



BRAINERD PUBLIC UTILITIES

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The regular meeting of the Brainerd Public Utilities Commission was held at 9:00 AM on February 24, 2026.

Commission President Angland called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM.

Commission Roll Call

Mike Angland – Present
Mike Higgins – Absent

Dolly Wussow – Present
Cory Jay – Present

Utility Staff Present

Public Utilities Director
Finance Manager
Operation Manager
Water/Wastewater Manager
Recording Secretary

Paul Sandy
Danny Loch
Trent Hawkinson
Charlie Gammon
Becky Ridlon

Others in Attendance

City Council Liaison
City Administrator
HR Director
City of Baxter Administrator
Bolton & Menk
Bolton & Menk
Eden Renewables
Citizen
Citizen
Citizen
Citizen
Citizen

Jeff Czczok
Nick Broyles
Brittney Kummet
Brad Chapulis
Morgan Salo, PE
Danny Jaeger
Thomas Cosby
Ken Heintzeman
Brian Timmers
Gary Thiesse
Karen Thiesse
Reid Thiesse

Commissioner Angland opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Agenda Items

Amendments to the agenda were discussed and added. An Amendment request to the agenda was presented to administer of the oath of office to new commissioner Cory Jay prior to the consent calendar. Agenda item 9. D was requested to be moved from new business to directly after public forum. Lastly, a consent calendar item was added, Pricing for directional drilling services for 2026 hourly contract, which was distributed prior to the meeting and requested to be added to the consent calendar.

Motion by Commissioner Wussow and seconded by Commissioner Jay to approve the amended agenda. There was a unanimous vote in favor of the motion. Motion carried.

BRAINERD PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION MEETING

February 24, 2026

Oath of office to Commissioner Cory Jay.

Public Utilities Director Paul Sandy administered the Oath of office to Commissioner Cory Jay.

Approval of Consent Items

Motion by Commissioner Wussow and seconded by Commissioner Jay to approve the minutes from January 27th, 2026, regular monthly meeting, current month's bills, approve recommendation of surplus items to auction, and Pricing for directional drilling services for 2026 hourly contract. There was a unanimous roll call vote in favor of the motion. Motion carried.

Public Forum

None

New business

Item 9. D. Introduction of Eden Renewables, LLC for potential Solar Project and Interconnection to Brainerd Public Utilities. See board packet for agenda request.

Eden Renewables Thomas Cosby presented.

Discussion included:

Commissioner Wussow asked how the project would be funded. Cosby explained that Eden Renewables will serve as the developer and take the project to market to secure the best financing option. A financing partner will then join the project to provide construction funding and carry it through completion.

Commissioner Angland asked to verify the process and what is the advantage of moving forward with this project. Operation Manager Trent Hawkinson responded, saying the finance team followed its usual process by meeting with staff outside of the commission meeting to review proposals and discuss the project, including coordination with Tom and his team. The proposed site was highlighted as an ideal location for a solar project because it is flat and located near existing infrastructure, allowing for easy interconnection to the distribution system. This project would help the commission make progress toward the state mandated 2040 goal for carbon-free renewable energy. The development team and property owners have been good to work with, and operationally the project fits the utility's needs. At this stage, the main consideration for the commission is the price point and long-term contract terms, which could provide future rate stability.

City Council Liaison Jeff Czczok asked what the approximate number of acres that is being looked at for the solar array. Cosby noted sixty acres. Regarding interconnection for a project located outside the Brainerd city limits, staff indicated there are no anticipated issues with connecting the project to the system even though it sits outside city boundaries. It was noted that the city does not have 60 acres of available land within the city limits, which contributed to the project being located outside the city. Appreciation was expressed for the work of city staff, the participating landowners, and Tom's team for collaborating to identify a suitable site and advance the project.

Czczok asked whether the utility will incur any costs as the development moves forward and sought clarification on any potential financial responsibilities associated with the project. Cosby explained that once the project is operational, the proposed structure would have the utility purchase power from the project. While the utility would incur costs associated with purchasing that power, the developer stated

BRAINERD PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION MEETING

February 24, 2026

that they are not charging for development work, as those costs are being covered by the developer. Interconnection costs are typically borne by the developer and reimbursed as part of connecting the project to the point of interconnection, though there may be opportunities to work with the utility to find a more cost-effective solution if those costs ultimately affect power pricing.

It was also clarified that the land for the project would be leased from the landowner for approximately 35 years. A decommissioning bond would be in place to ensure that at the end of the project's life, if it is not repowered or continued, the developer is responsible for removing all equipment and restoring the site to its original greenfield condition.

Czczok asked Cosby what the timeline is they are looking at, Cosby responded saying starting construction in 2027/2028

Commission Committee Reports

Personnel Committee Report

President Angland appointed Wussow and Angland to Personnel committee.

Finance and Operations Committee

President Angland appointed Higgins and Jay to Finance committee.

Unfinished Business

Memo -See board packet for updates.

Staff presented the unfinished business memorandum and indicated there were no additional updates beyond what was included in the report. Commissioners requested clarification on several items. It was noted that the rewrite of Brainerd City Code 705 is nearing completion and may be removed from the unfinished business list in the near future.

Additional discussion occurred regarding the lead service line program, specifically the proposed use of the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) "no plan submittal" process. Staff explained this approach as a fast-track method for smaller projects, allowing work to proceed through contractor quote packages rather than a traditional design-bid-build process in order to meet program deadlines.

The Commission also discussed the status of the EV charging policy. It was noted that the item remains at the Commission's discretion in terms of prioritization. Staff indicated willingness to continue work on the policy if directed, and it was mentioned that Commissioner Higgins may take a lead role in further evaluation. Discussion included considerations around public charging availability, impacts to electric rates, and the potential for future development within the service territory.

It was suggested that further discussion on EV charging may be appropriate at the Finance/Operations Committee level.

BRAINERD PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION MEETING

February 24, 2026

Approve BPU POL 2024-01 Frozen Water Service Lines

Public Utilities Director Paul Sandy presented.

Motion by Commissioner Wussow and seconded by Commissioner Jay to approve updated Policy BPU POL 2024-01 Frozen Water Service Lines as amended. There was a unanimous vote in favor of the motion. Motion carried.

Approve BPU POL 2003-04 Unauthorized Use of Utility Meters

Finance Manager Loch presented.

Motion by Commissioner Wussow and seconded by Commissioner Jay to approve updated Policy BPU POL 2003-04 Unauthorized Use of Utility Meters as presented. There was a unanimous vote in favor of the motion. Motion carried.

Approve BPU POL 2003-05 Fees for Water Meters

Public Utilities Director Sandy presented.

Motion by Commissioner Wussow and seconded by Commissioner Jay to approve the updated Policy BPU POL 2003-05 Fees for Water Meters as amended. There was a unanimous vote in favor of the motion. Motion carried.

Approve the Second Amendment to Large Industrial Power Agreement Between Brainerd Public Utilities Commission and Just for Krypto, LLC

Finance Manager Loch presented. Discussion included: Wussow asked whether the amendment would simply be formalizing a deadline to the contract while still allowing adjustments throughout the year. Loch responded that there is no true deadline in the extension. He explained that they are required to supply power if the other party remains in good standing, which they have. He added that the extension was being formalized based on a recommendation from legal counsel, since it had not been formally done to date.

Motion by Commissioner Wussow and seconded by Commissioner Jay to approve the Second Amendment to Large Industrial Power Agreement Between Brainerd Public Utilities Commission and Just for Krypto, LLC There was a unanimous vote in favor of the motion. Motion carried.

New Business

Approve Professional Services Proposal with Bolton and Menk for Risk and Resiliency Assessments at the Water Treatment Plant (WTP) and Wastewater Treatment Facility (WWTF). See board packet for agenda request.

Public Utilities Director Sandy presented.

Discussion included: Jay asked what the price difference was with the two proposals. Sandy responded saying Samatex estimated a cost of about \$17,000 for the water treatment plant portion of the project, while Bolton & Menk proposed a total of \$48,000 split evenly between the two facilities. It was discussed that completing both projects together would likely be more efficient than handling them separately.

BRAINERD PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION MEETING

February 24, 2026

Individually, Bolton & Menk's work would be around \$24,000 per facility, but if both are completed at the same time, the total cost is expected to come in under \$40,000.

Morgan from Bolton & Menk explained that combining the water and wastewater risk and resiliency assessments, along with the emergency response plans, creates efficiencies because much of the information overlaps. Water assessments are required by the EPA, while wastewater assessments are strongly recommended. By completing both simultaneously, the work can be streamlined using shared data and specialized tools, resulting in a single, comprehensive document. This combined approach not only reduces duplication but also provides a more detailed and useful plan, which is beneficial for the utility, especially in the event of an EPA audit.

Wussow thanked staff for their preparatory work, which will aid the assessment process. There was agreement that a proactive approach is important, especially as the wastewater plant faces capacity concerns. The group supported moving forward with both assessments at a total cost not to exceed \$40,000.

Czczok asked how often these assessments need to take place. Sandy stated every five years.

Motion by Commissioner Wussow and seconded by Commissioner Jay to approve the Professional services proposal with Bolton and Menk for Risk and Resiliency Assessments at the Water Treatment Plant (WTP) and Wastewater Treatment Facility (WWTF). There was a unanimous vote in favor of the motion. Motion Carried.

Approve Professional Services Agreement with Bolton and Menk for Professional Engineering and Construction Administration Services for the 2026 Lead Service Line Replacements Project in conjunction with the City of Brainerd's planned reconstruction of the alleyway between S 6th Street and S 7th Street from Paul Street to Joseph Street. See board packet for agenda request.

Public Utilities Director Paul Sandy presented.

Wussow asked a question about the process if a participant chooses not to proceed despite available funding, including how such decisions are handled and documented, and what steps follow if someone declines to move forward with construction. Sandy explained that the utility has fulfilled its obligation by notifying property owners of lead or galvanized service lines and offering replacement at no cost while funding is available. If an owner declines, they must sign documentation confirming their decision, which is kept on file and reflected in the utility's records. It was noted that future funding is not guaranteed, and if the owner later chooses to proceed, the replacement cost would be their responsibility.

Jay clarified that the project would include full replacement of the service line from the utility supply all the way to the house, not just to the curb stop. It was also noted that, as is standard, any future issues from the curb stop to the house remain the property owner's responsibility. Sandy confirmed this as correct.

Jay raised the question about how property conditions would be addressed in the contract following construction. It was explained that exterior areas will be restored to their original condition, such as replacing concrete with concrete and grass with grass, with a requirement to achieve adequate regrowth before project completion. Interior work, however, will be restored only to a functional level; necessary

BRAINERD PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION MEETING

February 24, 2026

repairs like patching holes will be completed, but specialty or finished features, such as basement finishes or woodwork, will not be returned to their previous condition due to variability in homes.

Motion by Commissioner Wussow and seconded by Commissioner Jay to approve Professional Services Agreement with Bolton and Menk for Professional Engineering and Construction Administration Services for the 2026 Lead Service Line Replacements Project in conjunction with the City of Brainerd's planned reconstruction of the alleyway between S 6th Street and S 7th Street from Paul Street to Joseph Street. There was a unanimous vote in favor of the motion. Motion Carried.

Hold Public Hearing and Adopt Resolution to Approve and Submit the Brainerd Wastewater Treatment Facility (WWTF) Plan. See board packet for agenda request.

Public Utilities Director Paul Sandy and Bolton and Menk Morgan Salo presented.

Public Hearing was opened at 10:38am

Discussion included:

Sandy stated both Brainerd and Baxter city councils voted to move forward, the agreement was to apply for a \$10 million dollar community funding grant through Congressman Stauber's office.

Discussion confirmed there was a preference for the selected program in part because it can be retrofitted, unlike other alternatives that rely on specialized equipment with limited lifespan and high replacement costs. It was noted that options such as integrated fixed film activated sludge require additional materials that must be fully replaced over time, while membrane reactors can be effective but are costly to operate and maintain. Other systems, like BAF units, also involve higher energy use and require additional treatment components, leading to greater overall expense.

Reed Thiesse a local resident asked about the amount of methane generated during the treatment process, referencing the existing methane flare, and questioned whether the volume produced is significant or relatively minimal. Water/Wastewater Manager Charlie Gammon responded saying about three years ago the city worked with Region Five to evaluate methane production, which was determined to be insufficient for generating electricity. A follow-up question was raised about whether methane capture and potential carbon credit opportunities had been explored, Gammon acknowledged that such benefits typically require higher volumes of methane, similar to what is seen at landfill operations.

Close public hearing at 10:40am

Motion by Commissioner Wussow and seconded by Commissioner Jay to Adopt Resolution 26-01 and to Submit the Brainerd Wastewater Treatment Facility (WWTF) Plan. There was a unanimous role call vote in favor of the motion. Motion Carried.

Staff Reports

City Administrator Report -see board packet for report. - see board packet for report.

Broyles thanked Morgan Salo from Bolton & Menk for his presentation. Additionally, he noted the Charter Commission unanimously advanced the proposed charter to the City Council. It will be included in the upcoming council packet, and staff may request a special meeting for further discussion and review.

BRAINERD PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION MEETING

February 24, 2026

City Council Liaison Report

Liaison Czczok provided an update on the solar project at Rotary Park. Although the City Council previously voted down the revised agreement, the Rotarians have decided to move forward with the original agreement, which places responsibility for maintenance, repairs, and eventual decommissioning of the solar panels on them. This was noted as a positive development, and the project is now underway under those terms.

HR Director's Report – *see board packet for written report.*

Public Utilities Director Report – *see board packet for report.*

Finance Manager's Report – *see board packet for report.*

Additionally, to the written report, an apology was given to Commissioner Higgins for a scheduling oversight that prevented participation via interactive technology. It was reported that the credit card processing machines have arrived, and staff are working toward implementation, though coordination challenges remain with Tyler staff; a meeting is expected to be scheduled soon. Quotes are being obtained for an electric cost-of-service study, with results anticipated for consideration at a March or April meeting. The audit is underway, with auditors scheduled to be on site next Tuesday and likely to request brief interviews with commissioners via email. The unaudited financial statements are included in the packet, with audited figures to follow upon completion of the audit.

Operations Manager Report - *see packet board for report.*

Additionally, from the written report, an update was provided where staff will be attending the March 6 Career Exploration Day and staff are looking forward to the event.

Water/Wastewater Manager Report- *see board packet for report.*

Additionally, from the written report, an update was provided that SB4 is currently being rebuilt with an estimated timeline of approximately two weeks to return it to operational status. An invitation was extended for anyone interested in observing the process, noting that the tanks will be open and the pumps disassembled to allow a closer look at the work involved.

Sandy stated Interest has been expressed by department heads and others who have not yet toured the facilities, prompting plans to organize tours of all three sites. Invitations will be extended to staff, commissioners, and council members, with consideration given to noticing requirements if participation is high. The goal is to schedule one or more tour dates to help participants better understand the size, scale, and operations of the water and wastewater facilities.

Commission Members – Report

Wussow expressed sincere thank you to staff and the Charter Commission for their extensive work on completing the charter, recognizing the significant effort involved.

BRAINERD PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION MEETING
February 24, 2026

Adjournment

Motion by Commissioner Wussow and seconded by Commissioner Jay to adjourn. There was a unanimous vote in favor of the motion. Motion carried at 10:52 AM.



Mike England, Commission President



Danny Loch, Finance Manager/Secretary