

Water & Sewer Commission Meeting

March 30, 2026

The Independence Water & Sewer Commission met on Monday March 30, 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, Jason Ekern, Water Superintendent Joe Galewski, Mayor Tom Kloss, City Attorney Rick Schaumberg, and Deputy Clerk Abby Bautch. Also, in attendance 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 –February 23, 2026: Motion by Richard Warner to approve the minutes from the February 23, 2026 meeting as presented. Seconded by Craig Konter. Motion carried unanimously by a vote of acclamation to approve.

Public Comments: City Clerk Dawn Smieja reported that she received a new Clerk phone and provided her updated contact number as 715-530-1497.

Commissioner Jason Ekern reported receiving a complaint regarding a resident not receiving their Water & Sewer bill.

Commissioner Tom Jensen also reported receiving a complaint from a community member concerning a late Water & Sewer bill, which resulted in the resident being placed on the disconnect list for the first time.

Old Business:

A. Facility Plan Review with Davy Engineering: Water Superintendent Joe Galewski informed the Commission that there were no updates to report at this time.

B. Water Pipe Survey: Water Superintendent Joe Galewski reported there are still 140 Survey’s left.

C. Water Service for 35194 & 35214 Diagonal Street: Water Superintendent Joe Galewski reported that water service was shut off to both properties after the 30-day notice period due to noncompliance by the property owners. The property owner of 35194 Diagonal Street subsequently paid for a new meter, and water service was restored. The property owner of 35214 Diagonal Street has not yet submitted payment. Two new meters with separate shutoff valves have been ordered for both properties. If payment for 35214 Diagonal Street is not received once the new meter is installed, water service will be disconnected again until payments are made.

- D. Water & Sewer Bills:** City Clerk Dawn Smieja reported that the number of issues related to Water & Sewer bills not being delivered to customers was significantly lower this month. City Attorney Rick Schaumberg noted that his wife Cher Schaumberg had contacted the Postal Service and Van Orden's office regarding the previous delivery issues. City Clerk Smieja asked whether the Commission wished to renew the City's annual postage permit with the Independence Post Office or consider using a different postal location. By consensus, the Commission agreed to continue using the Independence Post Office.
- E. Water & Sewer Truck:** Commissioner Jason Ekern reported that he consulted with former City Clerk Lenice Pronschinske to review the Water & Sewer financials. He stated that the most feasible options for purchasing a new truck would be to obtain a short-term loan or wait until next year and include the purchase in the budget. The Commission will explore loan options and revisit the matter at the next meeting.
- F. Auditors Report:** Deputy Clerk Abby Bautch reported that there are no new updates from the auditors at this time, pending completion of the 2026 Water & Sewer budget.
- G. Discussion on Delinquent Water Bills:** Deputy Clerk Abby Bautch advised the Commission to review the Public Service Commission (PSC) Water Utility Operating Rules regarding deferred payment agreements, noting that the City is required to follow those regulations.
- H. Water & Sewer Timecards:** No new updates at this time.
- I. Community Project Funding Request:** City Clerk Dawn Smieja reported that the deadline to apply for Community Project Funding had passed. Mayor Tom Kloss contacted Representative Van Orden's office, and it was determined that the City was not sufficiently prepared in its planning process to submit an application.

New Business:

- A. Bobcat:** Deputy Clerk Abby Bautch reported that the City Council approved the purchase of a Bobcat S590 Skid Steer from Komro Sales & Services in the amount of \$16,336.60, pending the approval from the Water & Sewer Commission. The City Street Department will fund one-half of the purchase (\$8168.30), with the remaining half split evenly between the Water & Sewer funds (\$4,084.15 each). Motion by Craig Knoter to approve the purchase, seconded by Tom Jensen. Roll Call Vote: Ayes-5 Nays-0. Motion Carried.
- B. Nonresidential Cross Connection Program:** Water Superintendent Joe Galewski reviewed the Hydro Corp renewal agreement for the City's nonresidential cross-connection control program. The City Attorney Rick Schaumberg had reviewed the agreement and requested additional information, such as prior agreements, for further evaluation. Hydro Corp requires confirmation by May 1st, 2026, on whether the City will

continue service. Motion by Richard Warner to table the decision until next meeting, seconded by Jason Ekern. Motion carried unanimously by vote of acclamation to approve.

Superintendents Report:

- A. Disconnect Update:** Water Superintendent Joe Galewski Hung 45 disconnect notices.
- B. Wastewater Testing:** Street Supervisor Eric Theisen will have his wastewater testing on May 28th, 2026.
- C. Training:** Water Superintendent Galewski reported that Kenny Olson is registered to attend training in Plover, WI on May 6th, 2026 to obtain the required continuing education credits.
- D. Snow removal damage:** Water Superintendent Joe Galewski reported that snow removal efforts conducted by Jason Piper and his crew following the March 15th, 2026 snowfall resulted in damage to a manhole and sidewalk/curbs. Any invoices related to repairs will be submitted to Piper.
- E. DNR Inspection:** Water Superintendent Joe Galewski reviewed the DNR inspection report completed by Brian Pietz on May 11th, 2026. The Commission will revisit to review the statuses of the deficiencies identified and any corrective actions taken.

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. Nonresidential Cross Connection Program
- H. DNR Inspection

Future Date for the next Meeting
April 27, 2026 @ 6:15pm

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

Motion by Jason Ekern to return into open session, seconded by Craig Knoter. Motion carried unanimously by a vote of acclamation to approve.

The Commission directed Attorney Rick Schaumberg to review the Ellsworth ordinance and consult with Davy Engineering or the Wisconsin Rural Water Association (WRWA) to determine

whether the ordinance would be appropriate for the City of Independence. Attorney Schaumberg will draft a proposed ordinance and present it at the next meeting.

Adjournment at 7:50PM

Abby Bautch, Deputy City Clerk