

Water & Sewer Commission Meeting February 23, 2026

The Independence Water & Sewer Commission met on Monday February 23, 2026, at the City Hall, 23688 Adams Street. The meeting was called to order at 6:15pm by Randy “Fritz” Conrad. In attendance, Craig Konter, Richard Warner, Tom Jensen by Computer, Jason Ekern, Water Superintendent Joe Galewski, Mayor Tom Kloss, City Attorney Rick Schaumberg, and Deputy Clerk Abby Bautch. Also, in attendance Tim Stockman from Davy Engineering and City Clerk Dawn Smieja.

Proof of Giving Public Notice: Yes, public notice was properly posted.

Approval of Agenda: Motioned by Jason Ekern and Seconded by Tom Jensen. Motion carried unanimously by a vote of acclamation to approve.

Approval of Minutes –December 29, 2025 & January 26, 2026: Motion by Richard Warner to approve the amended minutes from the December 29, 2025 meeting as presented. Seconded by Jason Ekern. Motion carried unanimously by a vote of acclamation to approve. Motion by Craig Konter to approve the minutes from the January 26, 2026 meeting as presented. Seconded by Tom Jensen. Motion carried unanimously by a vote of acclamation to approve.

Public Comments: None

Old Business:

- A. Water Service for 35194 & 35214 Diagonal Street:** Water Superintendent Joe reported that notices were issued to both property owners outlining their violations and available corrective options. Each property has 30 days from the date of when they were served the notice to comply, after which water service will be disconnected.
- B. Water & Sewer Bills:** City Clerk Dawn reported ongoing issues with water and sewer bills not being delivered to customers or arriving later than expected. She outlined potential solutions, including processing bills earlier in the cycle or mailing bills from an alternate postal location to improve delivery times. City Attorney Rick Schaumberg will follow up with the postal service to investigate and address these concerns.
- C. Water & Sewer Truck:** Water Superintendent Joe Galewski reported that he obtained updates pricing quotes for a new truck. The Commission discussed that funding sources for the truck are still under review. Superintendent Galewski also presented a quote from Universal Truck for a portable crane in the amount of \$10382.00. Motion by Tom Jensen to approve the purchase of the portable crane for the water & sewer department, seconded by Jason Ekern. Roll call vote: Ayes-4, Nays-0, Abstentions-1. Motion carried

D. Facility Plan Review with Davy Engineering: Tim Stockman of Davy Engineering reported that the facility plan review is currently pending FEMA approval. Tim Stockman explained that Davy Engineering works with financial advisors who assist municipalities with funding options. Once approved, the plan will be valid for a period of three years. No immediate upgrades are needed at this time but given the age of the plant upgrades will eventually be necessary. Mayor Kloss reported exploring potential grant opportunities. Estimated upgrade costs are \$8–10 million and could increase if relocation is required.

Motioned by Jason Ekern to go into closed session, seconded by Richard Warner.
Roll Call Vote: Ayes-5 Nays-0, Motioned carried.

Motioned by Jason Ekern to return into open session, second by Craig Konter. Motion carried unanimously by a vote of acclamation to approve.

- E. Water Pipe Survey:** Water superintendent Joe completed two additional surveys, leaving 143 remaining.
- F. Water Rates:** Deputy Clerk Abby reviewed the PSC’s final decision, confirming that all is justified and officially approved. The 3% water rate increase will take effect on April 1st, 2026.
- G. Water & Sewer Payment to City:** Mayor Tom Kloss reported that the City Council supports the new repayment plan to reimburse the City.
- H. Auditors Report:** Deputy Clerk Abby reviewed the response from auditors at Baker Tilly, who recommended keeping the water and sewer accounts linked to the general fund account.
- I. Discussion on Delinquent Water Bills:** City Attorney Rick Schaumberg looked into what other municipalities do for delinquent water bills because the city of Independence doesn’t have an ordinance for it. Rick supplied material on the Public Service Code (PSC), code states that we have to offer a deferred payment plan to the public. This is how the City’s water utilities are being regulated.
- J. Water & Sewer Timecards:** The City Council continues to evaluate more efficient timekeeping options.
- K. Water & Sewer After Hours Incident Report:** Water superintendent Joe created a digital file to document incidents, including the date and time, a description of the issue, and how it was resolved.

New Business:

Community Project Funding Request: City Clerk Dawn requested authorization from the Commission to apply for Community Project Funding through Congressman Derrick Van Orden's office. Motion by Richard Warner to approve proceeding with the Community Project Funding request. Seconded by Craig Konter. Motion carried unanimously by a vote of acclamation to approve.

Superintendents Report:

- A. Disconnect Update:** Water Superintendent Joe Galewski Hung 109 disconnect notices.
- B. Wastewater Training:** Water Superintendent Joe Galewski reported that Street Supervisor Eric Theisen attended the Wastewater class training session in Plover on February 23, 2026.
- C. DNR Inspection:** Brian Pietz from the DNR will be conducting a full inspection on March 11, 2026.

Commissioner Report: Nothing to report

Items for Next Agenda

- A.** Water Service for 35194 & 35214 Diagonal Street
- B.** Water & Sewer Bills
- C.** Water & Sewer Truck
- D.** Facility Plan Review with Davy Engineering
- E.** Status update on Water Pipe Survey
- F.** Disconnect Update
- G.** Auditor's Report
- H.** Discussion on Delinquent Water Bills
- I.** Water & Sewer Timecards
- J.** Community Project Funding Request

Future Date for the next Meeting

March 30, 2026 @ 6:15pm

Adjournment at 8:59PM

Abby Bautch, Deputy City Clerk