

**WEST MADISON UTILITY DISTRICT BOARD OF
COMMISSIONERS REGULAR MEETING
APRIL 8, 2025**

BE IT REMEMBERED that the regular meeting of the Board of Commissioners of the West Madison Utility District was duly convened, held and conducted on April 8, 2025, in the Kearney Park Community Center at 443 Livingston Vernon Road, Flora MS, as follows to wit:

The President of the Board, B. W. "Sammy" Brown, presided and called the meeting to order. The following members were present:

Commissioner B. W. "Sammy" Brown	Absent:
Commissioner Scott Rye	Commissioner Joyce Monroe
Commissioner Ernest Odom	
Commissioner Carolyn Andrews	

Also Present: WMUD Attorney James H. "Jim" Herring

The Board President announced that the members of the Board present constituted a quorum and declared the meeting duly convened. Commissioner Brown asked Commissioner Odom to open the meeting with a prayer.

RE: Approval of the April 8, 2025 Agenda

Commissioner Rye motioned and Commissioner Odom seconded to approve the Agenda. The vote on the matter being as follows: Commissioners Odom, Rye and Brown voted "aye" and Commissioner Andrews voted "no". The Agenda for the April 8, 2025 meeting is hereby approved

RE: Approval of Agenda Consent Items:

Commissioner Brown stated that the Board will now move on to the Consent Agenda Items and informed the Board that it wasn't until he saw the deposit of the insurance check for the community center that the income from, and for, the community center had been combined into the overall income with WMUD's income in past financial reports. Commissioner Brown then informed the Board that he had instructed Horn to separate the income/expenses for the community center from WMUD's on the financial statements. Commissioner Andrews stated that she would not approve anything in regard to finances until she receives copies of the bank statements as she feels that the financial report does not give her enough information. She stated that she wants detailed reports. Commissioner Brown stated that the Board felt that sending out copies of the bank statements was not necessary as the financial statement reflects all monies received and spent by WMUD, and Ms. Denson in the WMUD office sends the bank statements to Horne when they are received in the WMUD office. Commissioner Andrews asked "Sheila sees the bank statements?" Commissioner Brown said "yes" and informed Commissioner Andrews that he was trying to streamline the process so that matters could be handled more effectively.

Commissioner Brown then asked for a motion to accept and approve the consent agenda items. Commissioner Rye made a motion to accept and approve the consent agenda items and the motion was seconded by Commissioner Odom. Commissioners Brown, Odom and Rye voted to approve and accept the consent agenda items; Commissioner Andrews voted "no". The following consent agenda items were accepted and approved:

CONSENT AGENDA

4. Acknowledgement and Acceptance of EOM RVS Report for March, 2025.

5. Acknowledgement and Acceptance of EOM Financial Report for February, 2025
 6. Acceptance and Approval of the March 11, 2025 Board Meeting Minutes
- ***END OF CONSENT AGENDA***

RE: Customer's Concerns and Issues

There were no customers present at the meeting.

RE: Request for Use of Community Center for the Community

Marie Williams stated that she was requesting a free use of the community center for a line dancing class to be held about once every month or every two months on a Friday evening when the community center is not rented. Per Ms. Williams this is not something that they are charging for and it will be open to the community for health purposes as it is low impact exercise. Commissioner Brown stated that he did not see any issue with this as long as it did not displace a rental of the community center by a paying customer. Commissioner Odom stated that the community center needed to be cleaned up after the class and Ms. Williams stated they would make sure it was clean. Commissioner Brown made the motion that the community center could be used free of charge for a line dancing class to benefit the community once a month at no cost only when the community center is not rented by a paying customer. Commissioner Rye seconded the motion with all commissioners voting "aye". The motion passed.

RE: Operator's Report (K. T. Newman)

(See report.)

K. T. Newman stated that there are still some concerns regarding the lagoon but the bypass pump was working and able to assist during the last heavy rains. The last storm knocked the power out and when the electricity was restored the control panel shorted out. Commissioner Rye said that he was informed that he is expecting a quote on the control panel on the module to come in later this week.

K. T. stated that he felt the Board should contact Hydroservice regarding the last several bills that WMUD has not paid and try to come to some type of agreement before he talks with them about ordering a pump. Commissioner Brown said that he felt a motion was needed by the Board for him, Commissioner Rye and K. T. to meet with Hydroservice in this regard. Commissioner Andrews asked why a motion was needed; Commissioner Brown stated that he felt that it was prudent to have the Board's authorization to negotiate on behalf of WMUD in regard to these bills. Commissioner Andrews asked about the Hydroservice bills and the other commissioners explained that Hydroservice charged \$6,000-\$7,000 for parts/work regarding the bypass pump when none of what they did got the bypass pump working (per previous minutes). Commissioner Odom made the motion to authorize Commissioner Brown, Commissioner Rye and K. T. Newman to meet with Hydroservice to negotiate the bills referencing the unsuccessful repair charges to the bypass pump. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Rye with all commissioners voting "aye". The motion passed.

K. T. stated that he was sure the Board recalled that at the last meeting he mentioned that Reverent Hambrick is building a church on Harris Road in an undeveloped area, and while providing water service is not an issue, there are two choices regarding sewer for this location. The customer will have to put in a sewer treatment plant or a grinder pump to pump the sewage across the road to WMUD's manhole. Both of these costs will fall on the customer.

K. T. presented an expense report to the Board with P.O. numbers. K. T. stated that WMUD's prime supplier, Consolidated Pipe had recently moved from Jackson to Brandon and in the process of updating its new system, Consolidated Pipe had uncovered some past due charges to WMUD totaling \$5,977.84. K. T. stated that he had checked the invoices referenced and that these are valid charges.

No compliance issues to report and all water samples passed all standards set by the Dept. of Health for March, 2025.

A jetter usage report was also submitted to the Board.

RE: WMUD'S WATER AND SEWER RATES

Commissioner Brown stated that the Board needed to discuss the water/sewer rates and for K. T. to begin the discussion. K. T. informed the Board that as he has been informing the Board, costs for materials for repairs have escalated and due to WMUD having an older system, there tend to be major repairs more frequently. WMUD has not increased its rates since 2017 but the cost of supplies and materials has increased substantially. WMUD faces the fact that if it does not do something, it will not have enough money to repair its existing system.

Commissioner Brown stated that Commissioner Odom and he had attended the board training session in March sponsored by the Mississippi Rural Water Association, and they were informed that every utility supplier by law should have a 15% net profit each month. He further stated that K. T. and he had met and looked at the numbers and although no one likes it, it is necessary to raise the rates to get WMUD in the black as it has been losing \$3,000-\$4,000 per month in expenses over income. The Mississippi Legislature wanted to pass legislation this year, but instead issued a warning, and informed everyone that it fully intends to pass legislation next year that if a water/sewer supplier does not meet the requirements (at least 15% profit each month), that it will face take over by the State and/or other utility providers. During the class, it was mentioned that Holmes County is charging a base usage rate of \$80 and that basic water service currently should be at least \$45 per month, and will probably be at \$60 per month by next year.

Commissioner Andrews stated that she felt WMUD should not spend money on things it does not need. Commissioner Brown said that K. T. and he used June and July expenses from last year which excludes the attorney fees, etc., incurred for the certification issue, and it was still losing money at \$3,000-\$4,000 per month. The financials reflect that WMUD is losing money. Commissioner Andrews stated that WMUD should have a community meeting to discuss raising rates. Commissioner Brown stated that he was informed that the proper procedure for water/sewer providers is to pass the rates and then send the customers a letter informing them of the new rates and the date they will go into effect. "This is not something we want to do, this is something we have to do. Expenses speak for themselves", said Commissioner Brown.

Commissioner Andrews again stated that she felt WMUD could cut more costs and she wanted to see the bank statements. Commissioner Rye stated that there is an invoice/bill for every check he signed and every check now requires two signatures; his and Commissioner Brown's. Commissioner Andrews then questioned the "dues" and "consulting fees" listed on the financials.

Commissioner Brown stated that after working the numbers, he and K. T. arrived at \$45 for the base fee for water and \$40 for the base fee for sewer, and K. T. and he will draft a letter to the customers. Commissioner Andrews stated that she felt they should discuss the rates as she felt that was a huge jump in cost. She also asked "Why are we going in the hole? Why do we have consulting fees?" Commissioner Brown stated there is no more discussion. We have been back and forth about this for months. K. T. Newman informed that Board that just last week he had to repair a 4" water line at the creek crossing on Windy Hill and an 8" sewer line at Terry Road. The cost in just materials for these two repairs is at least \$3,500. Commissioner Brown further stated that Mississippi Rural Water Association (MsRWA) recommends a \$1.00-\$2.00 increase every year in a water/sewer provider's rates. WMUD has not increased its rates since 2017. Commissioner Brown stated that WMUD does not have a choice; water is our most valuable resource and we are tasked with the responsibility to make sure WMUD is able to provide water and sewer service to its customers.

Commissioner Rye made a motion to increase the base water/sewer rates, effective July 1, 2025, as follows:

Minimum Water Rate: \$45.00 for the first 2,000 gallons

\$ 5.00 per every 1,000 gallons used over the 2,000 gallons minimum

Minimum Sewer Rate: \$40.00 for the first 2,000 gallons

\$5.00 per every 1,000 gallons used over the 2,000 gallons minimum

The motion was seconded by Commissioner Odom. Commissioners Brown, Odom and Rye voted "aye" and Commissioner Andrews voted "no". The motion passed. Commissioner Brown instructed K. T. to draft a customer letter regarding the rate increase and send it to him for review.

Commissioner Odom stated that he did not want to increase the rates, but it is necessary. "The infrastructure and equipment are needed, not just for us, but for our children and grandchildren. I do not want to be 50 years behind. We are not exempted from these rates as we are all customers ourselves. I am on a fixed income and have been fighting cancer for the last ten years so, no, I do not like to see these rates increased, but it is our responsibility as board members to make sure that West Madison succeeds and has the ability to repair and increase the size of its infrastructure. At this time West Madison cannot even use a fire hydrant to fight a fire. We just need to explain why we are having to do this in an understanding way."

Mr. Jim Herring, the Board attorney, stated that the Board has the right to regulate and manage its rates as a utility district, and it also has a duty to manage them properly. He told the Board, "If you do not get the rates right and have a bit of profit each month, this falls squarely on you."

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Commissioner Brown made a motion to enter execution session to discuss the Town of Flora letter and attorney update; the motion was seconded by Commissioner Rye with all commissioners voting "aye". The Board entered executive session.

Commissioner Brown made a motion for Mr. Herring, the Board attorney, to respond to the Health Department, DEQ, the Attorney General and/or whoever else he felt needed to be contacted in regard to the Church Hill situation and the Town of Flora. Commissioner Rye seconded the motion with all commissioners voting "aye". The motion passed.

The Board exited executive session.

NEW BUSINESS

Community Center

Commissioner Brown handed out a copy of WMUD's Policies and Procedures regarding the community center. Commissioner Brown mentioned that after the break in last Tuesday evening that he had the community center cleaned ceiling to floor, and the floors were waxed. He said that the building was nasty in addition to having foam everywhere. Commissioner Andrews asked how the person had gotten in. Commissioner Brown stated that someone had broken into the community center through the back glass doors (jimmied the lock) and sprayed the contents of two community center fire extinguishers from ceiling to floor all over the whole interior. Commissioner Brown said he thought the Board needed to have a Special Meeting to discuss the cleaning, rates, deposits, etc., regarding the community center.

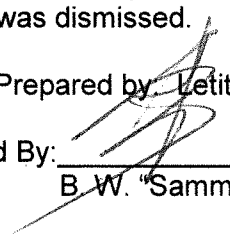
Commissioner Brown also stated he had spoken with Supervisor Karl Banks and County Administrator Greg Higginbotham about the community center roof, and that the county has agreed to assist with the cost of installing a galvanized metal roof on the building. Commissioner Brown had obtained three quotes that he will deliver to the County Administrator by the end of this week. Commissioner Brown mentioned that he felt the next steps would be to put some type of sound panels in the building so that people can hear each other speak inside the community center as currently it is difficult to hear what is being said unless you are close to the person speaking. Commissioner Rye mentioned new lights as well.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

There being no other business to discuss, Commissioner Brown made a motion to dismiss the meeting, seconded by Commissioner Rye. All commissioners voted "aye," and the meeting was dismissed.

Minutes Prepared by: Letitia Reeves

Approved By: 
B. W. "Sammy" Brown7

Date: 5-13-25