

**MINUTES  
CITY OF LAKE WORTH BEACH  
ELECTRIC UTILITY ADVISORY BOARD MEETING  
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 02, 2020 - 6:00 PM**

**ROLL CALL:**

Present were members: Ryan Oblander, Ramsay Stevens, Matthew Portilla. Steven Chubbuck and Ibrahim Chalhoub were absent for the roll call. Steven Chubbuck joined the meeting at 6:33pm.

Edward Liberty, the Electric Utility Director and Board Liaison was in attendance.

Franco Bellitto, Customer Service Manager was present.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:**

The pledge of allegiance was led by Matthew Portilla.

**AGENDA - Additions/Deletions/Reordering:**

There were no additions, deletions, reordering on the agenda.

**PRESENTATIONS: (there is no public comment on Presentation items)**

There were no presentations on the agenda.

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION OF NON-AGENDAED ITEMS:**

There was no public participation of non-agendaed items.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

EUAB 07.08.2020 MINUTES

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

A. Discussion of a pre-pay plan for customer utility payments

Mr. Bellitto opened the discussion stating the pre-pay program is a flexible, and convenient pre-payment solution for customers to pay their utility bills. The new pre-pay service will allow customers to have access to their consumption history, choose the frequency and payment amount; and ultimately have greater control over their utilities service. Pre-pay allows customers to add funds to their utility account in small increments rather than waiting for a entire utility bill at the end of the month.

Ryan Oblander asked if there is a set up fee for starting the utility account.

Mr. Bellito responded the current set up is a \$17 administrative application fee, \$35 electric utility and \$35 water utility fee. Staff is working on the business rules for the pre-pay program.

The City began a beta program in July of this year but encountered a program integration issue with the City's Central Square billing system. The City's database requires updates to match Exceleron's software.

Ryan Oblander asked how many participants are needed for the program. Mr. Bellito stated half to a dozen participants. Staff expects to be able to roll out the program by Thanksgiving or beginning of December.

Discussion ensued.

B. Discussion of credit card fees associated with customer use of credit cards to pay City utility bills.

Franco Bellito, the City Customer Service Manager stated the city pays approximately \$400K per year on fees when customer's use credit/debit card to pay their utility bill. About 40% of these fees are from rewards type credit cards and the City pays a much higher rate for credit cards that have rewards program.

Staff proposes the City follows the convenience fee model other utility entities have implemented to aid in the costs. Customer would be charged a flat rate fee per \$500 transaction.

Board members concerned about the proposed fee rate and asked can fee be reduced. Staff stated the fee is set by the financial institutions like "Visa" and these fees are not negotiable.

Mr. Stevens asked if Exceleron has a payment processing vendor that can make the costs more competitive.

Mr. Bellito stated Exceleron is not involved in such process. Staff would need to follow the Request for Proposal (RFP) process for such request and follow the same Visa utility payment structure guidelines regarding fees.

C. Residential deposit requirements

Board Chair mentioned the board made a recommendation during the EUAB meeting in February for the owner-occupied deposit requirement to remain the same but amended for the new tenant-occupied properties so deposits are held until service are terminated, pending legal review.

Now with the pre-pay program as an option Mr. Liberty suggests the City reconsiders the residential deposit resolution for new utility customers and offer options such as, no credit check requirement with a fixed multiplier for deposit, the other option is customer can opt into the pre-pay program.

Ramsay Stevens commended staff for offering the pre-pay program as option to customers that may not have a strong credit or meet the deposit requirement.

Mr. Stevens asked what is the minimum pre-payment amount.

Board Liaison stated the amount has not been set but Exceleron suggests the City follows the amount set by other utilities.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

There was no new business on the agenda.

**BOARD COMMENTS:**

Board Chair spoke off the language found on the City website regarding resolution 70-2013 to suspend utility deposit reviews through September 30, 2020 and prior to this Resolution 21-2020 to implement utility payment plan for customer with account subject to service disconnections from March 16, 2020 to July 16, 2020.

Mr. Liberty stated City Commission voted on the resumption on utility disconnects for customer who failed to be current or on a utility payment plan with the City.

Mr. Oblander stated City's website should be multilingual.

**BOARD LIAISON REPORTS AND COMMENTS:**

No Board Liaison comments.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:17pm.

A digital audio recording of this meeting will be available in the Office of the City Clerk.