

**UTILITY ADVISORY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES**

November 18, 2010

Public Works Department – Water Utility Conference Room

Board Members Present: Dick Behrends - Chair; Geoff Larson - Vice Chair; Janet Schempf; George Porter; Leon Vance; Scott Willis; Matt Van Steenwyk (telephonically)

Staff Present: Joe Buck, Scott Jeffers, Jim Heumann, Tom Trego, Patti Rumfelt

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 5:31 p.m. by Dick Behrends, Chair.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes from the September 16, 2010, meeting were presented and unanimously approved without any changes.

III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None.

IV. ACTION ITEMS

None.

V. INFORMATION ITEMS

A. Bio-Solids Disposal/Incinerator Rehabilitation CIP Update – Jim Heumann, PE

Mr. Heumann provided an update on the JDWWTP bio-solids incinerator project. The incinerator experienced several breakdowns over the past few months and it was difficult to diagnose the problem as a damaged heat exchanger unit. The bottom line is that the incinerator is around 18 years old and nearing the end of its original life expectancy of 15 - 20 years. It is currently shut down until repairs can be made to the heat exchanger unit.

The most recent failure of the heat exchanger occurred around the same time as the JDWWTP Sludge Incinerator Improvements project was advertised. This project focuses on a “re-skin” of the incinerator vessel and related repairs. The bid opening date for the incinerator improvements project was originally scheduled for November 12, 2010, but has been pushed back until January 27, 2011 to allow the utility time to study alternative bio-solids re-use/disposal options before moving forward. To date, five contractors have expressed interest in the

incinerator improvements project including several in Juneau, one as far away as Rochester, NY, and another from Moose Pass, AK.

The failure of the incinerator's heat exchanger unit prompted the utility to procure alternative bio-solids disposal services until it can be repaired. It was originally anticipated that they would have to be shipped south for disposal, but the city was able to obtain a six month contract for disposal at the Capital landfill operated by Waste Management, Inc. In the past Waste Management was unwilling to accept our bio-solids and we are very fortunate that they are working with us during the emergency shutdown.

The utility's study of alternative bio-solids disposal options includes an advertisement requesting letters of interest for a project titled Bio-Solids Re-use and Disposal Options. The advertisement requests responses by December 10, 2010. The city last did a study of this nature in 1998 which recommended the existing bio-solids incinerator as the best option. The current study focuses on an updated comparison of incineration, composting, and other disposal technologies before moving forward with the large capital expenses necessary to extend the useful life of the incinerator. In recent years the cities of Ketchikan, Haines and Fairbanks have begun using various composting technologies to process their bio-solids. This suggests that composting is now a viable option for Alaskan communities with wide geographical and climatic variances.

Mr. Buck emphasized that we are looking at all available technologies with the intention of identifying the most cost effective and environmentally feasible solution. Staff is aiming to present the findings of the updated study to the Public Works & Facilities Committee in December.

A general discussion of composting technologies followed and Mr. Larson noted he is aware that the Municipality of San Francisco operates a large composting project. He commented that a significant issue for these types of processes is finding and having a carbon source (ensuring that carbon-nitrogen ratio is correct). He also noted he is aware of a Belgium company that is generating methane as a useful bi-product of its bio-solids processing process.

Mr. Heumann additionally noted that Waste Management is working towards the development of a prototype plasma reactor unit that may be installed at an Oregon location in the near future. The unit is reportedly being designed to process 25 tons of material per day and, if successful, could be a good fit for the Juneau market.

B. Salmon Creek System Seasonal Maintenance & Inspections – Jim Heumann, PE

Mr. Heumann reported that larvae were observed during the course of the 2010 fall maintenance and inspection activities of the Salmon Creek

reservoir. Samples of the larvae were collected and sent to two independent labs who both confirmed that they were common midge fly larvae. The larvae are benign and pose no threat to the quality of the water supply. The tank was thoroughly cleaned and disinfected after the larvae were identified. Staff are scheduled to do a follow up inspection again next spring.

Mr. Willis inquired if the larvae occur naturally in surface water and Mr. Heumann responded yes but he is unsure if the larva entered through the water or through the vents. He stated that the tank's existing vents have ½" mesh which is aimed at keeping birds and squirrels out but does not stop insects. More expensive and more technically complicated vent systems are available if the utility determines they are needed.

Mr. Larson noted that the brewery uses UV lights just inside their building vents to take care of any insects that come through the vents in their facility. The lights require a 110 volt power supply.

Mr. Behrends noted that some of the mines and camp facilities he has worked with use water-filled clear plastic bags near open windows/vents to deter insects. He's not sure why this practice is reported to be effective.

C. Wastewater Utility Updates – Tom Trego, Utility Superintendent

Mr. Trego commented that he heard that the Capital Landfill has received odor complaints recently. He was initially concerned that they were caused by our bio-solids being delivered to the landfill but has found that they were occurring before we started delivering bio-solids to it. He also noted that the ADEC has investigated the complaints and found they are not related to bio-solids disposal. The landfill staff is in the process of upgrading the vacuum extraction system for objectionable gases; they expect this upgrade to correct the problem.

D. Water Utility Updates – Joe Buck, PE

Mr. Larson asked about the process of shutting off water services for non-payment of bills (as mentioned in the Water Utility Highlights memo). He was concerned about elderly people that may go without water. Mr. Buck responded that there are measures in place to insure that seniors are taken care of in situations like this and that staff takes extra effort during the winter months to reduce the possibility of freeze ups to occur as the result of shut-offs. Non-paying customers are notified well in advance of pending shut-offs and most settle their back payments before the shut-off actually occurs.

Mr. Buck reported that, as a result of our recent reorganization, a second Sr. Water Operator position was created. This position is currently being recruited for and closes on Monday, Nov 22. Mr. Behrends inquired as to

how many applications had been received for the position and Mr. Buck responded that we won't know until after the job announcement closes.

Mr. Behrends inquired if the reorganization is helping to boost morale and Mr. Buck responded that it has been a good change and that most employees are responding positively. A key component of the reorganization is that all water operators will be cross-trained to bring more unity and efficiency to the Utility.

Mr. Buck stated that a similar reorganization is also occurring in the Wastewater Utility. There was some resistance from staff at first, but things are going better now. He additionally noted that wastewater staff have been stepping forward with recommendations for improvement and were recently instrumental in solving a staffing problem at the JDWWTP. With the incinerator being out of service, the plant went from an ADEC "level 3" certificate plant to a "level 2" which eliminates need for it to be staffed by a level 3 operator seven days per week. This results in a savings on equipment, manpower, etc. during the incinerator shut-down.

VI. NON-AGENDA ITEMS

A. Monthly Meetings

Mr. Behrends inquired about whether monthly UAB meetings were necessary. He suggested returning them to bi-monthly. Mr. Buck responded that this year, the Board had several action items that required meeting more frequently. With those items now resolved, meetings could return to bi-monthly.

Mr. Behrends stated that the next meeting would be in January then And the board determined that January 13th appears the most suitable date, but staff will confirm the alternate date via email.

B. Empowered Board

Mr. Behrends mentioned the topic of empowered boards that was mentioned at the last two meetings. He stated that he joined UAB in particular, because it wasn't an empowered board. Empowered boards have much more work to do and require periodic filings with APOC, even on a personal level (so that personal financial information is made public). He is not in favor of UAB becoming an empowered board.

Ms. Schempf stated that she also is not in favor of pursuing an empowered board status. Since more would be added to the workload of an empowered board, she would not be able to commit to the extra time that would be required.

Mr. Buck stated that he does not recommend the Board seek to become an empowered board. He believes the Board is functioning very well in its "advisory board" capacity, and the Assembly is pleased.

Mr. Vance stated that to become an empowered board, a charter amendment would be required.

Mr. Behrends stated that the issue of becoming an empowered board has been resolved and will not be pursued.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:20 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Patti Rumfelt, Administrative Assistant II
CBJ Public Works Water Utility