

**WESTERN BUTLER COUNTY AUTHORITY  
607 MARKET STREET  
ZELIENOPLE, PA 16063  
PHONE: (724) 452-5501**

**Regular Meeting Minutes – November 11, 2021**

**CALL TO ORDER:**

A quorum was reached, and after reciting the Pledge of Allegiance, Vice Chairman Ed Eckenrode called the Nov. 11, 2021 meeting of the Western Butler County Authority Board of Directors to order at 7 p.m.

**PRESENT ON ROLL CALL:**

Ed Eckenrode  
Mark Butler  
Daniel Karns  
Paul J. Kremer Jr.  
Ron Lutz  
Greg Such (remotely)  
Dave Weber

**MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Thomas Tomayko

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

Manager Autumn Crawford  
Solicitor Matt Racunas  
Consulting Engineer Chad Hanley  
Samantha Schmucker of HRG (remotely)  
Facilities Manager Keith Warner  
Office Administrator Evan George  
Billing coordinator Jen Fassinger  
Outgoing Recording Secretary Nicole Peffer (remotely)  
Incoming Recording Secretary Natalie Hacker

**VISITORS:**

Eddie Fir of the Butler Eagle

**MINUTES:**

In a motion made by Mark Butler and seconded by Paul Kremer, the Board unanimously approved the Oct. 14, 2021, Regular Meeting Minutes, as amended.

**BILLS AND COMMUNICATIONS:**

Lists of bills in the amounts of \$107,116.54 (Operating) and \$62,210.90 (Capital) were presented to the Board in the form of Expenses by Vendor summaries with checks dated Nov. 11, 2021. Manager Autumn Crawford answered questions board members had regarding the bills.

In a motion made by Ron Lutz and seconded by Daniel Karns, the Board unanimously approved all of the bills for payment as presented by the Manager in Expenses by Vendor summaries with checks dated Nov. 11, 2021.

**REPORT OF THE SECRETARY:**

Secretary Greg Such reported that Harmony Borough passed the Harmony Pump Station portion of the Act 537 Harmony Planning Module, and that he was reappointed to the WBCA Board of Directors for another term.

**REPORT OF THE COMMITTEES:**

*Personnel Committee*

The Manager reported that she and Jennifer Fassinger interviewed eight candidates for two vacant maintenance utility personnel positions. The Manager said she would like to offer one candidate to begin work in next two weeks and offer the second new hire a January 1, 2022 start date. The Manger said she would discuss wages with the Committee.

*Finance Committee*

The Manager presented a draft of the 2022 Budget for review. The budget will be up for vote during the December 2021 Board meeting.

*Facilities Maintenance Committee*

The Committee had nothing to report.

*Administrative Review Committee*

The Manager reported that the Committee revised the Employee Handbook to expand the probation period for new employees from 60 days to six months. The benefits period will stand at 90 days before new employees become eligible for health and retirement benefits.

## **REPORT OF THE SOLICITOR:**

The Solicitor reported that work continues on the sales agreement for the Zelig Self Storage property, meetings with Lancaster Township and Zelienople Borough on accepting the Act 537 plan, and litigation matters. Further updates were deferred to Executive Session.

## **REPORT OF THE ENGINEER:**

The Engineer highlighted the following report items:

- **Herman Pump Station:** A potential completion walkthrough was completed Nov. 8, 2021 and a tentative substantial completion certificate was issued for the Authority's review, with a final expected the following week. The new pump station is operational and the old pump station has been demolished.
- **Act 537 Plan/Harmony Planning Module:** The Engineer continues to work with representatives from Zelienople Borough and Lancaster Township, answering questions and addressing comments. The Manager said a steering committee is scheduled Nov. 29 or 30, 2021. Zelienople Borough has named steering committee members. The Manager said they will move forward with the steering committee meeting.

Dave Weber requested details regarding the Planning Module permit 60-day deadline. The Engineer said he reviewed the law in this matter. If a developer submits a planning module and the municipality does not act upon it within 60 days, it is deemed approved. In the case of the Harmony Planning Module, the Authority is considered the developer. The Engineer said he doubts that the Department of Environmental Protection will validate the Authority as acting in the way of a developer. If the planning module is submitted to the DEP without municipal approval, he said he doubted that the DEP will approve it. He recommended further discussion.

The Solicitor raised a case from his experience when DEP did not approve a planning module without a municipal signature.

The Engineer said signed and sealed resolutions are needed from the municipalities. The Solicitor requested that Mr. Such add the ratification to the next Harmony Borough meeting's agenda. In addition, the Solicitor said that Component 4A forms must be sent to planning commissions, who are required to return form to the Authority in 60 days, otherwise it is deemed as having "no comment."

The Engineer said he would further discuss contacting DEP to "find out what their temperature might be on a submission" with the Manager and Solicitor.

- **Administration Building Construction:** Met with Hayes Design Group on Nov. 4, 2021. Proposals of the sketch plan phase, which defines the project, will be presented to the Board during the December 2021 Board meeting. The Manager designated Hayes

Design Group as a subcontractor to HRG.

Dave Weber asked about the cost of sketch plan phase. The Engineer said the Board would not be billed directly for the interview and scope meetings. He explained that by separating the process into sketch plan, design development and bidding document phase proposals, HRG can refine cost estimates as they proceed with the project. The Manger added that she directed Hayes Design Group that if it bills the Authority for time and materials with a “not to exceed” cap rather than a lump sum.

- **Conveyance System Improvements Project:** Final easement was signed Nov. 11, 2021, and a general permit for waterways encroachment has been submitted. One last permit is needed before completing the project manual and putting the project out to bid.
- **Developments:** A capacity verification requirement was received for Buncher Phase V. Jackson Township allowed the requested density of the proposed Santypal Farm development.

## **REPORT OF THE MANAGER:**

### ADMINISTRATIVE

- The Manager proposed putting the generator from the demolished Herman Pump Station out for bid.

In a motion made by Dave Weber and seconded by Ed Eckenrode, the Board voted unanimously to authorize the advertisement for the sale of the Herman Pump Station generator for the highest bid, with bid opening at the January 2021 WBCA Board meeting.

- The Manager researched the lawsuit involving WBCA, but was not able to find insurance records going back that far and deferred further discussion to Executive Session.
- **2022 Employee Wages and Benefits**

In a motion made by Mark Butler and seconded by Ed Eckenrode, the Board voted unanimously to approve the employee health insurance plan Proposal 1.

The Manager and Board members discussed Proposal 1. The Manager proposed taking the premium savings and distributing it between the employees (\$2,340 per employee) to help them cover health insurance deductibles. She proposed this measure as a one-time solution; next year, she intends to move coverage to a Highmark plan.

In a motion made by Ed Eckenrode and seconded by Mark Butler, the Board voted to approve the employee benefits plan Proposal 2 for 10 Federal employee holidays in a roll-call vote: **YES:** Dave Weber, Mark Butler, Daniel Karns, Greg Such, Ed Eckenrode;

**NO:** Paul Kremer, Ron Lutz. **The motion carried.**

Employees have six Federal holidays off. In exchange for a smaller wage increase (2% across the board), they requested an additional four days, bringing the total to 10 Federal holidays.

Discussion: Ron Lutz suggested adding four floating holidays for employees to schedule, instead. The Manager disagreed from an operations and scheduling standpoint, but said she would be willing to test floating holidays.

- In a motion made by Ed Eckenrode and seconded by Mark Butler, the Board voted unanimously in a roll-call vote to approve Proposal 3, a 2% raise in exchange for four additional Federal holidays off work.

**FACILITIES**

- In a motion made by Paul Kremer and seconded by Ron Lutz, the Board voted unanimously to approve Payment Application #8 in the amount of \$3,750 to Wagner Electric for the Herman Pump Station project.

**SEWER SYSTEM REPORT**

- The Manager gave brief updates on Buncher Phase V and Phase 3C in Jackson Township.
- Ed Eckenrode requested details regarding the increase of late payments. Jennifer Fassinger explained that her goal was to get customers on payment contracts. The Manager said that filing a notice of intent to file with magistrate has proven more effective than filing a municipal lien against a property.

**PAST DUE ACTIVITY**

On Oct. 4, 2021, a total of 18 customers failed to respond to the 30-day past due notification and were posted for water shut-off. Payment was due on or before Oct. 21, 2021. Only customers on a public water service are included for shut off. Customers with a balance in excess of \$20 who are 60 days past due are included.

	<b>Zelienople</b>	<b>Jackson</b>	<b>Lancaster</b>	<b>Harmony</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>September 2021</b>	\$6,575.07	\$4,106.13	\$660.41	\$7,563.27	<b>\$18,904.90</b>
<b>October 2021</b>	\$13,424.70	\$5,970.04	\$1,815.75	\$7,703.91	<b>\$28,913.81</b>

**OLD BUSINESS:**

No old business was discussed.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

No new business was discussed.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

The Board went into Executive Session at 8:29 p.m. to discuss contract negotiation, personnel, and litigation and exited at 9:05 p.m.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

As there was no further business to discuss, Daniel Karns motioned to adjourn, seconded by Ed Eckenrode, and the Nov. 11, 2021 Regular Meeting adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Nicole Peffer, Recording Secretary  
Western Butler County Authority