



OFFICIAL NOTICE AND AGENDA

a City Board, Commission, Department, Committee, Agency, Corporation, Quasi-Municipal Corporation, or sub-unit thereof.

JOINT MEETING:

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

WAUSAU WATER WORKS COMMISSION

Date/Time:

Tuesday, February 27, 2024, at 6:30 PM

Location:

City Hall (407 Grant Street, Wausau WI 54403) - Council Chambers

COW Members:

Katie Rosenberg, Carol Lukens, Michael Martens, Tom Kilian, Doug Diny, Gary Gisselman, Becky McElhaney, Lisa Rasmussen, Sarah Watson, Dawn Herbst, Lou Larson, Chad Henke

WWW Members:

Katie Rosenberg, Dawn Herbst, Jim Force, Joe Gehin, John Robinson

AGENDA ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 1 Call to Order
- 2 Discussion: Utility Commission Structure
Adjournment

Becky McElhaney, Council President

Katie Rosenberg, Wausau Water Works Commission Chair

Members of the public who do not wish to attend in person may view the meeting live or after the fact via the internet on the City of Wausau's YouTube Channel, <https://tinyurl.com/WausauCityCouncil>, or live by cable TV on Channel 981. Any person wishing to offer public comment who does not appear in person to do so, may e-mail prior to the meeting start, the City Clerk, at: kaitlyn.bernarde@ci.wausau.wi.us and mention "Committee of the Whole" in the subject line. All public comments, either by email or in person, will be limited to items on the agenda at this time. The messages related to agenda items received prior to the start of the meeting will be provided to the Chair.

This notice was posted at City Hall and transmitted to the Wausau Daily Herald on 2/23/2024 @ 4:00 PM

In accordance with the requirements of Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), the City of Wausau will not discriminate against qualified individuals with disabilities on the basis of disability in its services, programs or activities. If you need assistance or reasonable accommodations in participating in this meeting or event due to a disability as defined under the ADA, please call the ADA Coordinator at (715) 261-6622 or ADAServices@ci.wausau.wi.us to discuss your accessibility needs. We ask your request be provided a minimum of 72 hours before the scheduled event or meeting. If a request is made less than 72 hours before the event the City of Wausau will make a good faith effort to accommodate your request.



19 January 2024

Memo from the Mayor Regarding the Wausau Waterworks Utility Commission

Over the last two years, it's become evident that this policy body, the Wausau Common Council, would like to have more say over the Wausau Waterworks utility. In 2022, there were a few stray calls to abolish the utility commission but there have been no serious proposals or requests to discuss that concept by this body. However, over the last several months, I've heard complaints about the utility commission by members of this body once again, so I'd like to have that policy discussion instead of having it linger for another few months or years.

Policy question: Should the City of Wausau keep the utility commission as is, modify the commission, or abolish the commission and absorb those responsibilities into the Common Council?

Current Status: Chapter 13.04 of the Wausau Municipal Code governs the creation, membership, management, and control held by the independent, non-partisan utility commission. Since I was elected in 2020, the common council has elected a fellow alder to the commission twice, approved the appointment of a new member in 2020, and approved the reappointment of an existing member in 2021. The appointments are five-year terms and one member was reappointed by the council prior to 2020 session, his term set to expire in April 2024. The code also dictates that the mayor is the president and presiding officer of the utility commission.

- Wausau Water Works Water Division has a budget of \$12.8 million
- Wausau Water Works Wastewater Division has a budget of \$9.79 million

Modify the Commission: In its current form, there are a few potential modifications that would have some effect on policy setting at the commission level. The council may consider the makeup of the commission and prioritize certain attributes or needs when appointing members. The council may also consider creating a broader variety of advisors to the commission that includes other city directors such as the Finance Director and HR Director whose area of work focus is directly impacted by utility commission actions. Those advisors could also include pertinent Wausau City Council Chairs or the Council President.

Abolish the Commission: This would abolish the utility commission and reappropriate the duties to other city council committees or create a new committee.



Option 1: Utility Committee

Many cities in Wisconsin have Utility Committees made up of elected alders. Appleton, for instance, has a standing committee that oversees water filtration, distribution and installation of water main, wastewater treatment and any associated sewer lines, stormwater remediation and associated facilities. The committee also has rate setting responsibilities over the water and sewer utilities. Those rates, however, are all codified by the Appleton City Council.

Option 2: Water Utility & Environment Committee

In addition to utility discussions, City of Wausau Alders have had a variety of important discussions on topics that don't quite fit the missions of any of Wausau City Council Committees but could fit into a new committee. One option could be to create a Water Utility & Environment Committee where committee members could discuss not only the needs of the utility to meet regulatory requirements while balancing the resources of our community, but they could also be responsible for discussing environmental remediation efforts for soil, air, groundwater, and surface water.

Option 3: Utilities & Public Works Committee

Another option could be to position utility committee work alongside discussions related to other infrastructure work. In Lodi, for example, the Public Works and Utilities Committee provides oversight of the City's infrastructure and utilities including oversight for city buildings, improvements, streets, lands, storm water, and wastewater systems. The committee also performs the duties of the Board of Public Works. It might be quite a large workload for a committee like CISM to take on additional responsibilities without divesting of some other responsibilities.

Conclusion: The Wausau City Council is not powerless when it comes to the Wausau Waterworks Utility Commission. It has the authority, and responsibility, to determine how best to govern city and utility business. If the Wausau Waterworks Utility Commission is not meeting the needs of alders or our shared constituents, it's imperative that this body act to change how the utility is governed.