

Questions for City Council Ad Hoc Committee Concerning RMU and the Board of Public Works

This is a compilation of questions that I, Tracey Watson, have and that were presented to me at our Citizens Focus Group, RMU4You!, meeting on Wednesday, May 23rd, 2007.

1. Why has the statement, “They’re in a long term standing contract that is getting ready to expire and they are getting ready to raise their energy rates 40-50%,” (referring to the surrounding communities of Salem, Houston, and Waynesville, in explanation of their lower energy rates, and, has since been found to be a DIRECT LIE by RMU), never been addressed to the citizens of Rolla?
2. Why are the “facts” that RMU presents, either through Dan Watkins or Jim Stoffer, never double-checked for accuracy, but taken as gospel?
3. Did our City Attorney read the original contract with Mopep, in its entirety? Did our City Attorney read the Mopep amendments, in entirety? What issues were presented by the Attorney at each time to the Mayor and City Council? Were any issues addressed in closed, executive session? Identify the Attorneys involved.
4. Did the City Council read the contract with Mopep, in its entirety? Did our City Council read the Mopep amendments, in its entirety? What issues were presented at each time to the Mayor, City Administrator, and City Attorney? Were any issues addressed in closed, executive session?
5. Sec 35-157 of the City Ordinances states: “It is NOT INTENDED OR EXPECTED that the Board of Public Works shall pay the maximum salaries fixed or employ the maximum number of employees above mentioned, but it is intended that the board shall employ only the necessary number required and pay them JUST COMPENSATION for their services, it being further intended that the board shall exercise its discretion in the number of employees and the salary paid within the limits provided.

Has the City Council looked at the Payroll for RMU? For 52 employees the payroll totals almost 2 MILLION dollars (\$1,986,140.80) according to the RMU Salary Sheet that was furnished to me, with the top 6 salaries totaling \$463,352.00. Do you consider this “Just Compensation”?

6. What are the RMU Payroll and Benefits annual totals for the last five years? Does the City provide any funds for the payment of payroll and benefits? If so, identify what the City provides.
7. Why are RMU (or City, for that matter) employees allowed to take “company vehicles” home? We (the RMU consumers or taxpayers) pay for the vehicles and the insurance and the maintenance and the gas. Why is this allowed? How much did RMU spend on gasoline for each truck driven for personal purposes each month in 2007, and who drives each truck?

8. How many KWH of electricity did each department of the City use January through April 2007, itemized per sub-group, and how much did RMU bill?
9. How many gal. of water did each City department use January through April 2007, itemized per sub-group and how much did RMU bill?
10. Who sets the utility rates for the City departments? What are these rates? Is there a specific written agreement between RMU and the City for this purpose and how often is this agreement revised?
11. How many gallons of water does the Centre average for the winter months and also for the months the Splash Zone is open? Are these billed separately? Why is this water usage and its associated revenue not itemized in the RMU monthly reports published on their website? What is the price per gallon for the Centre?
12. Is the Centre self supporting or does the money come out of the City's General Fund (funded by the PILOT fee assessed by RMU through the Consumers)?
13. If Question 11 is indeed true is this not a form of "forced charity" in a twisted sort of way? Helping to fund a place for people who can already afford the high monthly Rec Centre dues and additional class fees, to work out? Do you have a reasonable fee reduction for Seniors for the same services at the Rec Centre? If tax dollars are spent to support the Rec Centre, then it would be reasonable to have a sliding scale monthly dues or fees so ALL Rolla Citizens may enjoy one of the benefits of their tax dollars. Do you have or have you considered setting up a sliding scale fee structure for this purpose? Why not?
14. Does the City and its employees pay the same Service Availability Fees per meter size as residential and business customers? Are City and/or RMU employees subjected to the same RMU fees and policies as Rolla citizens?
15. What is the purpose of the Service Availability Fees? What specific costs are directly associated with the Service Availability Fee and are these funds held separately? Prior to Service Availability Fees, what funds were used to pay for these costs? Why are SA Fees not reported as a specific line item in the RMU Monthly reports?
16. How much per month since January 2007 have customers paid in late fees? Reconnect Fees?
17. How does this compare for January through April 2006?
18. What is the justification for the flat fee of 10% for late fees? Are these funds held separately? Why are they not reported as a specific line item in the RMU Monthly reports?
19. Did RMU consider a per day charge, with a maximum of 10%, prior to setting the flat fee for Late Fees?

20. How many customers left Rolla without paying the final bill in 2006? How many since January 2007? What are the monthly totals for 2006 and 2007? How does RMU and the City of Rolla explain the increase if there is one?
21. How do you promote the Helping Hands program? Have you considered a dollar for dollar match for these donations?
22. Have you considered additional programs for utility assistance?
23. Why are the deposits held for 5 years? Who proposed the length? What were the justifications and who made the final decision and when?
Note: Seniors have complained that this is way too long and many need this money for items like medicine, food, etc. Since the deposits are high, this is a hardship.
24. Was anyone associated with RMU in any capacity involved with the setting of the amount of the PILOT fee? What were their recommendations or justifications?
25. Why is the RMU board meeting at 4:00 when few can attend?
26. Who sets the salary of the General Manager of RMU?
27. Who set the salaries of the staff making the top 6 salaries, except the General Manager? What was the latest % increase of each of these employees? When was this decided and made effective?
28. What was the % increase for the staff with the lowest 20 wages? What was the latest % increase of all RMU staff, and when was this decided and made effective?
29. What is the average salary of female staff? Male staff? Which male and which female RMU employees make the most salary? Who sets the salary for each?
30. What cost items, specifically, are used when determining "Cost of Service"?
31. When employees are "called in," how is it determined how many people to call in ?
32. Does Dan Watkins receive compensation for his involvement in the MJMEUC (Missouri Joint Municipal Electric Utility Commission)? (Other than the spiffy matching shirts.) If so, how much?
33. Is it true that City Employees receive a 20-25% discount on utility services? RMU employees? Any discount at all?
34. How many of the 52 RMU employees actually live in the RMU service area?
35. How much does RMU spend on things that have nothing to do with actually providing water and electricity? Specifically, how much was spent by RMU on

the recent Public Works Day? How does this amount figure into “Cost of Service”?

36. Were RMU customers charged for “down days” during the ice storm?
37. Two people who attended the RMU4YOU! citizen’s meeting reported that they called and complained about how high their bills were following the ice storm. After their complaint, they both received a different, lower bill. Why and HOW? We would like to let all Rolla citizens know how to request their rebate from RMU.
38. Consumers would like to know how to find out what day their meters are actually read so they can read it to verify that the meter reading is correct.
39. Why, when RMU chose to sign the Mopep contract, was this not put before the people with a public meeting (not just slid in a council meeting) with input from the citizens when it is something that will affect everyone greatly? The amendment to the Mopep contract was presented just prior to the Jan. 18, 2005 Council Meeting, and was signed into affect Feb. 23, 2005. This is moving awfully fast on something that affects so many people.
40. What are Mopep Bucks and how do they benefit us the consumer? How many do we have?
41. How would the new electric meters actually save money? What will be the cost per meter? Will this be a new line item on our RMU bill? What is the cost of new software and hardware needed to “read” the new meters? Won’t RMU still have to utilize personnel to read the water meters monthly?
42. How many new truck have you purchased in the last 2 years? Please list the make and model, cost, and who drives these trucks if they are specifically used by someone like the General Manager? Why would the General Manager need a truck? Does he provide equipment or tools or something unique to MANAGING the utilities?
43. How many RMU Board members serve on other Boards or Committee within Rolla and outside of Rolla? Identify each member and their appointments.
44. How many RMU Board members or employees own stock in energy companies or coops? Identify each.
45. How many RMU employees are given additional training or sent to outside seminars? Identify the seminars or training, identify the seminars or training organizations. Which employees were allowed to participate in the last 12 months?
46. How many sick days, paid vacation days, or personal days can RMU staff utilize? Is there a maximum accrued level before benefits are lost? Does RMU pay staff for unused days at the end of the year?

47. For the top 20 wage earners at RMU, specifically identify each and how long have they worked for RMU.
48. Explain the RMU retirement fund. Is it City or Rolla funded?
49. Are RMU employees considered City of Rolla employees? If not, are there any City funds used to pay any portion of RMU salaries or benefits?
50. Why are PILOT taxes not disbursed to the City of Rolla monthly, since these funds do not belong to RMU? Where are these funds held, specifically which bank & account? How much interest is earned and is the interest turned over to the City of Rolla? Does RMU use these funds during the quarter held? Identify how.
51. Explain why the monthly cash on hand in the PCB checking has increased from 1.9 million at the end of September 2006 to \$5.1 million at the end of April 2007? Isn't this an excessive amount for operating reserve? Just how many millions of dollars are expected to be forced out of Rolla citizens incomes and given to the RMU operating funds in the next 6 months?
52. Do any RMU Board members or employees file a financial report to the Missouri Ethics Commission? Identify each and give the instructions for obtaining these reports.
53. St. James Utilites has also experienced an increase in cost of electrical service. This increase was reasonably spread out over the next several YEARS. If a small town like St. James can set reasonable electric rates that reflect the actual cost of service, why can't RMU do the same and spread out their rate increases over years instead of a few months? I find it hard to understand why RMU, a much larger utility than St. James, does not experience economies of scale in production of services. Please explain why this has not happened.
54. RMU and the City keep referring to the increasing cost of kwh as the justification for increasing electric rates. I would like to see the month by month kwh bill paid by RMU for electricity since January 2004. Please provide this information.
55. Prepare a report itemizing the rising cost paid per kwh, if any, to the cost of administration, broken down into cost areas, over the last 24 months. Which administration cost areas have risen the most, % and total \$?
56. What impact on RMU monthly revenues will the Briggs shutdown have? What impact on RMU monthly revenues will the potential USGS shutdown have?
57. What fees are charged to citizens for the production of RMU documents? Who sets these fees, specifically? To avoid the time and expense of reproducing these files, why not have public records in a library on disk or on an open network server where each citizen could research the document and print or save it for themselves? It would be a simple procedure to grant public network access with read only rights to specific documents or databases, why not do this ASAP?

58. Where, when, and how often do you publish bid or surplus notices?
59. What is your records detention policy? How often do you destroy records and on whose authority? Do you advertise which documents will be destroyed and do you keep a copy on disk or file server of those hard copies destroyed? If not, why not do this in the spirit of open and full disclosure by a public entity?
60. Does the RMU Board understand that they are the servants of each RMU customer? Does the Board mandate that the General Manager train employees on this fact? What customer service training is given yearly?
61. Does the RMU Board and General Manager fully understand that they are the stewards of public funds and services for all citizens, both poor and rich? There is a rumor gaining popularity that RMU and the City of Rolla plan to get rid of the poorer segment of our citizens by driving them out of town with high rates and quick cutoffs. Bax plans to replace this population segment with "quality citizens." Do you feel this true? What have you done at RMU to assure Rolla citizens that this is not your intention?
62. How much does it cost per kwh to run the generators for mopep? How much did of a deficit did RMU incur in running these generators in 2006 & 2007 ytd for mopep? Why on earth did you not stipulate in your mopep contract a provision with mopep for running these generators immediately upon loss of electrical service for your ROLLA customers to provide electricity, first and foremost, here in town and not further along the mopep grid?
63. Missouri General Assembly recently passed two very important energy programs this year: the Green Power Initiative and the Net Metering and Easy Connection Act. The Green Power Initiative requires electric companies to work toward using more renewable energy technologies, including wind, biomass, and solar. The goal is to produce at least 11% of all retail electric sales from renewable sources by 2020. The Net Metering and Easy Connection Act requires utilities to cooperate with landowners generating their own electricity through renewable sources, such as wind and solar. Special meters will measure the difference between electricity used and generated by a customer. The customers will receive credits from the utilities for producing their own renewable energy. Both measures passed as part of SB 54. The bill also includes another important provision allowing for the disposal of yard waste in landfills operating as bioreactors. (from the MARE website) As I understand our city ordinances, the production of excess electricity by any resident or commercial entity within the city of Rolla is prohibited. Do you plan to lobby the city to get this ordinance changed? Have you considered alternatives to electricity? Have you worked with UMR to come up with viable alternative energy sources for Rolla?
64. If Owensville and Fredericktown cancel their contracts with MoPEP, will RMU give notice to end the MoPEP contract?