increase had been passed. Mr. Binkerd said that the loan would be needed now as a lease payment had already been made and the cash balances were low. Mr. Binkerd reiterated that the Solid Waste rate increase was not a new topic. It had been

talked about with the Council last year. Council members had requested that it be tabled until after the election which was done. Those conversation had now resumed with the Mayor and the current Council who were in support of an increase. Mr. Binkerd added that at the creation of the Solid Waste Utility it was projected that a rate increase would be needed after five years and this was year eight. Mr. Lewis moved, seconded by Mr. Green, to approve the loan of \$260,000 from the Stormwater Utility to the Solid Waste Utility. All board members voted aye. Motion carried unanimously.

### **CUSTOMER ADJUSTMENT REQUESTS**

Mr. Binkerd told the Board that there were several requests from customers. The first request was for 1327 W 1<sup>st</sup> Street. The landlord has IWU students in the rental. The students left for the weekend. The toilet was running while the students were gone and overflowed. The bill was \$736. The landlord was told that toilet adjustments were not normally given. The second adjustment was for 706 N. River Road. Central Indiana Orthopedics had a leak earlier in the year and received an adjustment in an amount close to \$5,000. They have had a second leak and were requesting another leak adjustment. The policy has been that only one adjustment be allowed within a 12 month period. Dr. Monteiro asked what the amount of the adjustment would be. Mrs. Humphries said it would be approximately \$11,000. The leak had been on an outside line that had been replaced. Mr. Binkerd requested that the first two requests be reviewed by the Water Committee. The third request was from accounts payable at the City. There were several accounts with late fees. The request was to remove penalties as they don't pay penalties. Mr. Binkerd requested that the Stormwater committee look at this request. Mr. Logan assigned the requests to the Committees for further review.

### **SENIOR LEADERSHIP REPORTS**

#### **P. Pinkerton, Assistant Director for Engineering & Solid Waste**

Mr. Pinkerton reported that there have been some rumors on leaf collection. Mr. Pinkerton presented a spreadsheet on the cost of four different leaf collection options. The first option was the remote control vacuum where the operation was done by one person. The second option involved a trailered unit that usually required two people. The third option was for contracting the leaf collection. Mr. Pinkerton said this option had the most questions it was unclear if there were enough contractors to service the city. A contractor taking care of the Town of Sweetser was contacted. The contractor estimated that it would cost \$125 per load with 1,680 loads per year. Mr. Binkerd added that a work group was assisting with developing options. The workgroup consisted of Brian Cowgill, Mike Graft, Curt Simpkins, Herik Martinez, and Mr. Pinkerton. The fourth option was for picking up bagged leaves. The last line item on each option was the total cost. The most popular options were 1 and 4. Jennifer Wilson had been contacted to model both options to look at what an increase for Stormwater would look like. Mr. Lewis asked what the goal of this was. Mr. Binkerd explained that the Mayor's office, as well as Nick McKinley and some other Council members, requested that the Utilities take over the leaf collection service. Mr. Binkerd said that the fact finding stage was underway now and part of that was determining what the cost would be. Mr. Binkerd said it would likely double the residential stormwater bill from \$5 to \$10, but Jennifer Wilson was working on firm numbers. The Mayor and Council members have not baulked at that figure. The stormwater utility rate has been \$5 since its inception in 1995. Mr. Dorsey asked if it was known how much the City was paying for leaf collection now, and where the leaves would be taken for disposal. Mr. Binkerd said they would be taken to the compost site. As far as getting a figure from the City, Mr. Binkerd said that he didn't mean this to be negative, but we might not be able to get the number. Mr. Pinkerton said that he had asked and no one knew. Mr. Binkerd stated

that the City would have to make a \$1.2 million investment for purchasing equipment and hiring additional employees in order to move from bagged leaves to leaves being picked up with a vacuum as residents were pushing for. Mr. Binkerd said he thought the Mayor was looking at it from a business perspective. Mr. Dorsey asked where the bags came from. Reverend Green said that the City provided 25 bags per resident for free. Mr. Dorsey said he would like to see the prices for the bags. Mr. Binkerd said that he could get that, but it would be a drop in the bucket. Mr. Lewis asked if the Utility had the manpower to do this. Mr. Pinkerton said that each option showed how many employees would be needed. Mr. Conner said he thought Jonesboro did this for a while, and they had to have a specialized truck. Jonesboro also had to deal with the leaves blowing when it was a windy day. Mr. Binkerd said it would be nice if everyone would bag their leaves. Mr. Green said that the bags had to be paper. Mr. Jackson asked if this would be an optional service for residents or if this would be automatic charge for everyone. Mr. Pinkerton said it would be charged to everyone. Mr. Lewis said it was a catch-22 because nothing could be done about the wind. Mr. Jackson asked how we would make people rake or bag especially when 75% of the community was probably renters and a large majority were elderly. Mr. Binkerd said that the Utility wasn't here to determine what services people want. The Utility was here to provide a service and the people and Council would determine what services people wanted to pay for. Mr. Jackson asked if the money collected for all fees was kept or if some of it had to be paid to the federal government. Mr. Green asked if this was leaves only or if it would include branches. Mr. Pinkerton said it would only be for leaves. Mr. Binkerd said he wasn't asking for anything to be approved. He wanted the Board to know what was being discussed with the City Council and the Mayor's office. Mr. Carl suggested putting in a good contingency cost as there would be some unknown factors. Mr. Dorsey said he wanted to know about the costs of the bags and the current cost of collection. Mr. Pinkerton said that with the turnover at the Street Department Mr. Graft wasn't sure if anyone was still there that would know the cost. Mr. Dorsey asked if current staffing levels would allow for the leaf collection to be added. Mr. Binkerd and Mr. Pinkerton answered no. Mr. Dorsey asked what the employees would be doing when the leaf season was over. Mr. Binkerd said that there were several things that were backlogged. He explained that the Utilities took over the street sweeping without hiring more people or increasing the rate. Mr. Lewis said that people should really be responsible for their own lawns. Mr. Binkerd said he was asked the other day what he would do. His answer was in agreement with Mr. Pinkerton to mow and mulch the leaves back into the yard. Mr. Pinkerton said there were a lot of communities moving away from collection and towards mowing and mulching. Mr. Binkerd said mowing and mulching was the best environmental option. Mr. Pinkerton commented that Carmel was moving to a mowing and mulching push. Mr. Dorsey thought that that leaf collection should be an optional service for those who wanted it. Mr. Pinkerton explained that leaf collection would have to be an all or nothing charge because if one person wanted the service and another didn't, the one wanting the service would not be able to pay for the equipment. Mr. Pinkerton said the Utility might be able to do a better job, but it would not be much cheaper than hiring a contractor.

### **C. Binkerd, Utility Director**

Mr. Binkerd said that there were three applicants for the Director's position. He asked the members of the Personnel Committee to stay after the meeting for a moment to discuss when a good time to review the applications would be. Mr. Dorsey asked if the entire Board wanted to be present for interviews. Mr. Binkerd asked if that was something that could be done in executive session. Mr. Conner said that he would need to look into the issue and get back with the Board on the answer. Mr. Dorsey asked if all of the applicants were residents of Grant County. Mr. Binkerd answered yes.

**BOARD MEMBERS' COMMENTS**

There were no comments at this time.

**CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS**

Mr. Logan remarked that it was a very good discussion about leaf collection. He also reminded everyone that Daylight Savings Time was upon us.

The next meeting was scheduled for 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, March 21, 2024.

There being no further business before the Board, Mr. Lewis moved, seconded by Mr. Carl, to adjourn the meeting. All board members present voted aye. Motion carried unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 6:26 p.m.

Robert Logan, Chairman  
Marion Utilities Service Board

ATTEST



Misty Humphries  
Its Secretary