

City of Decorah  
Municipal Electric Utility Task Force  
March 11, 2021 – 9:00am  
Meeting Minutes

Electronic meeting pursuant to Iowa Code section 21.8 – In circumstances where such a meeting is impossible or impractical due to concerns about COVID-19 and social distancing for the safety of commission members and the public.

In support of Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds' proclamation declaring a State of Public Health Disaster Emergency in Iowa, the current COVID-19 situation makes it "impossible and impractical" to meet in one location. Due to this the Decorah City Hall was partially closed to the public for the March 11, 2021 MEU Task Force meeting. Seating was limited to ensure distancing. The public was invited to participate via electronic means.

Members present included: Carly Hayden Foster, Larry Grimstad, Doug Hamilton, Kristine Jepsen, Andy Johnson, Mark Lovelace, and Karen McLean.

Others present: Mayor Lorraine Borowski, Council Liaison Steve Zittergruen, Sustainability Commission chair Jim Martin-Schramm, and City Manager Chad Bird and Interim City Manager Wanda Hemesath.

There was a total of five people on the Zoom link.

Consider approval of minutes from the February 11, 2021 regular meeting

**Motion by McLean and second by Grimstad to approve the minutes of the February 11, 2021 MEU task force meeting**

**Roll call vote: Ayes, unanimous.**

**Motion passed.**

Report from education and outreach

- a. public perceptions of timeline for feasibility study

*McLean noted her and Lovelace have been speaking with many different people and groups in the community. They believed there is a credibility issue with the MEU topic and discussion and lots of misunderstanding.*

*Many people in the community believe this task force is a "Decorah Power II". She noted moving forward with a feasibility study at this time may be problematic.*

*Lovelace is reaching out to open communication and is having some good conversations. Bird mentioned local media may be able to help and mentioned "Our Town" radio.*

Schedule coordination between subcommittees

*Foster suggested dissolving the IUB subcommittee and role the IUB / Alliant Communications work into the feasibility subcommittee and their work.*

*Hamilton thought this might work and also see no issues with modifying timelines for work flow. He is very interested in proceeding and would like to see this work continue on pace.*

*Johnson would also like to keep the work moving and believes pushing off to 2022 would continue to widen the divide in the community.*

Budget considerations

*Foster led a discussion on the possible USDA grant and what work products should be put in the application.*

*Jepsen noted it could be focused on communications, education, and legal work and not the actual feasibility study. There was general discussion about this.*

*Hamilton noted the feasibility subcommittee is very much interested in moving this forward.*

***Motion by Grimstad and second by Jepsen to approve drafting and submitting the grant application with the legal, communication, and education components and not the feasibility study funding request.***

***Roll call vote: Ayes, unanimous.***

***Motion passed.***

*In general discussion, some said a study without data will be difficult to obtain and for it to be accurate.*

*Martin-Schramm noted it would not be wise to initiate the feasibility study unless there is accurate and reliable data from Alliant. Could there be a non-disclosure agreement signed? He also urged the task force to slow down and listen to build trust.*

*Bird noted the City Council intends for the franchise fee funding to be used for all of these discussion points.*

Discussion on March 15 report to the City Council

- a. Third Monday of each month / second monthly council meeting

*There was general discussion that the overall timeline for the task force, referendum, and feasibility study seemed very aggressive. Some on the task force cautioned about not rushing things.*

*Johnson noted communication is very critical and important. He wondered if the social discussions get better over time or does the task force just keep it moving forward?*

Update on efforts to replace taskforce members

*There was no additional discussion here other than to keep reaching out, communicating, and building community trust.*

Update from subcommittees

*Grimstad shared thoughts on getting additional help with the communications.*

*Zittergruen thanked the task force for their work and urged them to keep things moving.*

Discussion on future meeting dates

- a. Second Thursday of the month
  - i. April 8
  - ii. May 13
  - iii. June 10

*Foster expressed a desire to begin meeting every two weeks and proposed:*

*March 25, April 22, May 22, and June 24, in addition to the dates already established for the monthly meeting.*

Other business

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:01am by Hamilton / Grimstad.

Respectfully submitted,



Chad A. Bird  
City Manager

**Sustainability Plan**

*E.3 ACTION: Establish a Municipal Electric Utility (MEU) task force and commission a MEU Feasibility Study to be completed by fall 2021 (potential update of previous plan).*