

MANCHESTER WATER AND SEWER COMMISSION

April 9, 2026

The Manchester Water and Sewer Commission met on Thursday, April 9, 2026 for a regular meeting.

An announcement was made that this meeting will be live streaming.

Commissioner Hunt called the regular meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

Present were: Mayor Joey Hobbs, Commissioner Gary Hunt, Secretary Benjamin Peiffer, Commissioner Terrance Hillsman, Commissioner Zak Mohyuddin, Alderman Thomas Crosslin, Vice-Mayor Mark Messick, Alderman Donny Parsley, Director Lonnie Foley, and Billing Office Coordinator Jamie Harden. A meeting quorum had been established.

Absent: None

Late Arrival: None

1) Approval of Agenda

- After a vote was taken, a motion was passed to move Item A under New Business to be addressed between the review of previous minutes and the Mayor's Report

2) Citizen Comments

- **Spring Street Concerns:** A resident of 26 years requested a weight limit for Spring Street due to heavy truck traffic (logging, asphalt, cement) causing vibrations that damage fragile water and sewer lines
- **Accessibility Issues:** The resident highlighted the plight of a legally blind neighbor struggling with standing water (2 months) and uneven asphalt on Spring Street
- **Resolution:** The board suggested these issues be addressed in the Safety Committee meeting, as they have the authority to impose weight limits

3) Review of Previous Minutes

After a vote, a motion was passed to dispense with the reading of the previous minutes and approve them as submitted

4) New Business (Item A – J.E. Sartain Road Water Project)

- **Presentation:** Tim Morris and County Commissioners requested assistance for families on J.E. Sartain Road who currently lack potable water and are using creek water
- **Funding:** Coffee County offered \$36,000 for pipe materials. A local landowner, Mr. Ken McMahon, offered to pay for approximately 2,500 feet of the line in exchange for free future taps
- **Debate:** The board discussed the technical requirements (4-inch vs. 6-inch lines) and the city's inability to fund projects outside city limits while facing its own infrastructure issues but agreed to supply the labor without cost
- **Outcome:** No formal vote was taken; parties requesting assistance in funds will seek additional county funding and return for further discussion

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5) Mayor's Report

- **Compliance:** The city met the March 30th state deadline regarding a moratorium, saving \$20,000 and will meeting April 15th deadline as well
- **Training:** Recognized staff for completing three hours of online training regarding the civil and criminal responsibilities of licensed operators
- **Infrastructure Permits:** New permits were received for waterway crossings to continue infrastructure work
- **Bar Screen Project:** Requested an additional \$56,000–\$57,000 for a "turn-key" installation of the bar screen project to ensure full warranties

6) Director's Report

- **Bar Screen Project:** Originally passed at \$534,600. An additional \$56,000–\$57,000 was requested to make it a "turn-key" job with full warranties and then address the screws repair and the removal of the existing waste that has gotten through the current system

7) Budget Review

- **Revenue:** Projected increase in water and sewer revenue due to a full year of implemented rate increases
- **Employee Raises:** Proposed 8% merit-based increase for department employees, rather than across-the-board raises
- **Repairs:** Committed \$950,000 for internal sewer repairs and \$250,000 for water infrastructure
- **Billing Transition:** Proposed moving the water billing department under the City Finance Department to improve efficiency and increase budget line allocation for Water and Sewer Department. Motion passed to send the proposed budget to the Finance Department with the understanding that adjustments can still be made
- **Total Internal Sewer Repairs:** \$950,000 (This includes a \$200,000 specific line item mentioned during the session)
- **Internal Water Infrastructure:** \$250,000 committed for city-wide repairs
- **Collection System Projects:** The city intends to spend approximately \$4.2 million in the coming year, funded by new revenue from the rate increase
- **Vehicle & Equipment Cuts:** Following a high-spend year of \$465,000, the new budget is scaled back to essential excavators and trailers
- **Grant Funding:** The city is currently finishing projects utilizing \$3.2 million in remaining grant money, which must be cleared by September
- **TDEC Plan:** An aggressive three-year plan was mentioned that will require the city to borrow more money as the current bond payment pays off in 2028
- **Budget Balance:** The overall budget is being balanced against a previous \$64,487 loss to ensure no second-year deficit occurs
- **Personnel:** An 8% increase in the departmental payroll budget was proposed, representing approximately \$170,000 in total pay and benefits
- **Performance-Based Evaluations:** Funds will be allocated to the department, and management will distribute raises based on individual performance and evaluations rather than giving everyone the same percentage

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- **Role-Specific Rewards:** The Mayor emphasized that pay should reflect the difficulty and nature of the work, stating that "the guy who holds the shovel" should not necessarily receive the same increase as "the guy digging the hole"
- **Budgeting for Skill:** The goal is to incentivize staff to improve their performance by clearly communicating that "this is how you get the money"
- **Excluded Personnel:** The Director is specifically excluded from these head-count increases or merit raises for this cycle
- **Segregation of Services:** Expenses for the water billing service are being broken out into their own category to show exactly what is paid to the city, rather than being buried in general departmental costs
- **Internal vs. Contractual Work:** The board is reclassifying "Contractual Services" to clearly distinguish between work done by internal staff (internal infrastructure) and "Capital Projects" that are hired out to third parties
- **Repair Categorization:** Repairs that were previously miscoded as general expenses or "telephone expenses" are being moved into specific categories for truck repairs and machinery repairs
- **Correcting Historical Errors:** The Mayor highlighted that some categories were "predated" and set up incorrectly; for example, one budget line had only \$20,000 allocated but saw \$2.3 million in actual spending
- **Detailed High-Level Reporting:** While the board will see high-level numbers in public reports, the internal system is being coded to track every dollar by specific category (e.g., insurance, disabilities, and individual line descriptions) so they can be tracked "year over year"

8) New Business

- **AMI Project:** Discussion of a 400-meter program to move away from manual reading and increase accuracy and transparency for customers
- **Hydrant Maintenance:** Plans to retrofit and service city hydrants throughout the year
- **Water Treatment:** The department is increasing internal intellectual property by doing more specialized work in-house at the treatment plant

9) Commissioner Comments

- Commissioners engaged in detailed debates regarding the return on investment for technology upgrades and the necessity of prioritizing city infrastructure over rural extensions.
- There was also discussion of the benefits of requesting enough money from the bond to complete all projects

Chairman Hunt declared the meeting adjourned



Gary Hunt, Chairman



Ben Peiffer, Recording Secretary

LIVE STREAMING <https://www.youtube.com/@CityOfManchesterTennessee>

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