



## Marion Utilities

1540 N Washington St.

Marion, IN 46952

[www.marionutilities.com](http://www.marionutilities.com)

## Service Board

### BOARD MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 23, 2025 MEETING

The Marion Utility Service Board held their meeting on Thursday, January 23, 2025 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; Kristy Barney, Doug Carl, Isaiah Fuller, Al Green, Herschel Lewis and Jayda Monteiro.

Also present at the meeting were: Robin Shrader, Director; Pat Pinkerton, Assistant Director for Engineering & Solid Waste; Chad Guyer, Assistant Director for Operations & Maintenance; Erika Devine, Council Liaison; Misty Humphries, Secretary; Mike Conner, Attorney; and Brianna Coffing, Chronicle-Tribune.

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

There were no additions or deletions.

#### **2025 COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS**

Mr. Logan presented the assignments for the 2025 Committees. He asked that if anyone had questions to please let him or Mrs. Shrader know.

#### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Mr. Lewis moved, seconded by Reverend Green, to approve the minutes of the January 9, 2025 meeting. All board members present voted aye. Motion carried unanimously.

#### **UPDATE ON PROJECTS**

Mr. Pinkerton reported that the last pay request for the SRF Distribution project was being worked on. There may still be some minor grating and seeding to be done in the spring. Mr. Pinkerton said the project was coming in well below the estimate cost. Mr. Pinkerton concluded by reporting that on Tuesday night the City Council voted to vacate Clark Street. Mr. Conner added that the ordinance was recorded.

#### **1314 N. MANOR DRIVE CUSTOMER REQUEST**

Mrs. Humphries explained that Jan Lankenau called the office because she received a high bill of \$246.08 and couldn't figure out why her bill jumped from \$66.72. A suggestion was made for her to check the toilets to see if they were running. The toilets were not running as evidenced by the use of dye strips that were sent to Ms. Lankenau. Ms. Lankenau then reached out to a home warranty program that she is involved with and eventually to Martin Plumbing. Mrs. Humphries stated that through further investigation, it was discovered that when Ms. Lankenau's meter was changed out, an erroneous read was used. Mrs. Humphries explained



that there wasn't a leak or anything to be found by Ms. Lankenau or those working on her behalf. Ms. Lankenau was requesting for the \$100 invoice from Martin Plumbing to be paid. The Water Committee's recommendation was to pay the invoice since this was an error on the Utility's part. It was also noted that the time period covering the large bill was October 4, 2024 to November 4, 2024, and the error was discovered on December 27, 2024. Mr. Lewis asked what a change card was. Mrs. Humphries explained that it was a blue index card listing the customer address, date, time, the type of meter being taken out, meter serial number, the reads, the same type of information on the new meter, and a comment area that was used when a customer's meter was changed for any reason. Dr. Monteiro asked how the error was discovered. Mrs. Humphries said that all of the meters were scanned, kept on file, and eventually attached to each customer's account. Mr. Logan explained that normally a request like this would be denied. However, this was a case where the customer contacted the Utility, followed the directions given, and called in additional help only to find there was an error internally. Mr. Lewis moved, seconded by Reverend Green, to approve the payment of \$100 for Martin Plumbing. All board members present voted aye. Motion carried unanimously.

### **TRANSFERS & PAY REQUESTS**

There was no transfer or pay requests.

### **HISTORIC GALLATIN STREET APARTMENTS REQUEST**

Mrs. Shrader stated the Historic Gallatin Street Apartments were located across from the post office downtown. There was a company that rehabbed the buildings. Mrs. Shrader stated that her understanding was that the company went significantly over budget on the project. On the backside of that, the company sent requests to a number of different entities that may be eligible to help them recoup some of the overspending. Mrs. Shrader said that for the request to even be considered there would have to have been a repair or improvement to the infrastructure that the Utility would normally handle. Some diagrams and plans were sent over and reviewed. Based on Mr. Pinkerton's review of the plans, there was approximately \$50,000 - \$60,000 worth of work that would have been done on the public side. Mrs. Shrader told them that she would need a specific breakdown of the costs. The costs sent was \$87,022.12. Mrs. Shrader said that normally requests like this would occur on the front end of the project and not after completion. She said that there could be a discussion at tonight's meeting or in a committee meeting. Dr. Monteiro asked what work was completed that could have been done on the public side. Mrs. Shrader answered that there wasn't a problem that was known, but that the company made some improvements. Mr. Pinkerton said that the downspouts were running into their sanitary service which had to be separated resulting in a small extension of the storm sewer. Mr. Pinkerton said it was typical to bring up an older building to code. Mr. Lewis asked if there was any work directly related to the Utility. Mr. Pinkerton said no. The inlets were in the street so lines needed to be ran. Ms. Barney asked what the company's budget was. Mrs. Shrader said she was not sure but believed it was several million. Mr. Carl asked what the company would have most likely requested had they made the request before construction. Ms. Shrader said she was not sure, but the plans would have been reviewed and similar process to the Trails project would have been undertaken. Mr. Pinkerton added that he doesn't know at what point the company would have found out that they needed to upgrade their sewer system before they finished. Reverend Green asked what other work was performed. Mr. Pinkerton said one increase was pipe installation to handle their perimeter drain and downspouts to get them into Gallatin Street. Mr. Pinkerton said he doesn't know that the company had a complete

at the start. Mr. Lewis asked if the company wanted us to kick in money to offset their costs. Mrs. Shrader said that was correct. Dr. Monteiro said if this was done properly, the plans would have been presented for review, a cost estimate of any work we could do would be developed, the issue would have been presented to the board. Reverend Green suggested that the issue be assigned to Committee for further review and discussion. Dr. Monteiro and Mr. Logan agreed with Reverend Green. Mr. Fuller asked what happens if the board says no to the request. Mrs. Shrader said her understanding was that the company was going to ask several other organizations, but she was not aware of who those organizations were. Reverend Green asked if it was possible to find out what other organizations were asked and for what amount. Mrs. Shrader said that she could ask but was not sure if she would be given details. Ms. Barney asked if there was a confirmation of the building being inspected and up to code when the blueprints were received. Mr. Pinkerton said that based upon what the company has said they have done he would presume so. Mr. Fuller asked if people could move in prior to the inspection being completed. Mr. Pinkerton said that the Utility inspector only looked at connections and items related to Utility services. The building inspector would be the one to decide if the property was up to code. Mr. Logan thanked everyone for their discussion and assigned the item to the Stormwater Committee.

#### **WALK-A-MILE SPONSORSHIP REQUEST**

Mrs. Humphries said a sponsorship was received from the Grant County Rescue Mission for their Walk-A-Mile event. There were four sponsorship levels: \$2,500 Event Sponsor, \$1,000 Gold Sponsor, \$500 Silver Sponsor, and a \$250 Bronze Sponsor. Mrs. Humphries said that in the past, the event had been sponsored at the \$250 level. Mr. Lewis moved, seconded by Dr. Monteiro, to approve the sponsorship request at the \$250 Bronze level. All board members present voted aye. Motion carried unanimously.

#### **DRUG SCREENING POLICY**

Mrs. Shrader explained that a random drug screening policy was in effect for CDL holders. The question has come up several times as to why only CDL holders were randomly screened. There were a lot of people not holding CDLs that drive Utility vehicles. Mrs. Shrader said that it would be easy to extend the random drug screening policy to non-CDL as well. The current cost for random screening was \$1,000. By including the non-CDL holders, the number of employees being tested each quarter would increase by 9-10 people. The cost was anticipated to be under \$4,000 for the year. Mrs. Shrader said that this was not an effort to target anyone or anything, but it was a best practice. Mr. Fuller asked if the random would be amongst everyone or only those that drive vehicles. Mrs. Shrader explained that potentially every employee may drive a vehicle or equipment at one time or another so the policy would apply to everyone. She also noted that the vendor random selects those being screened each quarter. Dr. Carl asked if everyone with a CDL was randomly screened. Mrs. Shrader said yes, it was actually a regulation under FMCSA and INDOT. Mr. Logan said that Ambucare used to provide random screenings for the community like this. Mrs. Shrader explained that the vendor brings a mobile unit and conducts the testing in the parking lot so it was not an inconvenient or time consuming process for anyone. Dr. Monteiro moved, seconded by Mr. Lewis, to approve the extension of the random drug screening policy to extend to employees with and without a CDL. All board members present voted aye. Motion carried unanimously.

#### **QUOTE FOR BIO-SOLIDS DEWATERING CENTRIFUGE**

Mr. Guyer explained that for the last five years equipment had been research and tested on-site in order to dewater sludge. The Centrisys centrifuge testing went very well, and the company was quite responsive. Mr. Guyer said after onsite testing was completed, an opportunity to buy a refurbished unit. There was \$750,000 in the budget for purchase of the equipment. The refurbished unit was only \$498,960. It comes with a 1 year warranty that covers parts and labor as new units would be. Mr. Lewis asked Mr. Guyer to explain the dewatering process. Mr. Guyer explained that it was the end process for biosolids, or sludge, that come from the digesters. Normally, it was hauled to the farm fields. When the liquid form was hauled it had to be about 3% solids so it was mostly water. Mr. Guyer said when the dewatering process was done, there could be 20-30% solids. This would allow hauling to be completed in dump trucks and would greatly reduce the materials. Mr. Lewis asked if we wanted the solids. Mrs. Shrader answered yes. Mr. Fuller asked if it was basically a large strainer. Mr. Guyer said yes. Dr. Monteiro asked if a company had been onsite before. Mrs. Shrader stated yes. Mr. Lewis asked if this was in the budget. Mr. Guyer said yes it was included in the budget. Mr. Carl asked if this had to be bid. Mrs. Shrader and Mr. Guyer said that there were several quotes. The quotes however were all over the place as some of them included buildings and structures. Mr. Guyer said that this option was considerably cheaper than anything submitted and could be housed in existing buildings. Mr. Lewis asked if this was something that could be driven. Mr. Guyer answered no, but that it was on a skid so it could be moved. Mrs. Shrader stated at some point we were going to be regulated to perform dewatering. Reverend Green said this would be something new. Mrs. Shrader said a permanent installation would be new. Mr. Logan asked if dewatering was done on-site. Mr. Guyer said yes, through pilot studies over the last five years. Mr. Carl asked what a new one would cost. Mr. Guyer said \$698,000. Mr. Fuller asked how much was made by selling bio-solids. Mrs. Shrader said so far nothing because we were operating under a Class B permit. By dewatering, we could move to a Class A which would permit the selling of bio-solids. Mr. Fuller asked who potential buyers might be. Mrs. Shrader said buyers would include farmers or landscapers. This would be much like Miracle Grow on a larger scale. Mr. Fuller said he was wondering how much cost savings would there be. Mr. Guyer said while he didn't have a figure, it will be noticed right away. He added that what would once take crews six 12 hours days with three tanker trucks to apply can now be dried and applied easily in one day. Mrs. Shrader added that the equipment used to haul and spread the liquid form resulted in a large overhead especially since it was aging. Mr. Fuller moved, seconded by Mr. Lewis, to approve the quote of \$498,960. All board members present voted aye. Motion carried unanimously.

#### **RETIREE MEDICARE SUPPLEMENT BENEFIT**

Mrs. Shrader reported that an employee asked if they were to retire and stay on their spouse's insurance until Medicare eligibility, could they still receive the Medicare supplement upon turning 65. Mrs. Shrader said that the current policy doesn't address that. She stated that essentially what she would like to do was allow retiring employees to stay on a spouse policy and still receive the Medicare supplement to be provided upon Medicare eligibility. Mrs. Shrader added that this would result in a cost savings for the period between retirement and turning 65 years old. Mrs. Shrader said that the insurance company was consulted. The insurance company was fine with this as long as language stating that the retiree could rejoin the group health plan should a qualifying life event occur. Mrs. Shrader stated that language was included. Mr. Fuller asked if examples of qualifying life events would be provided. Dr. Monteiro said that qualifying life events was a defined industry term. Mr. Lewis verified that retiring employees had to be 65 in order to receive the supplement. Mrs. Shrader answered yes. Mrs. Humphries commented that at the time of supplement enrollment, proof of Medicare

enrollment had to be provided. Mrs. Shrader reiterated that allowing a retiree to stay on a spouse's plan until Medicare enrollment would be a savings of approximately \$13,000 per year. Mr. Lewis moved, seconded by Mr. Carl, to approve the policy change as suggested. All board members present voted aye. Motion carried unanimously.

### **SENIOR LEADERSHIP REPORTS**

#### **M. Humphries, Executive Assistant**

Mrs. Humphries shared some information regarding payment arrangements. For 2024, there were 770 payment arrangements made. The total amount arrangements were made on was \$367,240.83. Mrs. Humphries said of that \$350,077.17 was recovered. Mr. Logan said that was a major accomplishment. Mrs. Humphries reported that so far for 2025, there had been 11 arrangements made. The total amount arrangements have been made on was \$5,452.99 and \$4,930.86 has been paid. Mrs. Humphries explained that the left most column had labels of paid, broken, unpaid, and cancelled. She explained that unpaid referred to arrangement payments that were due but had not yet been paid. There was a grace period for customers to make the payment before the arrangement was considered broken. Cancelled arrangements refer to those instances where customers have called and requested to pay off the balance early. Mrs. Humphries also reported that with the cold snap there have been a lot of calls coming in. There had been 60 frozen meters since January 13, 2025 with calls still coming in. Mrs. Humphries also reminded everyone that if a customer doesn't have any water, we ask that the customer please call us and not try to thaw or repair the meters themselves or by calling a plumber. There had been three broken meters with at least one that was damaged by either the customer or the plumber they called trying to thaw the meter. Lastly, Mrs. Humphries stated that the social media post regarding faucet drips was being updated. Several people had called in wanting the adjustment now. Because we bill in arrears, an adjustment couldn't be made until the bills were issued as the reading wouldn't be known. After customers receive their bills, their average usage could be determined and bills could be adjusted as needed.

#### **P. Pinkerton, Assistant Director for Engineering**

Mr. Pinkerton had nothing to report.

#### **C. Guyer, Assistant Director for Operations & Maintenance**

Mr. Guyer reported that since January 15<sup>th</sup>, there had been 1.5 million gallons per day increase in flow at the Water plant. Mr. Guyer said that the Water plant had a line that went out as well due to the weather. The Distribution Team fixed it today.

#### **R. Shrader, Utility Director**

Mrs. Shrader thanked those out in the field, at the plant, and those that had volunteered to be on the after-hours call out team that were working outside in the weather and dealing with cold water being sprayed on them. Mrs. Shrader also said thank you to the CSRs and administrative staff for fielding customer phone calls. Lastly, Mrs. Shrader thanked the board for the approval of the dewatering equipment.

### **BOARD MEMBERS' COMMENTS**

Ms. Barney asked if all of the other employees will receive a notification of the change to the drug screen policy. Mrs. Shrader said yes.

**CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS**

Mr. Logan thanked everyone for their attendance and discussion this evening.

The next meeting was scheduled for 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, February 6, 2025.

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 6:22 p.m.

Robert Logan, Chairman  
Marion Utilities Service Board

ATTEST

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Misty D. Humphries". The signature is written in dark ink on a light-colored background.

Misty Humphries  
Its Secretary