

**CITY OF HARLINGEN WATERWORKS SYSTEM**  
**Regular Board Meeting Minutes**  
**Wednesday November 29, 2023**

The Regular Board Meeting of the Utility Board of Trustees was conducted on the 29th day of November 2023 at 6:30 P.M. in the Harlingen Waterworks System's Board Room located on the second floor at 134 East Van Buren Avenue, in the City of Harlingen, Texas.

Board Members Present:       Chris Bartnesky, Chairman  
  Maru De La Paz, Trustee  
  Michael Murphy, Trustee

Staff Present:                    Tim Skoglund, General Manager  
  Gene McCullough, System Attorney  
  David Sanchez, Director of Water Services  
  Jon Hedegard, Director of Wastewater Services  
  Ron De La Garza, Director of Finances  
  Florita Rodriguez, Customer Service Director  
  Michael Chamberlain, Purchasing Manager  
  Jose L. Rodriguez, Director of Information Technology  
  Elizabeth Soto, Director of Human Resources  
  Gabriel Trevino, Utility Engineer  
  Joseph Lunn, Assistant Utility Engineer

City Staff:                         Josh Ramirez, Assistant City Manager – Internal Affairs

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 1: OPEN MEETING AND WELCOME**

Chris Bartnesky, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 7:41 P.M. and asked whether the agenda had been posted in accordance with the law; Nilda Sanchez responded affirmatively.

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 2: CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

Mr. Bartnesky read the conflict-of-interest disclosure and asked the Board if anyone had any known conflicts of interest for this Board Meeting. None of the trustees reported a conflict of interest.

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 3: COMMUNICATION / INPUT FROM CUSTOMERS AND RESIDENTS OF HARLINGEN**

None.

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 4: APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Regular Board Meeting of September 27, 2023.**

**CITY OF HARLINGEN WATERWORKS SYSTEM**  
**Regular Board Meeting Minutes**  
**Wednesday November 29, 2023**

With no corrections requested, a motion to approve the Board Minutes for the Regular Board Meeting of September 27, 2023, was made.

Motion: Michael Murphy  
Second: Maru De La Paz

Motion to approve was carried by a vote of the Board (3-0).

**\*\*\* OUT OF SEQUENCE**

**i) Authorizing a contract for Public Outreach and Communications Services related to rate setting.**

Mr. Skoglund discussed a proposal solicited from Tripepi Smith, a communications consultant who had worked extensively with Waterwork's rate consultant in assisting water utilities with public engagement on rate setting. The proposal included a menu of ad-hoc services that could be incorporated in a communications plan for public outreach to support the current rate setting process. Mr. Skoglund suggested a cap of \$30,000 on services and recommended appointment of a committee of Waterworks Board Members and City Commissioners to guide the development and execution of a public outreach communications plan.

Jennifer Vaughn of Tripepi Smith gave a brief presentation about the firm's services and experience in public outreach to support rate setting. Trustee Michael Murphy asked about the length of time this type of public outreach would require. Ms. Vaughn reported some engagements had taken as long as five months. Trustee Maru De La Paz asked about the cost range for a typical scope of services for rate setting projects. Ms. Vaughn reported a range of \$25,000 to \$100,000, depending on the services needed, and an average of about \$40,000. Discussion by the Board ensued.

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 5: REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS**

**a) Report on delinquent accounts exceeding \$500.**

Florita J. Rodriguez gave an overview of the delinquent accounts that were currently pending and reported several accounts that were written off for fiscal year 2023. Discussion by the Board ensued.

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 6: FINANCIALS**

**a) Monthly Financial report for month ending October 31, 2023.**

Ron De La Garza gave an overview of the financial reports for October 31, 2023. Discussion by the Board ensued.

**b) Presentation of Quarterly Investment Report for Quarter ending September 30, 2023.**

Ron De La Garza discussed information in the Quarterly Investment Report, ending September 30, 2023.

**CITY OF HARLINGEN WATERWORKS SYSTEM**  
**Regular Board Meeting Minutes**  
**Wednesday November 29, 2023**

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 7: RESOLUTIONS**

**a) R2324-01: Approving a license renewal for GIS Software and Services**

Mr. Skoglund reported on the expiring contract and proposed license renewal for geographic information system (GIS) software by Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI). He noted that the software had been a valuable tool for master planning and was continuing to serve as an essential foundation for other enterprise applications. The current contract was expiring soon, and a renewal was needed to continue use of the software and provide access to support services. Discussion by the Board ensued.

A motion was made to approve Resolution No. R2324-01 – approving a license renewal for GIS Software and Services

Motion: Michael Murphy  
Second: Maru De La Paz

Motion to approve was carried by a vote of the Board (3-0).

**b) R2324-02: Awarding a contract for the purchase of Ammonia Analyzers**

Mr. Skoglund reported that a combination of two chemicals, chlorine and ammonia, were used to disinfect raw water and maintain a disinfectant residual in the distribution system. Maintaining a proper ratio of these chemicals is essential for optimizing dose and disinfection performance and for minimizing system flushing.

One bid had been received for one (1) in-line ammonia analyzer at each of the water treatment plants that would provide real-time indication of ammonia concentration and greatly improve operator's ability to optimize disinfectant dosing. Discussion by the Board ensued.

A motion was made to approve Resolution No. R2324:02 – awarding a contract for the purchase of Ammonia Analyzers

Motion: Maru De La Paz  
Second: Michael Murphy

Motion to approve was carried by a vote of the Board (3-0).

**c) R2324-03: Approving contract Amendment No. 1 for On-Call Hydraulic Modeling Services**

**CITY OF HARLINGEN WATERWORKS SYSTEM**  
**Regular Board Meeting Minutes**  
**Wednesday November 29, 2023**

Tim Skoglund reported expenses on the existing contract with Freese & Nichols, Inc. for hydraulic modeling services had reached its not-to-exceed limit of \$25,000. Staff had anticipated the contract limit would be sufficient for the entirety of the fiscal year. He noted, however, that several proposed developments required verification of system capacity and an update of master plan capital project cost estimates was needed for the rate study, all of which exhausted the contract limit.

As other projects would arise, continued access to these services would be essential to evaluate the impacts of new development and respond confidently to economic development inquiries. Mr. Skoglund noted that Freese & Nichols developed the current hydraulic model as part of the master planning effort and possessed the familiarity and expertise to most effectively and responsively provide support. Chris Bartnesky asked for clarification that the proposed \$75,000 amended amount represented the total contract amount. Mr. Skoglund responded affirmatively. Discussion by the Board ensued.

A motion was made to approve Resolution No. R2324-03 – approving contract Amendment No. 1 for On-Call Hydraulic Modeling Services.

Motion: Michael Murphy  
Second: Maru De La Paz

Motion to approve was carried by a vote of the Board (3-0).

**c) R2324-04: Awarding a contract for purchase of Power Quality Monitors for the Water Treatment Plants.**

Mr. Skoglund informed the Board of many recent failures of electrical equipment at the water treatment plants. The issues had been observed more than seven years ago, but a power quality investigation later performed by an electrical engineering consultant revealed no significant problems during a three-month monitoring period.

More recently, power quality problems were resulting in equipment failures and costly repairs. Based on the electrical engineer's recommendation for a suitable power quality monitor, a proposal was solicited for five (5) power quality monitors to be installed at the power feed points to both water treatment plants to provide continual monitoring that would be able to identify and document power quality problems. Such documentation would be essential for pursuing recourse from the power company for the cost of equipment repairs and replacements arising from power quality issues or for motivating power grid improvements. The monitors would be installed by staff. Discussion by the Board ensued.

**CITY OF HARLINGEN WATERWORKS SYSTEM**  
**Regular Board Meeting Minutes**  
**Wednesday November 29, 2023**

A motion was made to approve Resolution No. R2324-04 – awarding a contract for purchase of Power Quality Monitors for the Water Treatment Plants.

Motion: Maru De La Paz  
Second: Michael Murphy

Motion to approve was carried by a vote of the Board (3-0).

**d) R2324-05: Awarding a contract for Removal and Disposal of Water Treatment Sludge.**

Mr. Skoglund reported there had been an accumulation of water treatment sludge in the sludge lagoons at the Downtown and MFR Water Treatment Plants. Over a period of more than 16 years, sludge from the Downtown plant had been hauled to the MFR sludge lagoons, and the accumulation of sludge from both plants was approaching the MFR lagoon's capacity. Removal and disposal of sludge was needed to ensure continued operation of the plants.

Proposals from the region's sole-source vendor for sludge land application had been solicited for dredging the lagoons, removing the sludge, and hauling it off to permitted land application sites. The removal and disposal services for accumulated sludge were proposed to be phased over six years. A not-to-exceed total of \$600,000 was proposed for the first-year contract. Discussion by the Board ensued.

A motion was made to approve Resolution No. R2324-05 – awarding a contract for Removal and Disposal of Water Treatment Sludge.

Motion: Michael Murphy  
Second: Maru De La Paz

Motion to approve was carried by a vote of the Board (3-0).

**e) R2324-06: Approving Change Order No. 4 – Priority Sewer Renewal Package No. 1 Project.**

Mr. Skoglund reported the change order was the final reconciliation for the completed construction contract, reflecting a decrease contract amount of \$732,080.82 associated with a net reduction of line-item quantities in the contract. Discussion by the Board ensued.

**CITY OF HARLINGEN WATERWORKS SYSTEM**  
**Regular Board Meeting Minutes**  
**Wednesday November 29, 2023**

A motion was made to approve Resolution No. R2324-06 – approving Change Order No. 4 – Priority Sewer Renewal Package No. 1 Project

Motion: Maru De La Paz  
Second: Michael Murphy

Motion to approve was carried by a vote of the Board (3-0).

**f) R2324-07: Authorizing the General Manager to execute documents related to the management of water rights.**

Mr. Skoglund recapped a recent purchase of water rights associated with irrigable land that had been developed into an urban use. He explained the need for converting Class A and Class B agricultural rights to municipal water rights and for the consolidation of other rights into a smaller, more manageable number of accounts. The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality required that the executor of water rights transactions be authorized by the governing body to do so. The proposed resolution would authorize the general manager as the executor for the currently needed transactions and any future transaction involving water rights. Discussion by the Board ensued.

A motion was made to approve Resolution No. R2324-07 – authorizing the General Manager to execute documents related to the management of water rights.

Motion: Michael Murphy  
Second: Maru De La Paz

Motion to approve was carried by a vote of the Board (3-0).

**g) R2324-08: Approving the purchase of a Wastewater Lift Station Pump.**

Mr. Skoglund reported that one of current submersible pump at the wastewater treatment plant's influent lift station had been installed in 2006, had reached the end of its useful life, and was in need of replacement. The proposal for the replacement slightly exceeded the fiscal year budget but the proposed manufacturer's pumps had proven reliable through many years of service in the collection system and would be compatible with the control equipment of the same manufacturer at the plant's influent lift station.

A motion was made to approve Resolution No. R2324-08 – approving the purchase of a Wastewater Lift Station Pump.

**CITY OF HARLINGEN WATERWORKS SYSTEM**  
**Regular Board Meeting Minutes**  
**Wednesday November 29, 2023**

Motion: Maru De La Paz  
Second: Michael Murphy

Motion to approve was carried by a vote of the Board (3-0).

**h) R2324-09: Awarding a contract for purchase of Half-Ton Pickup Trucks.**

Mr. Skoglund reported the need for new pickup trucks. Some were failing and had reached the end of their useful lives. One pickup truck had to be replaced because of an accident, and one additional pickup truck had been requested by the newly appointed Fleet/Safety Coordinator in lieu of a stipend for use of his own vehicle. Discussion by the Board ensued.

A motion was made to approve Resolution No. R2324:09 – awarding a contract for purchase of Half-Ton Pickup Trucks.

Motion: Michael Murphy  
Second: Maru De La Paz

Motion to approve was carried by a vote of the Board (3-0).

**i) R2324-10: Approving a contract extension for Manhole Rehabilitation.**

Mr. Skoglund reported Southern Trenchless had rehabilitated many sewer manholes within the system and that staff continued to be pleased with their performance. Southern Trenchless' manhole rehabilitation services continued to be offered through BuyBoard contract, and even though an improved product at a higher unit price was being proposed, it would substitute for the combination of two former products at a net equal cost. Discussion by the Board ensued.

A motion was made to approve Resolution No. R2324-10 – approving a contract extension for Manhole Rehabilitation.

Motion: Maru De La Paz  
Second: Michael Murphy

Motion to approve was carried by a vote of the Board (3-0).

**j) R2324-11: Awarding a contract for purchase of Backhoes.**

Mr. Skoglund reported the need for backhoes, one of which would be a replacement and the other two were additional units needed to eliminate downtime associated with

**CITY OF HARLINGEN WATERWORKS SYSTEM**  
**Regular Board Meeting Minutes**  
**Wednesday November 29, 2023**

conflicting demand for two units currently being shared between three crews and to equip a new construction crew established for in-house construction of large meter installation upgrades. Discussion by the Board ensued.

A motion was made to approve Resolution No. R2324-11 – approving a contract for purchase of Backhoes.

Motion: Michael Murphy  
Second: Maru De La Paz

Motion to approve was carried by a vote of the Board (3-0).

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 8: MANAGER’S REPORTS**

Mr. Skoglund asked whether the Board had any questions about the manager’s reports, and no questions were asked.

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 9: EXECUTIVE SESSION**

**(1) Deliberation on the appointment, employment, evaluation, reassignment, duties, discipline or dismissal of a public officer or employee; pursuant to Tex. Gov’t Code §551.074.**


Chairman Bartnesky informed the Board, Executive Session was to be rescheduled for next month’s Board Meeting in consideration of the late hour and the absence of Board Trustee, Michael Garza.

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 10: ADJOURN**

There being no further business to discuss, Chairman, Bartnesky, called for a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:41 P.M.

Motion: Michael Murphy  
Second: Maru De La Paz

Motion to approve was carried by a vote of the Board (3-0).

Attest:   
Nilda Sanchez, Board Secretary