

# The Times-News

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## Mona City discusses solutions to collect overdue utility bills

By Myrna Trauntvein

Times-News Correspondent

Mona needs an outside company to help them collect overdue utility bills because the city secretary is too soft-hearted.

As a result of the conversation, the city council will make certain that the city policy is written so that it can be enforced and will also consider finding a new entity to perform notices and shut-offs for the city.

Michelle Dalton, city secretary, said that the city audit, to be presented at the next council meeting, will show that the delinquent accounts are very high.

"It is hard for me to shut off past due accounts," said Dalton. "I am too big a sucker. I am not a good person for the job."

Arriving at a home where there were small children made it difficult for her to shut off services.

This is the highest number of past due accounts they city has had, she said.

However, said Everd Squire, city finance director, the city had a problem with past due accounts for many years.

"It has been a recommendation of the auditor for many, many years that something needs to be done about collections," said Squire.

"I would like to see us go to an outside entity to perform this service," said Jeff Smith, council member.

Nephi may be willing to help with that. Dalton said she had talked to the city treasurer and was told that he notifies the department heads, after proper notice is given, and they do the work of turning off the utilities.

The treasurer said that there was also a way to turn off utilities at the computer.

"He sends a letter out to past due accounts," said Dalton.

If an outside entity were to perform the service, then Dalton could just hand those who had their services disconnected a card telling them who to contact and that would be the end of her need to be pressured.

Mona does not have the power that Nephi does. For example, Mona residents get their electricity from Rocky Mountain Power. That company does its own billing and performs its own cutoffs. In Nephi, the city can turn off the electric service and that gets more notice from the past due customer.

She can only turn off natural gas service and culinary water service. Usually, she cuts off the natural gas but that is not effective in the summertime. Very few really miss it until winter comes and so they do not rush to take care of the problem.

Shutting off the water results in a sanitation problem because the sewer quits working at that residence. One of the biggest parts of individual city utility user charges comes from the sewer service.

She said that more than \$20,000 was owed the city from accounts that were over 90 days in arrears.

The city does charge a reconnect fee to restore the natural gas service.

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**EARLY VOTING** • Sharon Jarrett casts her vote at the county clerk's office during the early voting period. You can cast your vote for your favorite candidate now through October 31 during regular office hours. Please bring your I.D. when you vote.

## Mona City may have to adjust building permit fees

By Myrna Trauntvein

Times-News Correspondent

Mona Planning Commission is going through the planning permitting process to revamp some of the requirements.

"We had an individual bring to light that some of our fees, such as building permit fees, need to be adjusted," said Lynn Ingram, city planning commission chairman.

He said that the planning commission took the suggestion to heart and had decided to look at what is being charged for various fees. He said the commission planned to investigate what some other communities of like size were charging for their fees.

"We think this is an opportune time to consider our fees while we are doing the other work of looking at our permits," he said.

If the commission makes a determination that the city is charging too little for their fees, then he, representing the commission, will bring a suggestion to the city for review.

The city planning commission processes all development applications through all planning stages and then presents the information to the city council for approval.

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## Houweling's and Mona City iron out small details in agreement for purple water

By Myrna Trauntvein

Time-News Correspondent

An agreement between Mona City and Houweling Properties Utah Inc, allowing the company use of the city's effluent or purple water should be ready for signatures by next meeting, October 28.

City council members and Casey Houweling, owner of Houweling's, ironed out a few more small points as the council opened for public comment at a public hearing held on Tuesday.

"Houweling is being generous in what they are paying," said Jeff Hearty, council member. "They will pay \$200 an acre-foot."

The term of the agreement is that it will remain in effect for 15 years with an option to renew for two additional five year terms.

Hearty said that the agreement could be dissolved by either party with the usual notice clause.

One point that needed clarification, said Houweling, was how much water the company was going to have to use.

"It is a little vague in the agreement," said Houweling, "that if we don't need as much effluent water as you can provide, we don't have to take it. We don't want to have to take more than we need."

"Right now," said Hearty, "We can provide 50 to 60 acre-feet."

The city owns certain water rights on record with the Utah Division of Water Rights. In addition, the city operates a waste water treatment plant

and has the right to beneficially use approximately 370 acre-feet of treated effluent water (also known as purple water).

The amount the city can provide, said Hearty, may double or even triple in the next few years from the 60 acre-feet it can now provide.

"If we need 100 acre-feet and you are producing 150 acre-feet, we do not want to have to take all the effluent," said Houweling.

Hearty said that he would make certain that the request of Houweling was part of the agreement.

"If Houweling does not need all the purple water, can we sell it to somebody else?" asked Allen Pay, city water superintendent.

There would only be a few industries that could use the purple water, said Mayor Greg Newton. Farmers would be the most likely and they may have to stand in line to get whatever was not needed by Houweling.

Bill Mills, former mayor, asked what right, if Houweling would decide that they did not need all the water being produced and if the city subsequently allowed use by a farmer, that Houweling would have to then take the water away from the farmer.

That should not be a problem, said Houweling. Farmers mostly use the water only in the summertime. If the company were to get to the stage where all of the water the city effluent could produce was desired by the tomato-growing facility, then the plant would need to have a storage facility.

When the hydrologist met with the city, it was determined that the purple water was not usable, said Lisa Kay. She wondered what had changed that it now was.

"We do on-site treatment," said Houweling. "We do all we can to collect and reuse water."

He said that filtration technology cleans, sterilizes and recirculates water and computer-monitored drip irrigation conserves it.

Sodium levels were the biggest issue with the water quality, said Jonathan Jones, council member.

The agreement presumes that the purple water will continue to be treated to a level that it can both legally and physically be used by Houweling. If the purple water quality falls below a level that can be used by the greenhouse, Houweling has no obligation to take or use the purple water and will have no obligation to continue to make payments to the city.

Kay said she also had a concern about what would happen if the city would rely on the money paid for the water and then Houweling would cancel the agreement.

"My preference," said Everd Squire, city finance director, "would be to make the money paid part of the sewer revenue because that fund needs it."

However, the money received in payment from Houweling could also be put into the water department fund.

Once placed in that fund, it would stay there unless it was used by a project such as a pump or water storage.

The water has been going into Mona Reservoir and has then found its way to Goshen.

Jones said that he agreed with the public that the city should have a plan for what to use the water for and how it could be utilized by the city if Houweling decides that it is not needed.

It might be wise to hire an engineer to help the council decide what could be done with the water if ever Houweling does not need it. He said the city may never need Plan B but such a plan would make it so that the water was not just lost downstream.

"We need to finish Plan B before we go to Plan A," said Frank Riding, council member.

Hearty said, that one backup plan might be that the city could pump the water into secondary water storage. However, such a plan will not be needed for several years.

Molli Graham, council member, said that the agreement states that if the water falls below the quality needed by Houweling, the company will not be under obligation to purchase it. If Houweling cannot use the water for 120 days, they are no longer under any obligation to make payments to the city.

Under terms of the agreement, the purple water produced at the treatment plant may fluctuate according to the use by city residents of the plant and may also be affected by future growth.

"We will have the agreement ready for adoption by next meeting," said Hearty.



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