Date: April 28, 2020
Time: 9:00 a.m.
Place: Via conference call, per proclamation No. 20-28.1

Attendees:
Commissioners Hall, Sanders, and Bush
General Manager Dunn
Assistant General Manager Hunter
General Counsel Hultgrenn
Director of Finance and Business Services Meyer
Director of Customer Programs and Services Ball
Director of Power Management White
Director of Information Technology & Broadband Services Folta
Director of Executive Administration Conover
Manager of Customer Service McAloon
Manager of Accounting Zirker
Manager of Human Resources Dunlap
Manager of Conservation & Renewable Energy Programs Johnson
Manager of Contracts & Purchasing Ochweri
Supervisor of Executive Administration/Clerk of the Board Cole
Executive Assistant – General Manager Marshall

The Pledge of Allegiance was given.

Commission President Jeff Hall and General Manager recognized Director of Customer Programs & Services Paula Ball and Supervisor of Executive Administration/Clerk of the Board Terri Cole on their upcoming retirements from the District.

Consent Agenda
Motion by Barry Bush, seconded by Lori Sanders to approve the Consent Agenda as follows:
b) Approving Vouchers audited and certified by the auditing officer as required by RCW 42.24.080, and those expense reimbursement claims certified as required by RCW 42.24.090, have been recorded on a listing made available to the Commission. As of this date, the Commission does approve the following for payment: Accounts Payable: Automated Clearing House (DD) payments 79654-79672 79855-79893 in the total amount of $891,476.86 Checks & Customer Refund payments (CHK) 78903-78959 78961-78993 in the total amount of $611,530.56, Electronic Fund Transfer (WIRE) payments 5311-5326 in the total amount of
$853,323.87; Purchase Card Detail for March 2020; Payroll, Direct Deposit 04/16/2020 79673-79853 in the total amount of $459,056.60 Check Climbing Allowance (Retiree) 600109 in the total amount of $458.06 for a grand total of $2,815,845.95. Voided checks in the total amount of $25,220.00 were included on the report.

c) Approving Resolution No. 2541, Approving the Authority to Issue Checks or Warrants and Initiate Electronic Funds Transfers (EFTs), by District employees and Commission appointed positions effective April 28, 2020.

d) Adopting Resolution No. 2542, Amending the Merit-Based Salary Administration Plan.


f) Authorizing the General Manager on behalf of the District to sign change order #9 of Contract #10-46-13 with NoaNet, to increase the not-to-exceed amount by $27,000.00, bringing the new total contract value to $421,200.00.

g) Authorizing the General Manager on behalf of the District to sign Change Order #5 of Contract #16-33-02 with Benton County Emergency Services, to increase the not-to-exceed amount by $32,601.60; bringing the new not-to-exceed amount of the contract to $104,831.88.

h) Reviewing Quarterly Broadband Service Orders Report to Commission.


MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Report from Management

General Manager:

1. A discussion was held regarding the May 12, 2020 commission meeting being held in the District’s Kennewick Auditorium to maintain social distancing and allow staff and commissioners to be present for the meeting. Scout Clean Energy has expressed their interest in providing a presentation as part of the May 12th agenda. General Manager also reviewed other items staff are ready to present on. Commissioners confirmed they were fine with attending in person for the upcoming commission meeting.

2. General Manager discussed the Governor’s current Stay-at-Home order and reminded the Commissioners of the limitations on agenda items resulting from the governor’s proclamation amending the Open Public Meetings Act. Currently the Governor’s Proclamation is set to expire at midnight on May 4, 2020.

3. General Manager discussed the recent PPC Wire to Wire article which provided information on Clallam PUD’s expulsion from PPC.

4. An update was provided on a “playbook” being developed by staff that will define expectations and conditions to re-open the District offices for customers and staff. The “playbook” will provide checklists, expectations, and guidelines for employees. General Manager informed the Commission there are no plans to have staff return to the office on May 5, 2020 but will continue to keep the Commissioners updated.

5. Staff are continuing to stay updated on the Northwest Power Pool (NWPP) Resource Adequacy (RA) efforts. A discussion was held on a recent NWPP webinar during which preliminary RA program design and governance were discussed. Under one scenario load serving entities, including Benton PUD, would be responsible for voluntary RA compliance
which would seem to be a complicated issue given the large number of utilities served by the Bonneville Power Administration. The question of why utilities would voluntarily commit to meeting RA standards is still the subject of discussion as compliance will come at a direct cost to participants. It is widely believed that utilities will voluntarily comply with enforceable RA standards for the better good of the region and because no utility wants to be identified as contributing to a regional black out. Staff will continue to keep the Commission updated.

Assistant General Manager:
1. The District recently received first place award recognition from both APPA and NWPPA Safety programs.
2. Assistant General Manager provided an update on the Operations 50/50 crew rotations and work schedules. Fifty percent of the District’s Operations crews have returned to the office and practicing social distancing to maintain a six-foot distance from each other. Staff will continue to monitor and update the Commission as needed.

Director of Executive Administration:
1. The District, along with other community partners, is participating in a “Light up the Night” on Friday, May 1, 2020. Two-line trucks and the District’s Electric Vehicle will be a part of a community parade that will drive around the three local hospitals.
2. The District has developed a COVID-19 page on the Benton PUD website that is regularly updated and provides a list of programs available for those in need. Staff are going to highlight some of these programs on the District’s Facebook page.

Director of Information Technology & Broadband Services:
1. An update was provided regarding a need during the Stay Home Stay Healthy order to offer public Wi-Fi hotspots in underserved areas as all students are now attending school over the internet. Director informed the Commission that NoaNet is managing the Washington State Broadband Office’s Drive-in Wi-Fi initiative and is utilizing a non-profit organization called the Information Technology Disaster Resource Center that will be providing equipment to connect students in designated underserved areas throughout the state to these Wi-Fi hotspots. Director also informed the Commission that five existing District Wi-Fi hotspots installed over fifteen years ago in Kennewick were recently turned back on; however, due to older technology, they are bandwidth limited. The District has ordered equipment to update these hotspots and would like to additionally provide Wi-Fi access at the District’s Prosser office parking lot as well as at least one location in Benton City. Overall, many of the public libraries and school districts have reported that they are doing well with existing District-provided broadband access and have also made Wi-Fi available outside of their respective buildings for public use. Director will continue to provide updates at future commission meetings.
Business Agenda

Motion Extending Temporary Changes to the District’s Customer Service Rates and Policies
Director of Customer Service & Programs provided updates on customer statistics that were discussed during the previous commission meeting, including accounts eligible for disconnect, average payment volume, and self-service and kiosk payment usage.

Director reported on letters being mailed to customers with account balances of more than 60 days past due; providing them with program and assistance options and encouraging the customers to call Customer Service.

An update was provided on programs and assistance available to citizens affected by COVID-19, which includes additional LIHEAP funding available through the local CAC office. Director also reported on a new disaster cash assistance fund available through DSHS that will be available through EBT cards. Citizens eligible for the additional DSHS disaster cash assistance have the ability to withdraw funds from the card to pay bills, such as utilities.

Director reviewed options shared with the Commission at the previous meeting to provide assistance to customers in the form of a bill credit or low-income discount. The Commission agreed with the staff recommendation to discuss the options again at a later meeting.

Director reviewed the recommended motion with the Commissioners, explaining the extension to May 18, 2020 is two weeks beyond the current May 4, 2020 expiration of the Stay Home Stay Healthy order and would allow staff to return to the May 12, 2020 commission meeting with updates and discuss further extensions.

Motion by Lori Sanders, seconded by Barry Bush extending the following temporary changes that became effective March 16, 2020 to the District’s Customer Service Rates and Policies, Resolution No. 2516:
1) Discontinuance of the assessment of the 1% late fee on past due balances.
2) Suspension of the mailing of Urgent Notices to customers with delinquent account balances.
3) Suspension of disconnects for non-pay.

And authorizing the temporary changes to continue in place until close of business of May 18, 2020.
MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Energy Conservation Payment Approval
Director of Finance & Business Services reviewed the recommended motion for an Energy Conservation Payment Approval. Commissioner Lori Sander recused herself from considering this agenda item due to a potential conflict of interest.
Motion by Barry Sanders, seconded by Jeff Hall approving check number 79854 to A&R Feser Inc in the amount of $530.65 for New Construction Home Rebate. 
MOTION PASSED.

March 2020 Financials/Forecast
Director of Finance & Business Services reviewed the March 2020 Financials, which are also located on the District’s website. 
Director provided a financial forecast update, as well as an update on current account receivables.

Director provided updates on his calls with S&P and Fitch rating agencies. Fitch is completing a review of the District’s rating. 
The State Auditor is currently completing their 2019 Accountability Audit with the District; and Moss Adams is wrapping up their 2019 Financial Audit of the District. Director will return to the Commission as needed with updates.

Future Planning
General Manager reviewed the Energy Northwest Participants Review Board (PRB) election designation form. Commissioners held a discussion on the nomination of Benton PUD commissioner for the Participants Review Board (PRB) with Commission Secretary Barry Bush expressing his interest in a nomination; acknowledging if elected this is a three-year term. Staff will complete and return the paperwork to Energy Northwest.

Commission President Jeff Hall reported on his virtual attendance at the recent WPUDA Association meetings. WPUDA will hold a May 23, 2020 virtual Board of Directors meeting for the election of officers.

A brief discussion was held on how utility associations are responding to Clallam PUD expulsion from PPC meetings.

General Manager reported on his attendance at a recent MCEI Board meeting; informing the Commissioners that Chad Bartram is replacing Mike Lawrence as Board Chair for the MCEI Committee. General Manager reported Scout Clean Energy has expressed interest in providing a presentation at a future MCEI Board Meeting.

Hearing no objection, Commission President Jeff Hall adjourned the Commission Meeting at 10:09 a.m.

Jeffrey D. Hall, President

ATTEST:
Barry A. Bush, Secretary

Commission Meeting Minutes
April 28, 2020