

Water & Sewer Commission Meeting Minutes

June 29, 2026

The Independence Water & Sewer Commission met on Monday, June 29, 2026, at City Hall, 23688 Adams Street. Chair Randy “Fritz” Conrad called the meeting to order at 6:15 p.m. Present were Richard Warner, Tom Jensen, Jason Ekern, and Deputy Clerk Abby Bautch. Also in attendance was Attorney Rick Schaumberg, Mayor Tom Kloss, Water Superintendent Joe Galewski and Mike Palkowski. Missing was Craig Konter.

Proof of Giving Public Notice: Public notice was properly posted.

Approval of Agenda: Motion by Tom Jensen, seconded by Jason Ekern, to approve the agenda. Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

Approval of Minutes – May 20, 2026: Motion by Jason Ekern, seconded by Richard Warner, to approve the minutes of the May 20, 2026 meeting as presented. Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

Public Comments: None.

Old Business:

- A. Water Service for 35214 Diagonal Street:** Water Superintendent Joe Galewski reported that he contacted Mike Palkowski, homeowner of 35214 Diagonal Street, on June 8, 2026, to arrange access for installation of a new water meter. Mr. Palkowski indicated he was unwilling to allow access until payment responsibility for the meter was clarified. Mr. Palkowski arrived at the meeting at 6:24 p.m. Attorney Rick Schaumberg reviewed Public Service Commission regulations regarding access to water meters on private property. Motion by Richard Warner, seconded by Tom Jensen, to have the City cover the cost of the new water meter at 35214 Diagonal Street. Motion by Richard Warner, seconded by Tom Jensen, to amend the original motion to include that City Water Department staff be granted access to install the water meter. Roll call vote: Ayes: 3; Nays: 0; Chair Conrad voted present. Motion carried.
- B. Water & Sewer Ordinance:** Attorney Rick Schaumberg reviewed sewer ordinance regulations from other municipalities, including Ellsworth, Hammond, and Medford, for comparison with the City of Independence’s current or proposed regulations. The Commission discussed appropriate regulatory limits for Total Kjeldahl Nitrogen (TKN), ammonia, and grease. The Commission considered setting limits of 35 ppm for TKN, 50 ppm for ammonia, and 100 ppm for grease. Attorney Schaumberg stated he could contact Tim Stockman of Davy Engineering to verify whether the proposed limits could be scientifically supported if questioned by auditors. After discussion, the Commission

expressed uncertainty regarding whether to establish additional regulations at this time. Motion by Jason Ekern, seconded by Tom Jensen, to take no further action on the Water & Sewer Ordinance matter. Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

- C. **Facility Plan Review with Davy Engineering:** Water Superintendent Joe Galewski reported that the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources is still waiting for FEMA approval before proceeding with the next steps in the facility plan review process. He stated that FEMA has not approved the plan due to concerns related to approximately 0.2% of the plan. The Commission discussed the possibility of contacting Congressman Van Orden's office to request assistance in moving the approval process forward.
- D. **Water Pipe Survey:** Water Superintendent Joe Galewski reported there are still 134 Survey's left.
- E. **Water & Sewer Truck:** Water Superintendent Joe Galewski reported that the new Water & Sewer truck is currently in the garage awaiting placement of the City logo. Commissioner Randy Conrad requested that the old Water & Sewer truck be placed for auction.
- F. **Pump Inspection:** Water Superintendent Joe Galewski reported that Midwest Pump Works inspected the pumps at the Frogtown Lift Station and the Healthcare Lift Station. Midwest Pump Works provided a quote totaling \$10,734.11 to repair the pumps at both locations. Motion by Jason Ekern, seconded by Richard Warner to approve the pump repairs at both locations, not to exceed the quoted cost of \$10,734.11. Roll call vote: Ayes: 4; Nays: 0. Motion carried.
- G. **Sludge Transfer Pump:** Water Superintendent Joe Galewski reported that Slaby Septic is currently hired to pump the sludge tank, and last year they pumped it nine times at a cost of about \$325 per pumping, totaling nearly \$3,000 annually. He stated that Slaby Septic has pumped the sludge tank four times so far this year. Galewski reported that he is researching the purchase of a sludge transfer pump so the work can be completed by City staff. He obtained a quote for a 3-inch electric pump in the amount of \$2,186.67. The Commission discussed the matter and requested that Galewski pursue a gas-powered pump instead of an electric pump. Motion by Tom Jensen, seconded by Jason Ekern, to approve the purchase of a 3-inch gas-powered sludge transfer pump, not to exceed \$2,186.67. Roll call vote: Ayes: 4; Nays: 0. Motion carried.

New Business:

- A. **23970 Adams Street:** Deputy Clerk Abby Bautch reviewed the delinquent Water & Sewer utility bill for 23970 Adams Street. She reported that the account is more than four months past due with an outstanding balance of \$1,086.84, and that water service to the property has been disconnected. She further reported that the property is four years delinquent on property taxes, with back taxes totaling \$6,844.09. The Commission requested that the past-due utility amount be added to the property tax roll. Due to the length of time water service has been disconnected, the Commission also requested that Trempealeau County Health Services be contacted.

Superintendents Report:

- A. **Disconnect Update:** Water Superintendent Joe Galewski reported that 59 disconnect notices were posted.

Commissioner Report: Attorney Rick Schaumberg reviewed his new findings from the Public Service Commission's regarding regulations governing access by public workers to water meters located on private property.

Items for Next Agenda

- A. Water Service for 35214 Diagonal Street
- B. Water & Sewer Truck
- C. Facility Plan Review with Davy Engineering
- D. Status update on Water Pipe Survey
- E. Disconnect Update
- F. 23970 Adams Street

Future Date for the next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for July 27, 2026, at 6:15 p.m.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 8:04 p.m.

Abby Bautch, Deputy City Clerk