

**Utilities Committee**

Wednesday, September 5, 2018

1

1 The Meeting of the Utilities Committee was called to order at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday,  
2 September 5, 2018. It was noted that the meeting had been announced and a notice posted at  
3 City Hall.

4  
5 Roll call was taken, with the following members present: Ald. Jerry Every, Ald. Jim Olson, Ald.  
6 Kim Smith, Village of Holmen Trustee Brandon Cain, Village of West Salem Trustee Leroy  
7 Brown

8  
9 Also Present: City Administrator Eric Rindfleisch, Mayor Joe Chilsen, Financial Services  
10 Director/Treasurer Fred Buehler, City Engineer Jarrod Holter, Deputy Financial Services  
11 Director Kim Isensee

12  
13 **Item 2 – Approval of minutes from the previous meeting**

14  
15 Leroy noted the following correction needs to be made to the August 8 Utilities Committee  
16 minutes:

- 17  
18 • Line 196: Mayor Joe Chilsen referred to the TAC (Technical Advisory Committee). The  
19 name of the committee was misidentified as the Tech Committee.

20  
21 Motion by Leroy, second by Ald. Olson, to approve the amended minutes from the previous  
22 meeting as printed and on file in the City Clerk’s Office.

23  
24 On voice vote, motion carried.

25  
26 **Item 3 – Public Input (limited to 3 minutes/individual)**

27  
28 Ald. Every called three times for anyone wishing to provide public input and closed that portion  
29 of the meeting.

30  
31 **Consideration and possible action on the following items:**

32  
33 **Item 4 – MASS TRANSIT**

34  
35 a. Shared Ride Transit:

- 36  
37 1. **Public Hearing: Approximately 7:00 P.M. (or immediately following Public**  
38 **Input) – Proposed increase in Fares**

39  
40 Ald. Every noted the proposed fare increases would take effect in 2019 (January 1). The  
41 proposed increases are as follows:

42  
Reviewed 9/10/18 by Fred Buehler

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	<b>Fare Category</b>	<b>Cash Fare</b>	<b>Proposed Fare (1/1/19)</b>
43			
44	Adult	\$4.00	\$4.25
45	Student	\$3.50	\$3.75
46	Senior	\$3.50	\$3.75
47	Senior Reduced Fare	\$2.75	\$3.00
48	Disabled	\$3.50	\$3.75
49	Disabled Reduced Fare	\$2.75	\$3.00
50	Extra Rider w/same		
51	pickup and drop-off	\$2.50	\$2.75

52  
53 Ald. Every called three times for anyone wishing to provide public input regarding the proposed  
54 increase in fares for Shared Ride Transit and closed the public hearing.

55  
56 Motion by Ald. Smith, second by Ald. Olson, to approved the proposed Shared Ride Transit  
57 increase in fares as described the Utilities Committee’s handout entitled “4a-1.”

58  
59 Leroy said that with the trajectory that ridership has been taking in recent years, he personally  
60 believes it is not the right time to increase fares because he fears it might have a further negative  
61 effect on ridership.

62  
63 Ald. Every asked Fred if he believes a fare increase will affect ridership.

64  
65 Fred said he does not believe it will based on past history. Fred also referred to a Utilities  
66 Committee meeting earlier in 2018 at which time he noted the City of Onalaska Shared Ride  
67 Program was “out of the norm” with comparable Shared Ride programs in the state. Fred  
68 referred to a discussion he had had with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation about  
69 increasing fares by 25 cents, and he said WisDOT officials told him they believed a fare increase  
70 would put the city closer to being within the norm, “but is not out of the ordinary to do so.”

71  
72 Ald. Smith said she supports the rate increase, stating, “It’s also following our pattern of routine  
73 increases over time. We have been increasing them at a certain interval.”

74  
75 Mayor Chilsen said, “Basic economic principle would say that yes, you would lose fares. But  
76 that is only if the fares of competing businesses are lower. I’m not so sure that’s the case. I  
77 think they’re getting a great deal now, and they’ll get just a little less than a great deal with the  
78 fare increase. I don’t know that for a fact because I don’t know what the competition is  
79 charging.”

80  
81 Ald. Olson said he agrees with both Mayor Chilsen and Ald. Smith that, considering the value of  
82 the services being offered, a 25-cent increase is “beneficial for our communities, rather than the  
83 alternative.”

84  
Reviewed 9/10/18 by Fred Buehler

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85 Ald. Every said he agrees on two points, stating, “I think \$2.50 is their actual share – right  
86 around that amount. That’s a pretty cheap taxi ride. And it’s kind of unique that they would  
87 have a ride like that for \$2.50. The other thing that we’ve talked at length about is the future of  
88 this program to begin with. We have it, and I think we need to see it through and do what we  
89 need to do to find out what happens, I guess.”

90

91 Fred noted no comments had been received after the public hearing notice was published.

92

93 On voice vote, motion carried, 4-1 (Leroy).

94

95 2. Financials (Justin Running or Jeff Burckhardt/Fred Buehler)

96

97 The July 2018 statistics are as follows:

98

- 99 • **West Salem Trips:** 646 (an increase of 220 from July 2017)
- 100 • **Holmen Trips:** 1,224 (an increase of 340 from July 2017)
- 101 • **Onalaska Trips:** 2,772 (a decrease of 493 from July 2017)
- 102 • **Total Trips:** 4,642 (an increase of 67, or 1.46 percent, from July 2017)
- 103 • **MTU Passes:** 556 (a decrease of 55 from July 2017)
- 104 • **Agency Trips:** 954 (an increase of 122 from July 2017)
- 105 • **Year-to-Date Trips:** 33,707 (a decrease of 664 from July 2017)
- 106 • **Revenue:** \$114,841 (a decrease of \$3,637, or 3.07 percent, from July 2017)

107

108 Motion by Ald. Olson, second by Leroy, to accept the Shared Ride Transit Financials for July  
109 2018.

110

111 On voice vote, motion carried.

112

113 3. Federal Transit Authority 2018 Triennial Review:

114

115 a. Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) requirements/modifications to goals  
116 and plans

117

118 Fred noted he had presented the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Program Plan at the June 6  
119 Utilities Committee meeting. Fred noted discussions had begun in December 2017 when both he  
120 and Kim had traveled to Chicago in preparation for the FTA’s Triennial Review. One of the  
121 discussion points was whether the City of Onalaska may or may not need a DBE plan and goals.  
122 Fred said the city was informed in May that it did need a DBE plan. A draft of a DBE plan and  
123 goal had come before the Utilities Committee, with the goal being 0.19. Fred said there was a  
124 request at the Triennial Review to make a few modifications, and he thanked WisDOT officials  
125 Becky Soderholm and Eric Stoegbauer for their assistance in helping the city become compliant

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126 within Region V. Fred noted the plan has come before the Utilities Committee this evening, and  
127 he said the goal will come before the committee at its October 3 meeting. Fred said it is  
128 necessary to make some adjustments to the goal. Fred said one of the requirements of a DBE  
129 Plan is that the city must hold a public hearing. The city will invite citizens via its website to  
130 participate in the public hearing.

131  
132 Kim said Becky had told her and Fred that the city's goal and plan are being utilized throughout  
133 the state as a template for many of the different communities. Kim said this is why Becky and  
134 Eric have devoted a significant amount of time ensuring that the city's verbiage and sections  
135 inside the goal are both correct and current.

136  
137 Fred told committee members that not only does each municipality utilizing a Shared Ride or  
138 mass transit program have to have a DBE that meets the threshold, but also the State of  
139 Wisconsin. Fred noted the State of Wisconsin also had a DBE plan that is updated  
140 simultaneously based on findings found with the City of Onalaska.

141  
142 Ald. Smith asked Fred and Kim if they have been monitoring the hours they have worked on the  
143 DBE.

144  
145 Fred said the intent of the DBE is to assist the businesses of a level to have them have the  
146 opportunity to provide the same services being provided to the city. Fred said, "Following the  
147 rules and guidelines set forth, but at the same time notifying them and trying to get them to  
148 participate."

149  
150 Ald. Every thanked Fred and Kim for their work.

151  
152 Fred referred to the yellow-colored sheets attached to the Draft DBE Program Plan and said they  
153 include exhibits of the icons that are included within the draft plan.

154  
155 Ald. Smith asked Fred if he is seeking a motion to move the Draft DBE Program Plan to a public  
156 hearing.

157  
158 Fred said he is seeking approval of the Draft DBE Program Plan.

159  
160 Motion by Ald. Smith, second by Brandon, to accept the City of Onalaska Draft DBE Program  
161 Plan dated August 31, 2018.

162  
163 On voice vote, motion carried.

164  
165 b. Set public hearing date/time for DBE goal/plan

166  
167 Ald. Every noted the public hearing for the DBE goal/plan will be held at 7 p.m. on Wednesday,  
Reviewed 9/10/18 by Fred Buehler

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168 October 3.

169

170 Motion by Ald. Olson, second by Leroy, to set the public hearing for the DBE goal/plan at 7 p.m.  
171 Wednesday, October 3, 2018.

172

173 On voice vote, motion carried.

174

175 b. MTU Transit financials (Jim Krueger)

176

177 Fred noted he had sent an email to Jim Krueger approximately two weeks ago, but Jim had not  
178 responded. Fred told committee members he will attempt to contact Jim on Thursday.

179

180 c. Holmen Transit Input (Holmen Rep.)

181

182 No report.

183

184 d. West Salem Transit Input (West Salem Rep.)

185

186 Leroy said he had received an email from the Active Transportation Committee informing him  
187 he will meet the Jim Krueger next week. Leroy promised to tell Jim that Fred is looking for a  
188 return email.

189

190 e. Onalaska Transit Input (Onalaska Rep.)

191

192 No report.

193

194 **Item 5 – UTILITIES**

195

196 a. City of Onalaska Storm Water:

197 1. 2018 Storm Water Financials

198

199 Fred said these financials represent the amount of income the City of Onalaska received via the  
200 April and July billings. Fred noted the revenues (\$514,535.37) are close to 50 percent and said,  
201 “Based on the ERUs and the ERU units that we have in the different classes, we can be pretty  
202 close to what we’re going to receive in reference to revenues.” Fred noted two quarters (the  
203 October and January billing cycles) remain. Regarding expenditures, Fred said two of the larger  
204 expenses (Tipping – Bulk Leaf & Yard Waste and Other Contractual) are “pretty stationary  
205 items,” with Bulk Leaf & Yard Waste (\$44,860 budget) coming later in 2018.

206

207 Ald. Every said the budget should have been at about 75 percent as of August 31.

208

209 Jarrod referred to the fall leaf pickup and noted the city has a \$30,000 contractual obligation with

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210 Harter's Quick Clean-Up. Jarrod also pointed out the tipping fee will be approximately \$12,000,  
211 meaning the city will have additional costs of approximately \$42,000 that occur only at that  
212 times. Jarrod said, "There's been no expense against that. That would get you pretty close to the  
213 number that you'd want to be at."

214  
215 Motion by Ald. Smith, second by Ald. Olson, to accept the 2018 Storm Water Financials and  
216 place them on file.

217  
218 On voice vote, motion carried.

219  
220 2. 2019 Storm Water Budget

221  
222 Jarrod directed committee members to page 13 of the 2019 Storm Water Budget handouts and  
223 noted it is the yearly budget summary. The adopted 2018 Storm Water Budget was \$813,662.  
224 The proposed 2019 Storm Water Budget is \$839,416. The estimated 2020 Storm Water Budget  
225 is \$875,813. Jarrod noted the adopted 2018 Storm Water Budget had a total of 12,064 ERUs  
226 (Equivalent Runoff Unit, or 3,888 square feet of impervious). Each single-family home is  
227 considered one ERU. Commercial properties and non-residential governmental properties take  
228 their actual square footage of impervious, and the city divides that by 3,888 to determine the  
229 number of ERUs for their charges for the Storm Water Utility. Jarrod noted the city had 12,109  
230 ERUs as of July 19, and he said staff is projecting 12,173 ERUs for 2019.

231  
232 Ald. Every inquired about the charge per ERU.

233  
234 Jarrod said the current charge is \$67.44. The proposal for 2019 is \$68.96.

235  
236 Jarrod directed committee members to page 12 of the 2019 Storm Water Budget, which is a  
237 graph of the Storm Water Utility ERU Rate, and said staff has tracked the ERU rate since the  
238 inception of the Storm Water Utility in 2010. Jarrod noted the second line on the graph is the  
239 base, operations and maintenance portion, and the bottom line is capital improvements and debt  
240 services. The proposed base, operations and maintenance portion for 2019 is \$37.55, and the  
241 proposed capital improvements and debt service portion is \$31.41. Jarrod said the storm water  
242 lift station on Main Street was one of the primary projects when this utility was created in 2010,  
243 noting the cost of the project was more than \$3.5 million. That was the reason for the initial  
244 increase on the capital improvements and debt service portion.

245  
246 Ald. Every said the city will need extensive storm water planning if it continues to receive  
247 above-average rainfall.

248  
249 Jarrod told Ald. Every the lift stations on Main Street and 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Well Street have  
250 proved to be very valuable, noting he was not called out to the lift station during the recent heavy  
251 rains. Jarrod described a previous lift station as being "under-designed and underpowered," and

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252 he noted it failed “quite often.” Jarrod said that while the lift station had been a large monetary  
253 expense to keep the city’s infrastructure up to date in that area, “this is a perfect example of how  
254 the utility is performing the services it should be.” Jarrod said the 2019 Capital Improvements  
255 Budget will include a proposed project to improve a pipe on Troy Street. This project would  
256 have a \$700,000 Storm Water Budget impact for capital service if approved. Jarrod said the pipe  
257 in question serves a northern portion of the city that floods frequently. Jarrod said the city would  
258 extend a pipe WisDOT put across the road either in 2015 or 2016.

259

260 Jarrod directed committee members to page 11 of the 2019 Storm Water Budget, which lists the  
261 following items that have increased from the 2018 Storm Water Budget:

262

- 263 • Capital Projects (\$10,000)
- 264 • Employee wage & benefits erosion control inspection (\$4,000)
- 265 • Employee benefits/wages increases (\$8,500)
- 266 • Fiber connection to Public Works Facility annual cost (\$1,500)
- 267 • Build America Bond reduction (\$1,850)

268

269 Jarrod reiterated the ERU charge would increase from \$67.44 in 2018 to \$68.96 in 2019. This  
270 increase would mean an increase on quarterly bills from \$16.86 to \$17.24.

271

272 Fred told committee members, “Estimated for 2020 does not really ... This is capital  
273 improvements we have thus far, but it does not include any potential ... We are looking in the  
274 months to come through the Board of Public Works at doing a potential Water, Sewer and Storm  
275 Water Mortgage Revenue Bonds. This is looking out two years out for projects. Those projects  
276 are then looked at as to what potential modification we may have to the rate.”

277

278 Ald. Every praised the plan and said he believes it needs to be implemented when the time  
279 comes.

280

281 Jarrod said Fred was referring to the Capital Improvement Plan both for 2019 and 2020. Jarrod  
282 said the city goes out for Mortgage Revenue Bonds for the Storm Water Utility, adding, “We’re  
283 going to have a budgetary impact on the ERU in future years. We did not know when we put  
284 this budget together because we’re still working through those financials. Hopefully in another  
285 month we’ll have all those budget impacts.” Jarrod redirected committee members to page 13  
286 and Line Item No. 10 (“Capital Improvements and Planning”), noting that Capital Improvements  
287 and Debt Service totaled \$317,165 in 2018. That total increases to \$327,315 in 2019, and is  
288 projected to be \$350,000 in 2020. Jarrod said, “We have increased it, but it’s probably not going  
289 to be to the amount that is needed to suffice. If we go forward with the Mortgage Revenue  
290 Bonds in the Storm Sewer area, that number probably will increase more than what’s on your  
291 projected budget sheet.”

292

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293 Ald. Every asked Jarrod if he is talking about short-term borrowing.

294

295 Jarrod said it would be long-term borrowing (20-year bonds). Jarrod said, “This would be the  
296 yearly principal and interest payments.”

297

298 Motion by Ald. Smith, second by Ald. Olson, to accept the 2019 Storm Water Budget and  
299 establish the ERU rate for 2019 at \$68.96.

300

301 On voice vote, motion carried.

302

303 3. Establish 2019 ERU Rate

304

305 This item was covered under Item 4a-2.

306

307 b. City of Onalaska Sewer:

308 1. 2018 Sewer Financials

309

310 Fred said the fixed assets, which begin with Account No. 620-18204 (“Sewage Disposal Plant”) and end with Account No. 620-18513 (“Sewage System”), total nearly \$14 million in infrastructure in the Sewer Utility. Fred noted the revenues (\$1,015,113.41) are through two quarters (\$1,890,359 was budgeted for 2018). Regarding the expenditures, Fred referred to Account No. 620-58100-290 (“La Crosse Contractual Charges”) and said this item, for which \$936,850 was budgeted, accounts for slightly more than half the budget once depreciation is removed. Fred said the sewer treatment rate, which is a portion of the city’s rate structure in the sewer utility, is solely to handle the cost as it relates to the La Crosse charges. Fred said a sufficient amount of funding must come in through the sewer treatment rate based on consumption to pay for the \$936,850.

320

321 Jarrod told committee members Bernard Lenz is the new Utility Director in the City of La Crosse and said he has reached out to him regarding utility rates. Jarrod referred to the adopted and approved 2018 Sewer Budget and noted a 5 percent upcharge had been included in the 2018 rates starting July 1. Jarrod noted the rates have remained unchanged in the City of La Crosse and said the City of Onalaska kept the same amount of budgeted treatment charges for 2019 because the budget increase was never realized. Jarrod said the City of La Crosse still in anticipating the 5 percent upcharge coming to fruition sometime in 2019. Jarrod told committee members the La Crosse Treatment Plant is in the process of meeting new phosphorus rules, and he said La Crosse is projecting its treatment rates could increase anywhere from 20 to 80 percent. Jarrod said, “We don’t have anything exact at this time.” Jarrod said the \$936,850 charge is a volume charge the city pays to do capital service on the treatment plant, adding the city would pay a higher cost up front if it had to form its own treatment plant.

333

334 Ald. Every asked if the City of La Crosse had extended the current contract partly due to the

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335 changes that will occur there.

336

337 Jarrod said yes and noted the City of La Crosse's Capital Improvements Plan only has items "to  
338 keep up with wear and tear" and capital projects put into the plant. Jarrod said it is his  
339 understanding the Sanitary Sewer Utility in the City of La Crosse has no debt service for that  
340 utility. Jarrod said the entire treatment plan, through all the user fees over the years, have paid  
341 for the plant and upgrades.

342

343 Fred said the transmission rate is to cover the debt service of the city's infrastructure and  
344 operational costs of keeping its system within the city limits.

345

346 Motion by Ald. Smith, second by Ald. Olson, to accept the 2018 Sewer Financials and place  
347 them on file.

348

349 On voice vote, motion carried.

350

351 2. 2019 Sewer Budget

352

353 Fred said he feels the \$936,850 budgeted for the sewer treatment rate to the City of La Crosse  
354 should be sufficient for 2019. Fred addressed the transmission rate and said he recalls discussing  
355 this topic with Robert W. Baird, the city's bond counsel. Fred said, "Looking at these Water  
356 Sewer Mortgage Revenue Bonds, that debt service will start to have an effect in 2020."

357

358 Jarrod told Fred he is correct, noting the first principal and interest payments would be due in  
359 2020.

360

361 Fred said he does not expect the transmission rate to change. However, Fred also said he and  
362 Jarrod will be speaking with HABCO. In addition, Fred said he wants to wait for the October  
363 billing to come through as it relates to sewer and water. Fred said he does not expect a  
364 significant change to Sewer; however, any changes would occur through the Administrative  
365 Budget process. Fred said the transmission rate would be the only area that would be adjusted.

366

367 Jarrod addressed expenditures, noting a few line items had been switched around. Jarrod told  
368 committee members that minus some depreciation costs, the line items that his department  
369 controls were kept within what it had in 2018.

370

371 Fred said an anticipated 10 percent increase in health costs have been accounted for in the Storm  
372 Water, Sewer, and Water budgets. Any changes to the anticipated increase that occurs between  
373 now and when the Administrative Budget goes before the Common Council will be made during  
374 that time.

375

376 Motion by Ald. Smith, second by Ald. Olson, to accept the 2019 Sewer Budget, as presented.

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On voice vote, motion carried.

3. Changes to the Treatment rate for 2019

This item was addressed under Item 5c-2.

4. Changes to the Transmission rate for 2019

This item was addressed under Item 5c-2.

c. City of Onalaska Water:

1. 2018 Water Financials

Jarrold said the budget that was outlined on the attached memo states there were minimal changes in the Water Utility. Jarrold said staff had stayed within the confines of the line item accounts, and maintained slightly less than 2018. New equipment items have been included within the budget that the department does yearly. Jarrold said approximately \$6,000 was added under Account No. 610-57300-441 (“Chemicals”) because the city will begin adding orthophosphate to its water system to coat the pipes for lead and copper.

City Administrator Rindfleisch asked that the 2018 Water Financials be accepted first before the committee discusses the 2019 Water Budget.

Fred said he does not see any abnormalities in the financials through August.

Motion by Ald. Smith, second by Ald. Olson, to accept the 2018 Water Financials and place them on file.

On voice vote, motion carried.

2. 2019 Water Budget

Jarrold said the largest amount of water consumption (including lawn sprinklers) typically occurs during the third quarter (July, August, September), adding the city will see what its income is when the October water bills are mailed. Jarrold noted July and August were “relatively dry” even with the significant amount of rainfall the city experienced in late August.

Fred said the city is in a window where it could do a percentage increase to the water rates across the board, if necessary. Fred said, “When we do the Water, Sewer, Storm Water review of our Capital Projects that get approved through the Board of Public Works ... Eventually we’re going to see what kind of water projects we are looking at and moving forward on. We will then have

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419 a pretty good answer from HABCO ... what impact it would have on our residential homeowner  
420 if 'x', 'y', and 'z' projects were approved."

421  
422 Jarrod noted the Public Service Commission controls drinking water rates. Therefore, it is  
423 necessary to hold a public hearing and a rate case study or a simplified study for a rate increase.  
424 Jarrod said the city is within the window because it conducted a full rate case study in 2015 when  
425 Well No. 9 was rebuilt. Jarrod said the city has an opportunity to conduct a simplified rate case,  
426 which he described as being much easier to navigate. The rates would increase by a set  
427 percentage. Jarrod said it is governed by a rate of return based upon revenues and expenses.  
428 Jarrod said that depending on which projects remain in the 2019 and 2020 CIBs to be constructed  
429 through the Mortgage Revenue Bonds, it will fluctuate the city's debt service. Jarrod said  
430 HABCO is working the portions the city would need if more funds were needed to fund the  
431 projects. Jarrod said, "Hopefully we'll have something back that would say, 'This is what the  
432 rates would be.' For 2019's budget, we anticipate what's in here. What we're bringing in at the  
433 current rate would be sufficient for what we have."

434  
435 City Administrator Rindfleisch said a simplified rate case examines not only revenues and  
436 expenses, but also liabilities and assets, including depreciation. City Administrator Rindfleisch  
437 said, "When you look at your rate of return, it's more complex than simply cash flow."

438  
439 Jarrod noted the CIB once again includes large infrastructure projects. Jarrod also said he  
440 believes the city is in the bottom 25<sup>th</sup> percentile in the state with its water rates.

441  
442 Motion by Ald. Smith, second by Ald. Olson, to approve the 2019 Water Budget, as presented.

443  
444 On voice vote, motion carried.

445  
446 3. Options regarding water rates

447  
448 This was discussed under Item 5c-2.

449  
450 **Adjournment**

451  
452 Motion by Ald. Olson, second by Ald. Smith, to adjourn at 7:53 p.m.

453  
454 On voice vote, motion carried.

455  
456  
457 Recorded by:

458  
459 Kirk Bey