



**COMPREHENSIVE
PLAN UPDATE
JULY 2021 -JUNE 2022
UTILITY DEPARTMENT**

ABSTRACT

The City of Fort Smith's Utility Department is using the Future Fort Smith Comprehensive Plan to face the challenges of today to make the opportunities of tomorrow a reality for the citizens of both the City of Fort Smith and the Fort Smith Region.

September 2022

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Abbreviations

AMI	Advanced Meter Infrastructure
AMR	Automatic Meter Reading
ARDoT	Arkansas Department of Transportation
CD	Consent Decree
CIP	Capital Improvement Plan
CMMS	Computer Maintenance Management System
CRMP	Capacity Remedial Measures Plan
CNG	Compressed Natural Gas
DOJ	Department of Justice
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
ERT	Encoder Receiver Transmitter
ETJ	Extra-territorial Jurisdiction
EUM	Effective Utility Management
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FOG	Fats, Oils, and Greases
GIS	Geographic Information System
ITS	Information Technology System
MGD	Million Gallons per Day
MPG	Miles per Gallon
SSO	Sanitary Sewer Overflow
VTM	Vehicle Miles Traveled

Director's Message



Building on the experience of providing safe, reliable, high-quality, sustainable, and affordable water and water reclamation services, Fort Smith Utility is dedicated to meeting the challenges that lie ahead.

Our mission and values are vital as a public utility dedicated to providing the best water and water reclamation services to our community. It is also important to us that our strategic business plan and initiatives align with both the City of Fort Smith's Mission Statement and The Future Fort Smith Comprehensive Plan. Fort Smith Utility strives to serve our community in a way that helps Fort Smith and the River Valley Region achieve success.

The last twelve (12) months have been challenging for the Utility Department, City of Fort Smith, and the State of Arkansas. While we are slowly recovering from the impact of Covid-19 Pandemic, supply chain demands now impact many of the projects we work to complete. This has also been an opportunity to look for new suppliers, materials, and techniques to complete the vital work of the Department. Both the snow and freezing weather experienced during February 2022, and the drought and high temperatures in late June 2022 also impacted the Department and the citizens of Fort Smith. The Department, like many businesses in the City, still struggles to fill open positions from entry level up to upper management.

There have also been numerous wins for the Department. The greatest win has been the citizens of Fort Smith supporting a 5/8% sales tax for eight (8) years to help fund Consent Decree projects. This investment by the citizens in the Department and City is encouraging. The Department also worked to form the Drinking Water Advisory Committee as required by Arkansas Act 605 of 2021. The implementation of PayIt for utility bill payment on line also has moved the City towards modernization.

Although the challenges are numerous, the Department has continued to move forward. The credit for the progress is with the men and women who have continued to work diligently to ensure clean, safe drinking water is delivered to homes and businesses, and the wastewater continues to be conveyed to the water reclamation facilities for treatment and returned to the environment.

This Annual Update of the Utility Department's progress outlines goals and objectives achieved over the past twelve (12) months in relation to The Future Fort Smith Comprehensive Plan Implementation Matrix, and shares the Department's goals and priorities for the years to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Lance McAvoy". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a light blue horizontal line.

Lance McAvoy,
Utility Director

Utility Overview

Fort Smith Utility provides safe, reliable, high-quality, sustainable and affordable water services that have met the community's needs for over 100 years. Fort Smith Utility provides water to over 150,000 people in Fort Smith and the River Valley Region, both retail and wholesale, across multiple counties and into Oklahoma. The utility draws water from two surface water sources fully owned by the City of Fort Smith. Lake Fort Smith and Lee Creek Reservoir supply water to the two water treatment plants, Lake Fort Smith and Lee Creek, which have a combined maximum capacity of 62 million gallons per day. More than 11.6 billion gallons of drinking water were produced in 2021.

Fort Smith Utility has two water reclamation facilities (formerly known as wastewater treatment plants), "P" Street and Massard, that can receive up to a peak of 100 million gallons per day of sewage to treat. Wastewater is cleaned into high-quality effluent that is safely returned to the Arkansas River. More than 6.8 billion gallons of wastewater were treated and returned to the environment in 2021.

Fort Smith Utility is still working to comply with the current Federal Consent Decree. Projects are still ongoing but funding for the next 8 years has been secured by the citizens approving a 5/8% sales tax for Consent Decree projects. The City is in regular communication with EPA, DOJ, and the State of Arkansas on the impact the 2019 Flood, Covid-19, and supply chain issues are having on the compliance schedule. The City is working with the agencies to find a solution that will allow the City to move forward while keeping the Consent Decree affordable.



Sunnymede Equalization Basin Chemical Treatment Control Center (pre-2019 Flood)

Utility Department's Mission Statement

“We are a unified team committed to delivering reliable, high-quality drinking water and water reclamation services for the City of Fort Smith and the River Valley Region.”

Utility Department's Five Year Vision Statement

“The Fort Smith Utility Department will modernize its policies, processes and procedures to meet current and future challenges in a proactive, transparent, and responsible manner and become an effectively managed utility.”

Utility Department's Values

The Utility Department recognizes the importance of having values that support and drive its employees' actions and behavior. For that reason the Department has adopted the I CARE values. Those values are as follows:

I = Integrity: *We honor our commitments and work to keep the trust of our customers.*

C = Customer Service: *We respond and support the needs of our customers in a professional manner.*

A = Accountability: *We are accountable for our behaviors, actions, and decisions.*

R = Respect: *We give thoughtful consideration to each other's differences and opinions.*

E = Engagement: *We are committed to the goals of both the City and the Department.*



Fort Smith Utility Crew works to replace a broken water line over Easter Weekend 2020

Comprehensive Plan Initiatives

The Future Fort Smith Committee selected a balanced approach for Fort Smith's preferred future. This approach counter-balances the trend of dispersed development by focusing on Fort Smith's historic resources and existing structure. One of the many benefits to the City of Fort Smith by using this approach is it allows the City to utilize existing infrastructure and reduce service costs.

FLU-1.3: Coordinate and plan future development with neighboring jurisdictions and the City of Fort Smith

- FLU-1.3.1: Exercise the City's extra-territorial jurisdiction over land in Sebastian County
- FLU-1.3.2: Ensure that the subdivision of land within the allowable Planning Area will comply with City subdivision and infrastructure requirements, as amended, to address rural and estate development

As the extra-territorial jurisdiction (ETJ) land development begins to grow, the Utility Department continues to plan for the future. This includes looking at the future needs of water and the potential to incorporate the water reclamation needs with in the current and future infrastructure.

2022 Update: In 2018, the Department began to update its Water Master Plan. The Department continued its work to finalizing the Water Master Plan and water hydraulic model to determine the overall drinking water needs of the City and region. This plan will take in to account such needs as water storage, pumping, line size requirements, and water quality. Part of this plan includes the new 48-inch water transmission line and pressure reducing station from Lake Fort Smith Treatment Plant to the eastern side of the City, as well as needed drinking water plant upgrades. This plan will be completed in late 2022 or early 2023.

The Department submitted an updated Capacity Remedial Measures Plan (CRMP) to the EPA/DOJ as part of the Consent Decree Requirements. The CRPM uses the sanitary sewer hydraulic model to determine the size of pipe needed to carry the normal flow of wastewater and additional flows that may occur during rain events as a result of Inflow and Infiltration. This model also is used to ensure the sanitary sewer systems installed in the expanding areas of the City, as well as the ETJ are of sufficient size to properly convey the wastewater contributed by the developments and businesses expanding in the area.

All infrastructure development plans are reviewed by the department to determine if the developer is sizing and installing the infrastructure properly. The Department works with the developer and often partners with them when placing lines to ensure the size meets the overall needs of the City, ETJ, and region.

FLU-1.4: Ensure adequate, well-maintained infrastructure, public safety, and public facilities for all development and prevent development ahead of infrastructure and service provision

- FLU-1.4.1: Conduct an assessment of current service boundaries and ensure regulations to guide the expansion of services
- FLU-1.4.2: Encourage development near community facilities and services (e.g., schools, recreation centers, health facilities) to fully utilize existing services and limit duplication

2022 Update: The Utility Department is continuing to make progress with compliance of the Consent Decree. This includes replacing infrastructure and increasing capacity to allow future use of developed areas within the City.

The Utility Department is also working on the Hwy 45 widening project while meeting the needs of the Department and Arkansas Department of Transportation (ARDoT).

The Utility Department is working on the Phase 5 Water Transmission route to help meet the needs of the land owners impacted by the proposed route while ensuring safety and longevity of the piping and associated equipment.

HN-1.2: Limit high costs associated with building new infrastructure.

- HN-1.2.1: Use a cost/benefit analysis to guide City decisions when seeking infrastructure approvals.
- HN-1.2.2: Encourage redevelopment and infill development in identified growth centers.

2022 Update: The Utility Department uses a cost/benefit analysis to guide how lines will be rehabilitated. Factors such as cost, customer impact, traffic disruption, and benefit to the City are factored in to the overall decision making process. Additionally the cost of new infrastructure may be offset by private/public partnerships.

Where mains are already available for development, the Department works with developers and new or existing businesses to utilize the existing infrastructure. This allows for potential growth without the cost associated with new infrastructure.

HN-1.3: Promote private investment in identified growth centers and encourage adaptive reuse of historic buildings.

- HN-1.3.2: Support the renovation and revitalization of existing housing and promote infill development of vacant land within the corporate limits.

2022 Update: The Utility Department works with the Chamber of Commerce to utilize existing vacant property within the City limits to entice new business. The Department places one million dollars in economic development in its capital improvement plan (CIP) each year. This allows for some new infrastructure to be either installed or to replace inadequate existing infrastructure to meet the needs of both new or expanding businesses and developments.

The Department also works with Planning and Building Services when businesses are renovated to ensure compliance with backflow prevention and the Fats, Oils, and Greases (FOG) Program.

HN-3.2: Utilize the City's zoning and subdivision regulations to promote the construction of a variety of housing sizes and types.

2022 Update: The Utility Department works with the Planning Department to ensure all subdivisions that are built have adequate water supply, fire protection, and sewer capacity to meet the housing and/or zoned land use.

TI-4.1: Continue to ensure that customers within Fort Smith have access to reliable water, sewer, drainage, solid waste services by reducing or eliminating deficiencies and gaps in infrastructure systems.

- TI-4.1.1: Implement an infrastructure Asset Management Program as a tool for management of the utility department's water and sewer systems and to track, manage, and schedule necessary facility upgrades and improvements.

2022 Update: The Department is continuing to expand the use of its computer maintenance management system (CMMS), Lucity. This system will allow for greater productivity by using tablets and laptop computers in the field. It will also auto generate work orders for proactive maintenance, allow for greater reporting, and eventually lead to predictive maintenance. Processes are being documented and staff is using LEAN Management principles to ensure the current processes are as efficient and effective as possible. This is also helping to update the leak repair list to ensure it is up to date. Lucity is now tied to the Department's GIS system to track repairs of assets. The last piece is to integrate the material and equipment cost used which will allow the Utility Department to determine of actual work order cost based on personnel, equipment usage, and materials.

The Department is continuing to look at new technology and methods to track performance and life span and cycle cost of the assets.

TI-4.2: Ensure that utility and infrastructure systems can meet the city's long-term needs.

- TI-4.2.1: Coordinate land use planning and capital programming to ensure infrastructure improvements and extensions are phased to support the future land use pattern.
- TI-4.2.2: Use the future land use framework to identify opportunities to expand the city's green infrastructure and open space network to increase the city's ability to manage stormwater and limit the need for additional grey infrastructure.

2022 Update: In 2018 the Department began updating its Water Master Plan. During the update process, the Department determined it was time to complete a full drinking water hydraulic model to illuminate possible future challenges and opportunities. The Department is currently finalizing the Water Master Plan and water hydraulic model to determine the overall drinking water needs of the City and region. This plan will take in to account such needs as water storage, pumping, line size requirements, and water quality. Part of this plan includes the new 48-inch water transmission line from Lake Fort Smith Treatment Plant to the eastern side of the City as well as needed plant upgrades. This will be completed by the end of 2022 or early 2023.

The water, non-Consent Decree water reclamation and Consent Decree capital improvement needs are outlined in the Department's capital improvement plan (CIP). The CIP is a living document that is reviewed on a semiannual basis and presented to the Board of Directors on an annual basis. Projects are added, moved, or removed from the plan based on developing needs of the City.

The Department's infrastructure is being mapped and loaded into the City's GIS system to provide a better understanding of where current infrastructure is located and where new infrastructure may be needed to facilitate development and expansion of services.

The Utility Department has taken on the task of training commercial drivers who need to obtain a CDL for the entire City. By having a single source for training, the City is saving money and reducing inefficiencies from redundant positions and use of equipment.

PFS-1.1: Maintain fair and transparent codes and regulations.

- PFS-1.1.1: Set up ongoing communication with other groups in the City (CBID, School Board, Chaffee Crossing, Planning Commission, CEO Group, Chamber, etc.) to ensure that all organizations maintain consistent goals and objectives with each group focusing on the responsibilities best suited for them.
- PFS-1.1.2: Continue to update the City's UDO based on feedback from the business community and continue to improve on-line access.

2022 Update: The Utility Department works closely with all stakeholders. The Utility Department’s website includes forms and instructions for Utility Department Permitting (Industrial Pretreatment and Fats, Oils, and Greases Programs) as well as any other additional information one would need for development of business application related to the Department.

PFS-2.1: Ensure that the City's planning and implementation process is transparent.

2022 Update: The Utility Department has established written specifications for both water lines and sanitary sewer lines. These are reviewed periodically and are posted on the Department’s website.

In 2022 the City updated the leak policy and approved the Department’s standard operating procedure for customers to apply for different bill adjustments. The forms and instructions are on the Utility Department’s website.

The City is looking to update its website as well. The Utility Department is not only supportive of this measure but is an active partner. As the new City website is designed, the Utility Department’s website will merge with it so those needing or wanting information will have only one website to visit to find what they are looking for, or find the contact information for specific questions to be answered.

Currently staff are actively utilizing GovDelivery and social media to inform citizens about what is going on in the Utility Department. The Department is also active in community organizations

PFS-4.1: Seek opportunities to co-locate future community facilities to maximize efficiencies in service provision and reduce capital and operating costs.

2022 Update: The Utility Department currently utilizes existing City Facilities to meet the needs of the Department. This includes the Carnall facility which is shared with ITS and Engineering, Garrison which serves as the City’s Town Hall, and Kelley Hwy facility shared with the Street Department. The fleet garage at the Kelley Hwy facility is operated by the Department but works on both Utility and Street Department vehicles. The fueling station operated at Kelley Hwy serves the public safety vehicles as well as other vehicles owned by the City.

PFS-4.2: Provide new facilities in a manner that protects investments in existing facilities and promotes orderly growth.

- PFS-4.2.1: Evaluate existing water conservation policies and goals for residential, commercial, and industrial uses to identify opportunities for additional reductions.

2022 Update: The Utility Department continually monitors the lake levels, water production, and water delivery of drinking water to ensure the supply is ample to meet the needs of the City. This allows the Department to determine when to enter into a phased water conservation status, which is authorized by ordinance. The Department is placing language into all surplus water user agreements that mirrors the current language in the City’s ordinance.

NCR-2.1: Develop and manage watershed programs to minimize pollution from stormwater runoff and other sources.

- NCR-2.1.1: Utilize “Green Infrastructure,” a network of open space and natural areas that connect the natural and built environments and provide multiple benefits for people and ecosystems, wherever possible to increase the City’s ability to manage stormwater.

2022 Update: The Utility Department currently oversees the watershed programs for Lake Fort Smith and Lee Creek. The Department purchases property in the watersheds when they become available and return them to the natural state to reduce the impact of human activity and stormwater runoff associated with the human activity.

In 2021 the Department received a Watershed Grant to construct streambank stabilization project in the Lake Fort Smith Watershed. This reduces the amount of sediment entering Lake Fort Smith and impacting the water quality. The project was completed in late 2021 and is being monitored for its effectiveness in reducing sediment loading into Lake Fort Smith

The Department continues to work towards compliance with the Consent Decree and reduction of sanitary sewer overflows (SSOs). The Department has made great strides to reduce wet-weather SSOs and reduce the impact to stormwater pollution. Work is still ongoing to repair the damage from the 2019 Flood.

NCR-2.3: Improve air quality.

- **NCR-2.3.2: Improve miles per gallon (MPG) for all vehicle miles traveled (VMT). Reduce any unnecessary mileage and increase usage of CNG where deemed appropriate.**

2022 Update: All Utility Department vehicles have a LiGo® module installed for tracking their location. If a vehicle idles for an extended period of time, e-mail alerts are sent to the senior management and supervisors to investigate why the vehicle is idling. The next step is to utilize vehicle location when dispatching crews to an emergency call. This will allow vehicles to be driven fewer miles and provide faster response times. The Department is also looking to utilize both hybrid and CNG vehicles when and where deemed appropriate. This began in 2017 when several hybrid vehicles were purchased. Going forward, each type of vehicle purchased will be evaluated to determine if a hybrid or CNG vehicle will meet the particular need of the work performed.

In June 2022 the Department launched PayIt to provide customers a more user friendly online payment platform for their utility bills. This reduces the need to drive to a payment location and thus reduces fuel usage.

In late 2021 the Department began looking at the effectiveness of payment drop boxes. The Department had noticed almost all other utilities had removed the drop boxes. When the cost of the daily pick-up of the payments and the impact of fuel prices and air quality were evaluated, the Department recommended closing the drop boxes. The Board of Directors will decide on whether or not to close most of the drop boxes in September 2022.

Projects Completed from July 2021 to June 2022

The Utility Department has completed multiple projects since the last update. Although some of these may span several months or years, the following projects and their importance show just a small portion of the work in which the Department is engaged.

1. **2015 Consent Decree Cure-In-Place Pipe Project:** This project completed the Consent Decree required remedial work that was not completed in 2019. This project also allowed for some of the work for the 2016 Sanitary Sewer Remedial Measures to be completed at no additional cost.
2. **Peracetic Acid Disinfection Project:** This project achieves wastewater disinfection while reducing the amount of chemicals and electricity (i.e. carbon footprint) that is currently used for this task. This is also a much more cost effective and safer method of disinfection than was previously being used.
3. **Sanitary Sewer Assessment:** This is a requirement of the Consent Decree. Staff test and video the sanitary sewer lines to determine the condition of the pipes. The pipes are scored on a rating of 1 (best) to 5 (worst). The assessment allows the Utility Department to prioritize the repairs of the sanitary sewer system to reduce SSOs and provide a more reliable conveyance of wastewater. Most of this work is being performed in-house to reduce the cost of the Consent Decree.
4. **Bill Payment App:** The Utility Department, in partnership with the ITS and Finance Departments, are looking for a bill payment app to make it easier for citizens to pay their utility bill online.

Top Priority Projects for July 2022 to June 2023

The Utility Department has multiple projects that are currently underway or will begin in the next few months. Although some of these may span several months or years, the following projects and their importance show just a small portion of the work in which the Department is engaged.

Capital Improvement Projects

The capital improvement projects (CIP) are those projects that normally require outside engineering design and construction. The following are some of the projects the Utility Department are either currently performing, or are planned to begin in the next twelve (12) months.

1. **Flood Recovery:** The replacement of the two (2) pump stations lost during the 2019 Flood is important to ensure compliance with the Clean Water Act and to allow for the final submittal for FEMA reimbursable expenses. This reimbursement will allow the City to fund other needed projects. Construction is underway and it is hoped to be completed before the end of 2022. (Estimated construction cost \$5.5 million)
2. **Pump Station #6 Capacity Upgrade:** The rehabilitation and capacity improvements of Pump Station #6 is a requirement for Consent Decree Compliance. The City needs to complete this project to provide continued service to the citizens and reduce the number and volume of sanitary sewer overflows (SSOs). Construction is underway and it is hoped to be completed before the end of 2022. (Estimated construction cost \$3.0 million)
3. **Riverfront Drive Utility Extension:** This project will bring water from the 51 Acre Park down Riverfront Drive and allow for economic development along Riverfront Drive. A sewer pump station will also be installed to provide wastewater collection service for economic development. Construction is underway and it is hoped to be completed before the end of 2022. (Estimated construction cost \$2.2 million)

4. ***Hwy 45 Utility Relocation:*** Prior to the Arkansas Department of Transportation (ARDoT) performing the planned widening of Hwy 45, the water and sewer utility lines are being moved out of the highway's right of way. This is a requirement of ARDoT. The widening of Hwy 45 will provide better traffic flow and lend itself to potential economic growth in that area. (Estimated design and construction cost \$24.6 million)
5. ***Basin 10 & 14 Phase 1 Capacity Project:*** The capacity improvements of Basin 10 & 14 is a requirement for Consent Decree Compliance. This capacity project will be constructed in three (3) phases with Phase 1 beginning in 2022. This project includes upsizing sanitary sewer system pipes to convey the extra water that enters the sewer system during rain events. The City needs to complete this project to reduce the number and volume of sanitary sewer overflows (SSOs). (Estimated construction cost \$14.0 million)
6. ***Design of 48-Inch Drinking Water Transmission Line:*** Completion of the entire design of the new 48-inch drinking water transmission line for Lake Fort Smith Treatment Plant to the eastside of Fort Smith. Completing the design of Phase II through Phase V will allow the construction of the transmission line to begin once funding is available. (Estimated design cost \$2.9 million)
7. ***Towson Utility Relocation:*** Prior to the Arkansas Department of Transportation performing the planned Towson Avenue overlay project, the water and sewer utility lines are being moved out of the road way to reduce the future need to make vital repairs in the road way. This will reduce future traffic issues and allow proper water and sewer for continued service and if needed, future growth along Towson Avenue. (Estimated design and construction cost \$25 million)
8. ***Massard Aeration Basin Design:*** The Massard Water Reclamation Facility's trickling filters are 54 years old and exceeded their useful lifespan. Both trickling filters are structurally failing. The design and construction of an activated sludge aeration basin to replace the aging treatment system will ensure compliance and provide potential for future economic growth by expanding the treatment capabilities of the facility. This project is for the design of the aeration basin with construction of the basin being scheduled for a later date. (Estimated design cost \$2.0 million)
9. ***Lee Creek Transmission Line Casing Extension:*** Prior to the Arkansas Department of Transportation building a new exchange for the I-40 and Hwy 59 east bound exchange, the Utility Department is required to extent the casing around the current 48-inch water transmission line from Lee Creek. (Estimated construction cost \$1 million.)

Operational Projects

Operational projects are work that is of a specific nature that Utility Department staff perform. These are often short term in nature but can span several months or years depending on the scope of the project and the number of staff available to perform the work. The following are some of the projects the Utility Department are either currently performing, or are planned to begin in the next twelve (12) months.

1. ***Water Meter Replacement:*** Complete the replacement of the remaining water meters. This will allow the City to convert to full automatic meter reading (AMR) and prepare the City to transition to advanced metering infrastructure (AMI) which will allow citizens to view water usage and set alerts for potential water leaks.
2. ***Sanitary Sewer Assessment:*** This is a requirement of the Consent Decree. Staff test and video the sanitary sewer lines to determine the condition of the pipes. The pipes are scored on a rating of 1 (best) to 5 (worst). The assessment allows the Utility Department to prioritize the repairs of the sanitary sewer system to reduce SSOs and provide a more reliable conveyance of wastewater.
3. ***Water Leak Mitigation:*** The Utility Department is working to repair water leaks around the City. The Utility Department may use outside contractors to make the water leak repairs to expedite the repair process.

4. **Water Meter GPS Location:** This project includes identifying all current water meters, ensure the information on the meter is correct, and obtaining the GPS coordinates of each meter to better document the meter location in the system. This is important to provide proper reads and locate meter points in the event of a natural disaster.
5. **Pump Station Maintenance Evaluation:** This project will identify current maintenance needs of the wastewater and water pump stations, and update the preventive maintenance check list for each station. This will allow a more proactive maintenance and monitoring approach to reduce pump station down time, repair cost, and extend the useful life of pump station assets.
6. **Analytical Report Generation:** A large amount of data is generated daily, monthly, quarterly, and annually by the Utility Department. The Department is working on determining the need of each piece of data, how best to analyze the data trends, and report the data for both internal staff use, and for greater transparency with the public and regulatory agencies.
7. **Customer Service Quality Assurance Plan:** To ensure quality customer service is provided, a Customer Service Quality Assurance Plan is being developed to monitor the Customer Service employees' interaction with the public. This includes reviewing phone interactions and in-person meetings to ensure customers are treated properly, evaluating the Department's process, and continuing to improve employee interaction with customers.
8. **Energy Saving Study:** The Department is working with CLEAResult, an independent energy consulting firm, to find energy saving projects that may have funding offsets from matching grant funds from OG&E, AOG, and Arkansas Valley Electrical COOP. The hope is to reduce the amount of energy used by the Department, thus reducing cost and possible greenhouse gas emissions associated with electrical power generation.
9. **Professional Development of Staff:** The Utility Department is developing professional development training courses that will be used to develop staff in their current leadership rolls and also begin to instruct, mentor and develop the next generation of Utility Department Leadership.
10. **Water Rate Study:** The Utility Department has not performed a full water rate study since 2010. As the City grows and inflation impacts the Department, it is important to ensure the Department has the tools and financing available to maintain sustainability. It has been twelve (12) years since the last study and eleven (11) years since the last rate study was adopted. The water rate study will also allow the City to comply with Arkansas Act 605 of 2021 which requires a rate study every five (5) years.