

## MINUTES

### **PUBLIC UTILITY DISTRICT NO. 1 OF BENTON COUNTY REGULAR COMMISSION MEETING**

Date: February 11, 2025

Time: 9:00 a.m.

Place: 2721 West 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Kennewick, Washington

**Present:** Commissioner Jeff Hall, President  
Commissioner Lori Kays-Sanders, Vice-President  
General Manager Rick Dunn  
Senior Director of Finance & Executive Administration Jon Meyer  
Assistant General Manager/Sr. Director Engineering & Operations Steve Hunter  
Director of Power Management Chris Johnson  
Director of IT & Broadband Services Chris Folta  
Director of Customer Service and Treasury Keith Mercer  
Records Program Administrator II Nykki Drake  
Administrative Assistant II Roxie Weller  
General Counsel Allyson Dahlhauser

**Benton PUD employees present during all or a portion of the meeting, either in person or virtually:** Manager of System Engineering Evan Edwards; Manager of Procurement Michelle Ochweri; Manager of Customer Engagement Jenny Sparks; Manager of Customer Service Annette Cobb; Supervisor of Customer Service Kim Maki; Manager of Communications & Government Relations Jodi Henderson; Manager of Human Resources Karen Dunlap; Senior Manager of Applied Technology Jennifer Holbrook; Superintendent of Transportation & Distribution Robert Inman; Superintendent of Operations Duane Szendre; Supervisor of Distribution Design Michelle Ness; Supervisor of Energy Programs Robert Frost; Financial Analyst III Katie Grandgeorge; Senior Engineer Power Management Blake Scherer; Manager of Accounting Kent Zirker; IT System Administrator III Tyler Scott; Procurement Specialist I Tyson Brown; Communications Specialist II Eric Dahl; Distribution Designer Zach Underhill; Cyber Security Engineer III Paul Holgate; Procurement Administrator Levi Lanphear; Utility Tree Coordinator Brian Cramer

#### **Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance**

The meeting was called to order, excusing Commissioner Massey. The Commission and those present recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

#### **Agenda Review**

Commissioner Hall moved Management Report to the beginning of the agenda.

## **Public Comment**

None.

## **Management Report**

### ***General Manager:***

1. Canadian Natural Gas Tariff – General Manager Dunn discussed the proposed tariff on Canadian energy resources. Canada provides about 9 percent of the U.S. natural gas and in the Northwest about two-thirds of the natural gas we consume comes from Canada. So, clearly tariffs will increase Northwest natural gas costs. What is not so clear is how tariffs on electricity would work since electricity is routinely exchanged between the US and Canada, including through power-grid interconnections at the Washington and British Columbia border.
2. Willamette Hydropower Deauthorization Update – General Manager Dunn reported that Congress has directed the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACOE) to submit a report to congressional committees by the end of March on the impact of deauthorizing power at one or more of the eight hydroelectric dams in the Willamette Valley System. Environmental groups, Native American tribes and public-power advocates have all expressed support for deauthorizing hydropower generation at some of the dams. Public power’s support for deauthorization is due to the relatively small contributions made to hydropower capacity and the high cost of electricity produced by the Willamette dams. Preliminary reports from the USACOE indicate water flowing through turbines is also part of river flow regulation which makes deauthorization more complicated. The USACOE final report was overdue in July 2024 and is now under review by the Trump Administration.
3. Portland General Electric (PGE) Transmission Project Opposition & How Oregon plans to handle ‘staggering’ demand for new transmission lines – General Manager Dunn reported on local opposition in the Portland, Oregon area to very minor upgrades to transmission lines proposed by PGE. Manager Dunn pointed out how the same people clamoring for countless wind and solar farms in eastern Oregon and Washington, and beyond, which would require hundreds of miles of new transmission lines cannot agree to an almost immeasurable impact to their local community caused by the addition of a couple of structures and the rebuilding of an existing line.
4. Executive Order & Possible Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) Operational Impacts – General Manager Dunn discussed President Trump’s executive orders relative to federal agencies and how this could impact BPA operations.
5. Columbia Generating Station (CGS) – Extended Power Uprate – General Manager Dunn provided an update on Energy Northwest’s plans for upgrading CGS to provide an additional 186 megawatts of gross generating capacity which would be available

following the 2031 refueling outage. The cost for the upgrades continues to be widely supported by BPA utility customers with final steps in the approval processing occurring this spring and final contract execution in June.

***Customer Service/Treasury:***

1. AMI opt-out – Director Keith Mercer reported the Los Angeles wildfires have created a renewed concern about AMI meters. Over a dozen customers have contacted customer service expressing concerns and requesting the removal of their AMI meters. In October 2023, Benton PUD updated its Customer Service Policies, requiring the use of AMI meters and removing the opt-out option. While the policies don't allow customers to opt-out of AMI meters, they do permit AMI meter relocation at the customer's expense. Information regarding Benton PUD's AMI meters, including RF emission measurements, transmission frequency, and exposure compliance, was shared with the Commission. Benton PUD is actively addressing customer concerns.

***Finance/Executive Administration:***

1. Customer Rate Meetings – Senior Director Jon Meyer discussed the next customer rate meetings on February 13, 2025.

**Treasurer's Report**

Keith Mercer, Director of Customer Service & Treasury Operations, reviewed the January 2025 Treasurer's Report with the Commission as finalized on February 3, 2025.

**Consent Agenda**

**MOTION:** Commissioner Sanders moved to approve the Consent Agenda items "a" through "h". Commissioner Hall seconded and upon vote, the Commission unanimously approved the following:

- a. Minutes of Regular Commission Meeting of January 28, 2025
- b. Travel Report dated February 11, 2025
- c. Vouchers (report dated 2/11/2025) audited and certified by the auditing officer as required by RCW 42.24.080, and those expense reimbursement claims certified as required by RCW 42.24.090, have been recorded on a listing made available to the Commission and approved as follows for payment:  
Accounts Payable: Automated Clearing House (DD) Payments: 106996-107036; 107191-107219 in the amount of \$1,087,827.45.  
Checks & Customer Refund Payments (CHK): 89547-89592 in the amount of \$461,342.05;  
Electronic Fund Transfer (WIRE) Payments: 7186-7190 in the amount of \$4,407,893.41;  
Payroll: Direct Deposit – 1/30/2025: 107037-107190 in the amount \$439,974.94.  
Voided checks in the amount of \$138.54;  
Grand total - \$6,397,717.85
- d. Jobs Report for Commission

- e. Work Order 729429 – W 9th Ave & S Neel Ct Cable Replacement Project
- f. Contract #22-32-01 Alamon Inc.
- g. Contract #22-32-02 Boyd’s Tree Service
- h. Contract #25-20-01 Washington State Department of Natural Resources

**Business Agenda**

**Contract Awards – Power Transformer District # 31 Inspection Repair, Bid Package #24-21-24**

Superintendent-Operations Duane Szendre presented the contract award for evaluation of Power Transformer District #31 to T&R Electric Supply Company Inc. Superintendent-Operations Duane Szendre discussed evaluation of the transformer and the options to repair or salvage the transformer and recommended the Commission authorize the contract as presented.

**MOTION:** Commissioner Sanders moved to authorize the General Manager on behalf of the District to award contract # 24-21-24 to T&R Electric Supply Company Inc. for Power Transformer District #31 Inspection & Repair, in the amount of \$30,000.00 for Inspection of unit; initial cost to be applied to estimated Repair costs not-to-exceeded amount of \$200,000.00 plus Washington State sales tax in accordance with RCW 54.04.080 if unit is deemed repairable. Commissioner Hall seconded, and upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.

**Performance Measurement Report – 4th Quarter 2024**

Senior Director Jon Meyer presented the Performance Measurement 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2024 Report and stated that 16 of the 17 performance measures were rated green with positive quarterly performance, one was yellow. The following performance measures were highlighted by staff: Telephone Service Level (yellow rating), Accounts Receivable Collections (green rating), and Broadband Network Reliability (green rating).

**Other Business**

None.

**Future Planning**


Commission Sanders had a customer at church ask about the demand charge and that customer would be attending the Customer Rate Increase meeting on February 13<sup>th</sup>. Commission Sanders asked that demand charge refrigerator magnets be available at the meeting.

**Meeting Reports**

None.

**Adjournment**

Hearing no objection, President Hall adjourned the meeting at 10:12 a.m.

DocuSigned by:  
  
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President

ATTEST:

ABSENT \_\_\_\_\_  
Secretary