

Minutes

NEW BERLIN UTILITY COMMITTEE

AUGUST 7, 2000

Members Present: Alderman Bullermann (Chairman), Alderman Wysocki, Alderman Patzer, Mike Holzinger (Director of Finance & Utilities), and Tim Murphy.

Others Present: State Representative Mark Duff, Tom Krumplitsch (Utility Operations Manager), Mayor Gatzke, and Alderman Wilkens.

Alderman Bullermann called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

ITEM 28-00 WEPCO Discussion of Power Outages

- Alderman Bullermann introduced the members of the Utility Committee as well as State Representative Mark Duff, Tom Krumplitsch, Mayor Gatzke, and Alderman Wilkens.
- Alderman Bullermann introduced from WEPCO Vivian Kuss (Senior Account Manager), Bruce Sasman (Regional Manager of Western Division), Michael John (Manager of Media Relations), Bill Walter (Senior Applications Engineer), and Charles Cole (Vice President of Customer Relations).
- Charles Cole stated that they were well represented to answer all questions. He also stated that WEPCO was committed to giving safe and reliable electric service to all communities that they serve. In 1997, WEPCO began an extensive reinvestment in the distribution system. This year WEPCO will spend over 120 million dollars on improving the safety and reliability of their system. Despite their best efforts, there will be power outages from the weather, contract contacts, and equipment failure.
- Bruce Sasman gave a brief background. He stated that WEPCO has 1,852 feeders within their system, of that 35 feeders are in the New Berlin area. On a yearly basis, WEPCO looks at all feeders and identifies feeders that may need improvements. They have just completed 15 of the 35 feeders in New Berlin. Regal Manor East is one area that was not previously identified as a problem area. They just completed this area in April of 2000. At the current time, WEPCO is patrolling 4 additional feeders. This year they will be spending 2.2 million dollars on upgrades in New Berlin plus an additional 20 million on the transmission system. In 2001, WEPCO will be spending 3 million dollars in New Berlin.
- Mr. Sasman further talked about the maintenance of the system. He stated that the main problem is a forestry problem. In New Berlin, there are no overloaded feeders. They are planning on building 3 new substations in the Waukesha County area.
- Bruce Sasman discussed their outage management system. The number one objective is safety to the public and their employees. The system is based on phone calls. Currently they are upgrading their system to include a computer program that will show where the power outages are occurring. They are also looking at an automated meter reading system that will be 5 to 10 years down the road. Previously, they had 104 people taking phone calls for electrical outages. They are now automated with 480 dedicated lines and 960 shared lines and are able to handle about 20,000 calls an hour.
- Mr. Sasman then discussed the issue of forestry. They need to get onto a four or five year forestry cycle, therefore when they come to trim, they will be asking for five years of trim.
- Vivian Kuss discussed the area of Regal Manor North. They are trying to come in and do a five year trim in this area. They have had good response from the homeowners that they have contacted so far.

- Bruce Sasman stated that they want to come back in 90 to 100 days and let the committee know what they have found in the four feeder areas that they are currently checking and also what they have done.
- Vivian Kuss discussed the idea to bury all the lines. Doing this is extremely expensive. The Public Service Commission (PSC) sets the standard that WEPCO has to follow and the PSC sets the standard overhead.
- Alderman Wysocki questioned why the frequency of outages has increased in the last 5 years. He also stated that the phone call system is not working. He stated that we need to look at the option of putting the lines underground. He stated that WEPCO needs to study the reliability in today's environment of their overhead versus underground services. He hopes that WEPCO will do some sort of inventory of service needs to this community. WEPCO is a major player with us in our Utility. When power goes out, our wells and lift stations are affected. We do have generators, but we can't use them for days at a time.
- Bruce Sasman stated that the telephone calls do work, even if they only get 20% of the calls made. You do need to realize that we go for the largest number of people affected first, and then work on the individual properties. There are more outages; we need to improve reliability and work together. People need to call in when they come home and find out they were without power because the phone calls go on the repeated outage data base. When we see several calls in an area, we look at what the problem may be.
- Alderman Patzer stated that WEPCO is being more reactionary and it needs to be more proactive.
- Mr. Sasman stated that WEPCO is trying to be more proactive.
- Alderman Bullermann discussed how the ramifications of power outages on the community are really serious; sump pumps go out, they overflow and go into the sewer systems, and then sewers back up. People sustain a considerable amount of damage because of power outages. He also questioned whether WEPCO has the employee resources when outages occur.
- Bruce Sasman stated that in 1995 there was downsizing of experienced people and they are playing catch up. They have hired a significant number of people. He stated that Charles Cole said that WEPCO can no longer be reactionary but must become proactive.
- Mayor Gatzke stated that failures occur during a storm. The Gatewood subdivision have problems that have gotten worse in the past few years not only with power outages but also with flooding problems. It is an area that WEPCO should be looking into. Also Hearthside Acres is an area where they have been the last areas to get power restored. He questioned that when new meters were installed, would they call in when there was a power outage. He questioned what the reliability of underground versus overhead would be. He stated that if the reliability of underground was significantly higher, then we need to look to the state legislature to work with the PSC to develop some kind of a program to bury these lines.
- Bruce Sasman stated that the automatic meter readings would tell when there was an outage.
- Mark Duff asked if WEPCO has data on what percentage of outages is from storms, downed power lines, and lightning and what percentage is from failure of your equipment.
- Another WEPCO representative stated that they can get that data, but that over 90% of the outages are from storm and even equipment failures are many times due to lightning.
- Mark Duff stated that the feeder search was a good idea. He stated that this is the first year that he has gotten phone calls regarding electrical service.
- Alderman Wilkens stated that the program that WEPCO did in Regal Manor East has solved the problems in that subdivision. He stated that he hopes the City does not give false expectations that we are going to bury all wires because that isn't going to happen.
- Vivian Kuss stated that the City should not impose the added cost of an underground system on everyone in the State, but it should be a decision made by the City.
- Tim Murphy questioned why power was knocked out for 2 days because with the loss of power, it has a major impact on the number of sewer backups.
- Bruce Sasman stated that there was significant damage from the July 2nd storm. He stated that they brought in many workers not only from this area, but they also brought in crews from other areas.
- Alderman Wysocki stated that when there are power outages, you need to call 1-800-662-4797.

- Alderman Bullermann opened up the meeting to global questions from the audience.
- Mary Ann Dude, 3145 S. Manor Ct. stated that she is angry that the people from the WEPCO are so defensive and she feels her questions have not been answered. She stated that in her subdivision, most of the area gets power back in a short time and the rest of the subdivision does not get power for several days. Therefore they run cords from the people who do not have power to the people who have power so they can run their sump pumps and refrigerators.
- Bruce Sasman stated that there are some reliability problems in New Berlin.
- Robert Steckmann, 2510 S.Brookside Pkwy. stated that he was a former troubleman for WEPCO. He stated that even if you have underground, it has to connect to overhead wires. He said that if the troubleman would bridge the wires after the wire was cut down, WEPCO could get power to customers hours earlier.
- Bruce Sasman stated that the troublemen are the first responders. They had a loss of troublemen but have hired more troublemen. The number one concern is still safety.
- Alderman Bullermann gave the phone number again and stated that this meeting would be re-broadcast on August 15th at 7:00 p.m. He thanked State Representative Mark Duff and the people from WEPCO for being at the meeting.

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:05 a.m. by Tim Murphy. Second by Alderman Wysocki. Motion carried unanimously.