

Water Operator Agreement with Tecumseh Approved By BPW

Written by Nemaha County Herald
Monday, 21 January 2013 22:41 -

A water operator agreement with Tecumseh officials was approved by the Auburn Board of Public Works Monday, Jan. 14.

It is similar to agreements BPW has with other municipalities. It is from June 1, 2013 to May 31, 2014. Tecumseh officials sought an emergency or backup agreement if their current agreement with PeopleService falls through. Tecumseh officials are working with PeopleService officials to correct deficiencies in their current agreement. If PeopleService is no longer Tecumseh's operator before June 1, the agreement will begin the date PeopleService is no longer Tecumseh's operator. Tecumseh officials will pay BPW the \$35 hourly rate plus \$20.

Dave Hunter, BPW general manager, said he did not foresee BPW staff going to Tecumseh immediately. Tecumseh officials did not want BPW staff going there, which is the case with arrangements with Brownville, Nemaha and Peru.

"We make sure our ratepayers do not subsidize these operators," he said.

In discussing the issue, Tom Gulizia said it is a good opportunity to work with other municipalities when BPW needed the revenue. Mark Kubik said it lowers expenses and makes BPW more efficient. Rich Wilson was concerned about competing with other operations, and Tecumseh is not in Nemaha County or in the BPW electrical area. Doug Glenn said Hunter did a wonderful job of managing the staff. A policy on working with municipalities outside Nemaha County may be considered.

Auburn Mayor Scott Kudrna expressed concerns about taking on operations in other municipalities and if BPW had the staff to handle it. Hunter said it is a way to utilize the staff better and he looks at areas to be more efficient.

Tecumseh officials requested BPW provide an operator a couple of months ago. At that time, Hunter said it is getting difficult to find qualified individuals to fill water and wastewater operator positions.

To Replace Pump at Crestview Lift Station

The board approved purchasing a new pump for the Crestview lift station. Cost is about \$12,000. Gulizia voted against, because he suggested obtaining a repair estimate before ordering a new pump.

There are two pumps at the station, the seals of one of the pumps are leaking. The pump is more than 40 years old. Hunter said no estimate of repair cost would be available until the pump was sent in for repairs. When a pump was sent in, there would be a wait to obtain parts. Hunter said staff was trying to avoid the risk of having only one pump at the station in case of failure. The pump is a critical piece of equipment. Hunter was concerned that if the seals were repaired, the seals may not last. There were also concerned that the pump's bowl, impeller and shaft were also worn out.

Crestview is the oldest of the five lift stations. The others were remodeled since 2000.

Energy Efficiency Rebate, Construction Standards for Water, Health Insurance

The 2013 Energy Efficiency Rebate Program was approved. The program is usually modeled after the Nebraska Public Power District's (NPPD) program, where BPW obtains rebate funds from. The program is not unique to BPW, other utilities also offer a similar program.

The amount of rebate for geothermal increased and a \$100 rebate was added for heat pumps which were not certified.

BPW staff said contractors need to tell customers what was available to them. Anyone with questions about rebates should contact BPW.

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Construction standards for water created by JEO staff was approved. That included submitting \$1,800 to Health and Human Services (HHS) officials for their review and approval. The standards regard installation of a new water line from the curb stop to the main. The standards prevent BPW from having HHS officials review individual project plans.

A pole lease agreement with United Private Networks, LLC was approved. United Private Networks purchased Zito Media poles in Johnson. A standard amount is charged based on Federal Communications Commission formula. It is the same agreement BPW uses for Time Warner, Zito Media (Galaxy) and Windstream.

Health insurance rates approved by the City Council in December were approved. While the nearly 12 percent increase was higher than proposed, Hunter called it a good package for employees. Some paperwork needed completion and employees have not received cards.

General Manager to Discuss Holiday Lighting Issue

With Chamber Officials

Hunter will meet with representatives of the Auburn Chamber of Commerce to resolve the issue of repairing holiday lighting. In December, the Chamber requested a \$300 repair bill for the lighting be waived. The waiver was requested because of the tight Chamber budget and the Chamber lacked the money to cover the repairs. In past year, the Chamber has paid the cost of material used for repairs.

Wiring and decorations used with the lights are in deteriorating condition.

During discussion, Kubik said BPW staff helps the Chamber by installing the lights, and suggested a fundraiser to get people in the community involved. Hunter said it takes two days to install the lights and a day to take them down. Wilson said installing and taking the lights down is long, tedious work. Gulizia said Auburn residents and persons coming to Auburn enjoy the lights.

Other Business

October through December water and sewer liens were approved. Many of the individuals are the same as previous quarterly reporting periods.

Year end reports were reviewed. Franchise fees paid to county villages were: \$10,961.23 to Brownville, an increase; \$16,239.27 to Johnson, a decrease and \$5,761.69 to Nemaha, a decrease.

There were \$62,900.70 in conservation rebates, a significant increase, notably because of projects at Ariens and Auburn Public Schools.

Discussed obtaining a quote for a consultant to do an efficiency study of the water and wastewater departments. Because of state statute, BPW may be limited to firms registered with state officials.

Update on Water, Wastewater, Electrical Sales

Water: 2012 sales were 123,052,500 gallons, compared to 109,430,990 gallons in 2011, an 11 percent increase. BPW pumped 152,719,600 gallons from the wells, a 9 percent decrease from 166,210,200 gallons in 2011. Hunter said the efficiency in water use from the new water plant was about 10 percent compared to the old plant.

Wastewater: Billing units were 101,049,300 gallons compared to 97,325,800 in 2011. Flow at the plant was 101,995,304 gallons in 2012 compared to 130,785,206 in 2011.

Electrical: Sales were 56,871,542 compared to 59,920,550 in 2011. The lower figure was mainly because of the warmer winter season, Hunter said. Winter kilowatt hours were 35,554,864, the lowest since 2003. The 2012 summer season was close to average at

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21,316,678 while the average summer is around 21,556,435. System peak demand increased from 10,478 kilowatt hour to 10,611 kilowatt hours in 2012. Load factor was 61 percent for 2012 compared to 65 percent in 2011. Load factor is a big determination in the cost of energy from NPPD. With the load factor included in 2012, wholesale power cost increased 6 percent, Hunter said.