MINUTES
City Council Public Works & Utilities Committee

Thursday, December 5, 2024 – 3:30 PM
City Council Chambers

Members Present:	Mac Morrow, Chair, Council Member Lauren Wise, Vice-Chair, Council Member Owen Carson, Citizen Member Mayor Maureen Copelof, Ex-Officio
Staff Present:	Wilson Hooper, City Manager (arrived at 3:55pm) David Todd, Assistant City Manager/Infrastructure, Utilities, Public Works Dean Luebbe, Assistant City Manager/Finance Director Dennis Richardson, Water Treatment Plant Supervisor Emory Owen, Wastewater Treatment Plant Supervisor Aaron Winans, Wastewater Treatment Plant Staff Becky McCann, Communications Coordinator Selena Coffey, Assistant to the City Manager
Guests:	Harvey Sankey

A. Welcome and Call to Order

Committee Chair Mac Morrow called the meeting to order at 3:34 pm.

B. Certification of Quorum

Assistant to the City Manager Selena Coffey certified that a quorum was present.

C. Approval of Agenda

Motion by Mr. Wise, seconded by Mr. Carson to approve the agenda as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

D. Approval of Minutes – November 6, 2024 Meeting

Motion by Mr. Carson, seconded by Mr. Wise, to approve the minutes of the November 6, 2024 meeting as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

E. Discussion of Special Order of Consent

Mr. Todd introduced the agenda item regarding entering into a special order of consent for the City's wastewater treatment system. Mr. Luebbe provided financial implications regarding the potential order, noting that the City has approximately $10,000 in fines

and the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) would forgive 75% of these fines with improvements to the system and equipment that staff is currently correcting. Mr. Todd, Mr. Luebbe, and Mr. Owen submitted that they shared mixed opinions about entering into the special order of consent and asked for the Committee's input into the matter.

Committee members and staff continued extensive discussion regarding the advantages and disadvantages of proceeding with the special order of consent.

After considerable discussion, the Committee recommended that City staff continue working with DEQ staff and reconsider later before proceeding with the special order of consent.

F. Staff Update on KCI Capacity Projections

Mr. Todd shared a presentation by KCI Technologies (KCI), noting that staff had heard an extensive presentation by KCI representatives and wanted to share the information with the Committee. He stated that KCI had finished the initial phase of their study in reviewing City's land to determine the feasibility of using the current wastewater treatment plant site and adding modern equipment. The second phase of KCI's work was to evaluate the City's wastewater treatment capacity by looking at developable and currently developed acreage in the City limits and in its extra-territorial jurisdiction (ETJ).

(KCI presentation attached to minutes)

Mr. Todd reviewed the KCI presentation in its entirety, focusing on capacity projections for future years, responding to questions from the Committee as necessary. Mr. Todd noted that the City's plant is currently designed for 2.5 million gallons per day (MGD), but staff is realizing that the plant can only operate on 1.6 MGD, attributed to a much higher concentration of waste now than when the plant was built due to older and less efficient equipment. The KCI study reveals that the current site can accommodate a 5.0 MGD plant and they have recommended that the City develop a phasing plan to arrive at a 4.0 MGD plant in order to best plan for the future. Mr. Todd recommended that the City plan for a 3.0 MGD plant since the City has the footprint for a 5.0 MGD plant available for future needs.

The Committee had extensive discussion regarding the KCI study and its recommendations. Manager Hooper noted that the KCI projections did not consider the possibility of significant expansion to the system all at once, nor did KCI calculate the cost of adding significant industrial capacity within their study. He noted that it is important for the City to build a system that incorporates capacity for economic development and unanticipated growth. Mr. Wilson also emphasized that building a larger plant and spending more on the front end would be a positive approach if the City was willing to spend more upfront in planning for the future.

Committee members were pleased to hear that the current site could be used for expansion and noted that it would be difficult to find another site.

Mr. Todd noted the next steps as staff visiting other sites to look at equipment and technology being used in other jurisdictions. Mr. Hooper stated that additional follow-up and information was needed from KCI regarding stakeholders such as Transylvania County and Rosman regarding the potential for a regional plant. He further suggested that KCI may be able to present their final recommendations to the Committee and City Council in spring of 2025.

G. Public Comment

Harvey Sankey asked about NCDEQ's role regarding the City's wastewater treatment plant design and whether the City builds a 2.5 MGD or 4.0 MGD plant. Mr. Todd responded that he believes that DEQ will allow the City to build in phases. Mr. Sankey then asked Mr. Hooper about the potential for grants. Mr. Hooper reminded the group that the City has maintained $12.5 million of the $13 million that it received from the State for the project and applications for additional grants will be dependent on the final cost estimate for the project.

H. Set Date for Next Meeting

With the next scheduled meeting of the Committee falling on January 1, 2025, the Committee decided to reschedule the meeting to *Thursday, January 9, 2025* at 3:30pm in Council Chambers.

I. Adjourn

There being no further business, Mr. Wise moved to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Carson. Meeting adjourned at 4:55pm.

Minutes Approved: January 9, 2025

Mac Morrow
Chair, Council Member

Selena D. Coffey
Assistant to the City Manager