

# City of High Point

*Municipal Office Building  
211 S. Hamilton Street  
High Point, NC 27260*



## Minutes

**Monday, September 20, 2021**

**3:30 PM**

**City Council Chambers**

## **Special Called Meeting**

*Jay W. Wagner, Mayor*

*Britt W. Moore (At Large), Mayor Pro Tem*

*Tyrone Johnson (At Large), Cyril Jefferson (Ward 1), Christopher Williams (Ward 2),  
Monica L. Peters (Ward 3), S. Wesley Hudson (Ward 4), Victor Jones (Ward 5), and  
Michael Holmes (Ward 6)*

**ROLL CALL**

Mayor Wagner called the meeting to order at 3:31 p.m.

He then called the roll for attendance. The following council members were present:

Mayor Jay W. Wagner; Mayor Pro Tem Britt W. Moore, At Large; Council Member Tyrone Johnson, At Large [arrived at 3:42 p.m.]; Council Member Cyril Jefferson, Ward 1; Council Member Christopher Williams, Ward 2 [arrived at 3:44 p.m.]; Council Member Monica L. Peters, Ward 3 [arrived at 3:33 p.m.]; and Council Member S. Wesley Hudson, Ward 4; Council Member Victor Jones, Ward 5; and Council Member Michael Holmes, Ward 6 [arrived at 3:53 p.m.]

Staff present:

Tasha Logan Ford, City Manager; Randy McCaslin, Deputy City Manager; Greg Ferguson, Assistant City Manager; Jeron Hollis, Managing Director; JoAnne Carlyle, City Attorney; Meghan Maguire, Assistant City Attorney; Sandy Dunbeck, Economic Development Director; Sarah Stevenson, Economic Development Manager; Ryan Ferguson, Marketing Manager; Bobby Fitzjohn, Director of Financial Services; Bob Martin, Customer Service Director; Lisa B. Vierling, City Clerk; and Mary S. Brooks, Deputy City Clerk

Others present:

David Woodard, Outside Legal Counsel, Poyner Spruill

**Present** 9 - Mayor Pro Tem Britt Moore, Council Member Cyril Jefferson, Mayor Jay Wagner, Council Member Michael Holmes, Council Member Monica Peters, Council Member Tyrone Johnson, Council Member Victor Jones, Council Member Wesley Hudson, and Council Member Christopher Williams

**PRESENTATION OF ITEMS**

[2021-387](#)

**Presentation- AMI/Smart Meters**

Staff will provide a presentation on AMI/Smart Meters.

**Attachments:** [High Point Internal Manager Meeting AMI Bid Summary v03.pptx](#)

Bob Martin, Director of Customer Service, provided an overview of the AMI/Smart Meters project. He spoke to the AMR (Automatic Meter Reading) technology that the city is currently using and allows meter readers to either drive by or walk by with a hand held device to get meter readings; the city is currently looking at AMI (Advanced Metering Infrastructure) technology (smart metering) which is a two-way communication that allows staff to get the meter readings remotely without being in the neighborhood; how the AMR technology is outdated technology wise; and the expectation of the life expectancy of the infrastructure for

the AMI technology system is about 15 years.

Mr. Martin cited the following benefits associated with the AMI technology:

- Safety (does not require as many trucks)

- Remote meter re-reads

- Remote checks for meter reading, disconnects, checking to see who has power will tremendously assist with operational performance

- Greater customer satisfaction

- Information to produce more reliable systems at a high level

He advised the most impactful things that the customer and staff will see are: dramatic reductions in the field labor for meter reading, meter disconnects, meter connects, move-ins, move-outs, and the ability to leverage the system to address those spikes during busy times. He mentioned the ERT (encoder, receiver, transmitter) devices on the meters that are used to communicate the readings and sends a signal/reading to staff. He advised that one of the dramatic improvements of the AMI technology allows staff to notify the customer that their power is off and when it has been restored, so customers would no longer have to call in to report outages. He spoke to how staff would need to update its current customer records to include cell phone numbers to allow texting ability for notifications and this would be about a \$30,000 to \$40,000 annual expenditure. Mr. Martin explained it would be very advantageous because it would allow the city to alert the customer in a very short time frame if there are perceived issues such as water leaks, toilet leaks, high water usage in short periods of time, if any patterns abnormal use/patterns are detected.

He mentioned electric vehicles that are becoming a bigger part of our society, how the AMI technology could be very advantageous in regulating the electricity demand during certain periods/times of day and regulating rates based on the demand; maximizing the use of meter interval data; flexible interval readings; flexible reporting times; and being able to obtain voltage readings to do troubleshooting on power quality issues.

Additional major advantages of the AMI technology that Mr. Martin reported on were:

- Access to a customer portal so that customers can view details on their water or electric consumption data; make comparisons on their usage during various times; greater customer service because this will allow staff to better help customers understand where their problems are and when they are occurring

- Pre-Paid Metering; both customer satisfaction and employee satisfaction greatly increases with the use of prepaid metering; this eliminates the need to collect

large deposits

Mr. Martin then shared an overview of the AMI RFP (Request for Proposals) Procurement Process that has been ongoing for the past two years. The process started with the hiring of a consultant, Black & Veatch to assist the city; an RFP was created and sent out; eight (8) proposals were received and evaluated (Verizon, Honeywell, Eaton, Aclara, Itron, Landis Gyr, Sensus, and Tantalus); five were selected to do presentations (Eaton, Itron, Landis Gyr, Sensus and Tantalus); the project/process was put on hold due to COVID; the project/process was relaunched in October; staff brought back three finalists (Eaton, Itron, and Tantalus) who made additional presentations; discussions ensued with the consultant, representatives from Customer Service, Electric, IT, Finance, Manager's office; and staff took a road trip to Rock Hill, SC to vet one of the vendors.

Staff proceeded with a pricing comparison on the three finalists:

**Vendor      Pricing**

Eaton    \$13 million

Itron    \$14.5 million

Tantalus    \$9 million

Mr. Martin advised these include some of the 15-year recurring costs because some are paying annual licensing fees. He noted that with all three of these vendors, the city would be replacing every electric meter due to the ERT inside the meter that communicates back to the system; the cost to purchase these new meters would be as follows:

Eaton: \$5 million

Itron: \$4.5 million

Tantalus: \$5.3 million

Mr. Martin pointed out that half of the cost of the project is replacing the meters. He noted another point to keep in mind that pertinent to this pricing list is that the city just approved the purchase of Itron 100W ERTs under a sole source contract. He explained that Tantalus has a pricing advantage because they can read the protocol that is emitted from this ERT, so the ERTs will not need to be replaced. He also pointed out that although the ERT is actually an Itron product, they cannot read their own 100W ERT, so they have subbed it out to Tantalus and going with Itron would require all the ERTs to be replaced with Itron's newer 500W ERT.

He advised that basically Council is looking at a \$14 million and a \$9 million

option at this point and staff is recommending Tantalus for transitioning to the AMI technology. He stressed that staff asked many questions and of the Rock Hill folks that are using Tantalus and felt very good about the responses. He further explained that the contract itself is very heavy with performance goals that will have to be met, so it provides a way to claw back money if those goals are not met.

Mr. Martin reported that this will be a Pay-as-you-Go project and they plan to start out with a pilot of 400 to 500 meters. He advised there would be stipulations in the contract as to how much, what they are guaranteeing from a performance standpoint with a certain amount of equipment, a certain number of collectors, repeaters, etc.... so that if more equipment is required later from a performance standpoint, it will be at the expense of Tantalus.

Staff anticipates the contracting process to take 30-60 days and once staff receives Council's consent to move forward with the project, the final contract will be brought back to Council for consideration. The pilot test will follow and staff anticipates the entire roll-out to take somewhere in the neighborhood of 18-24 months.

At the conclusion of the presentation, Mayor Wagner asked if there were any questions/comments of staff.

Mayor Pro Tem Moore commented in the impressiveness of the benefits of the AMI technology and asked if the numbers that staff shared were pre-COVID or post-COVID numbers and if there are any anticipated disadvantages. Mr. Martin felt the numbers are good and noted that these are the numbers that the final three vendors brought when they made their presentations in October. Mr. Martin felt there would be a small element of customers who might be reluctant to having their meters read remotely and noted from a policy standpoint, decisions will need to be made as to whether or not customers would be given an option to switch over to the new meters, whether a negative incentive might be imposed if staff has to manually read meters, whether there will be an additional charge, etc....

Mayor Pro Tem Moore inquired about the security as the city smartens its electric grids, water grids, etc.... and if this would open up the city's grids to any suspicious activity. Mr. Martin explained no personal identifying information is encrypted, and the only information communicated back to the system from the ERT would be the customer's account number and meter number. He further explained that the system would actually be on a separate stand-alone network.

Mayor Pro Tem Moore inquired about the numbers that staff shared as far as cost and asked if the \$9 million includes the consultant fees that will be involved in the process. Mr. Martin advised that approximately \$80,000 has been spent so far in consulting fees and pointed out that there would be a need to hire a project manager for the life of the project which will be the 18-24 month period and that cost would be in the neighborhood of \$300,000 to \$350,000.

Council Member Jones inquired about real time data and how soon it would be available to the customers. Mr. Martin advised customers should be able to access the data in the same day (in most cases instantaneously by logging into the portal) and one of the questions would be how much data storage would be required for the interval data and the retention period for that.

Mayor Pro Tem Moore inquired about the funding location for this project. Deputy City Manager Randy McCaslin advised the funding would come from the electric, water and sewer rates.

Mayor Wagner asked if there were any additional questions/comments. Hearing none, he asked about the next step in the process. Mr. McCaslin explained that staff provided the information for informational purposes and hearing no objections from Council, staff hopes to move forward, start contract negotiations, then bring the contract back to Council for consideration.

#### [2021-388](#)

#### **Closed Session: Economic Development, Personnel, and Attorney-Client Privilege**

Council is requested to go into Closed Session for the following purposes.

1. Economic Development (pursuant to N.C. General Statute 143-318.11(a)(4))
2. Personnel (pursuant to N.C. General Statute 143-318.11(a)(6))
3. Attorney-Client Privilege (pursuant to N.C. General Statute 143-318.11(a)(3))

**A motion was made by Council Member Jefferson, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Moore, to go into closed session at 4:07 p.m. pursuant to N.C. General Statute 143-318.11(a)(4) (economic development); N.C. General Statute 143-318.11(a)(6) (personnel); and N.C. General Statute 143-318.11(a)(3) (attorney-client privilege). Mayor Wagner asked if there were any objections. Hearing none, the motion to enter closed session for discussion of these matters was approved by the following 9-0 unanimous vote:**

Council reconvened into open session at 5:20 p.m. and recessed the Special Meeting in order to prepare for the convening of the Regular Meeting of the City Council scheduled for 5:30 p.m.

Upon adjournment of the Regular Meeting at 8:33 p.m., the Special Meeting then reconvened at 8:35 p.m. to re-enter closed session to finish discussion on the closed session matters.

Upon reconvening into open session at 9:42 p.m., Mayor Wagner reported that no action

would be necessary as a result of these closed sessions.

**Aye:** 9 - Mayor Pro Tem Moore, Council Member Jefferson, Mayor Wagner, Council Member Holmes, Council Member Peters, Council Member Johnson, Council Member Jones, Council Member Hudson, and Council Member Williams

## **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to come before City Council, the Special Meeting adjourned at 9:42 p.m. upon motion duly made by Council Member Jefferson and second by Council Member Holmes.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jay W. Wagner, Mayor

Attest:

Lisa B. Vierling, MMC  
City Clerk