

Minutes of the Board of Water/Sewer Commission

Wednesday, January 24, 2024 at 4:00 pm

16C Perry Way, Newburyport, MA 01950

Present Commissioners: Roger Jones, William Creelman, Thomas O'Brien, Paul Suozzo, Daniel Simon

Staff:

DPS Director, Wayne Amaral

Thomas Cusick, Water Superintendent, Water Treatment Plant

Business Manager, Thomas Watkins

1. Appointments/Customer Inquires

- Gary Duclos, 12 Coombs Circle appeared before the Commission. He stated that his water usage was high for his last bill. He stated he had no leak and there must be something wrong with the meter because it is not registering properly. He asked to have someone come out and check the meter. Mr. Watkins gave him his business card to call and schedule the appointment. Commissioner Jones said he looked at the previous four quarters for that time frame and the usage was about the same except for the most recent quarter which would indicate a leak. Mr. Amaral agreed. Mr. Duclos confirmed he had irrigation. He said the irrigation company came out over the summer and found one broken hose and it was fixed.
- Doug Gove, AECOM – Mr. Gove gave a power point update regarding the Indian Hill pipeline project and PFAS. Potential sites for a pump station at the Indian Hill reservoir, including West Shore, East Shore, and city property below the dam were discussed. They decided to simplify the process and reduce the number of alternatives, planning to redo the pair analysis to address unknowns. The Department discussed the criteria for selecting a site for a new project, analyzing seven factors such as capital cost, environmental permits approval, ease of construction, security of site, accessibility, and aesthetic impacts. West Newbury approved the environmental permits. The team found that obtaining environmental permits was the most important factor, followed by capital cost and site approval by West Newbury and site security. The team then assigned a score to each site based on these factors. The Essex County Greenbelt property at the base of the dam, also known as alternative 3, was ranked the highest among the alternatives discussed. The team plans to move forward with this location.

The Department discussed the potential progression of a project, including phase 2, and the need for approvals from West Newbury and other relevant bodies. They decided to proceed with phase 1 work, which involves a submerged pipeline. They also contemplated scheduling a meeting with West Newbury to discuss the project's potential impact on the aesthetics of the reservoir. The team emphasized the importance of involving the city council in future steps. They also discussed funding for replacing motors in the pump station through rebates from National Grid and the possibility of a cost-saving project. The team agreed to proceed with the 30% design for Phase 1 and to wait before moving forward with the design for Phase 2. The Department discussed the advancement of a project in West Newbury despite some resistance, highlighting the potential need for legal assistance due to resistance from the community. Alternative sites for the project were considered, including one on Greenbelt property, but noted the need for permission. They discussed the possibility of the West Newbury town council rejecting their plan and the need to reassess their strategy. Some miscommunication regarding the chosen site for the project was also acknowledged. The Department discussed the process of evaluating four potential sites for a new project, emphasizing the importance of approaching the selection process neutrally and exhausting all other options before considering the underground option. It was decided to take the results of the pair analysis under advisement and consider it as a tool to guide their direction,

not as a final decision. The meeting revolved around the selection of a site for a new pump station. The engineer shared his professional opinion, indicating that the West site would be the best option if not for permit and property ownership issues. The importance of gathering as much information as possible about the project location was emphasized. Despite the challenges, they expressed confidence in the proposed site. The Department also suggested the possibility of revisiting the project if pushback from West Newbury occurs. The conversation ended with an emphasis on the necessity of a comprehensive 30% design review to ensure the chosen site was suitable.

- Brian Sadowski gave a power point presentation on PFAS. The City of Newburyport discussed the current status of PFAS regulation, with a focus on the PFAS 6 limit and the US EPA's revised health advisory limit and draft regulation. Potential solutions, such as the implementation of a granular activated carbon (GAC) treatment system, were also discussed, along with the associated costs. The Department discussed the potential operational costs associated with a new building filter. The Department also discussed the funding situation for projects related to PFAS contamination, noting the high demand for funding and the draft plan from the SRF program. They discussed the pros and cons of funding and constructing a project independently versus through the SRF fund. The group discussed the use of a grant to fund a project, expressing concerns about the potential for the grant's availability to decrease over time. No specific decisions or action steps were identified in this conversation.

2. Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Suozzo made a motion to accept the minutes from December 28, 2023. Commissioner Simon seconded.

Vote: Creelman yes, Jones yes, Suozzo yes, O'Brien yes, Simon yes

3. Business Managers Report

- Mr. Watkins presented and executive summary report outlining the expenditures and revenues that have come in. He stated the Department is on a better track this year than it was last year at this time in terms of revenue. He also attached an analysis on revenue for the past six years. He wanted to point out the months of October and November for FY23. He noted they are high years for revenue coming in. He attributes that to a dry summer and this year was a wet year. Commissioner Simon asked about expenses. Mr. Watkins said we are on an even par with last year. He stated that the Department will be looking at increasing the chemical line for next year's budget. Mr. Amaral stated the cost of getting rid of sludge at the Water Treatment Plant has increased and will need to be looked at.

Commissioner Simon made a motion to accept the Business Manager's report. Commissioner Suozzo seconded.

Vote: Creelman yes, Jones yes, Suozzo yes, O'Brien yes, Simon yes

4. New Business

- Mr. Amaral discussed the CIP draft plan and the ranking of projects, with a focus on the water meter replacement project. The importance of an accurate water meter system was highlighted. Mr. Amaral emphasized that the ranking was subjective and based on what was deemed important. The discussion revolved around the prioritization of projects and their environmental impacts.

Commissioner O'Brien made a motion to include the CIP Draft Plan on the next month's agenda. Commissioner Simon seconded.

Vote: Creelman yes, Jones yes, Suozzo yes, O'Brien yes, Simon yes

- Mr. Amaral talked about a request to purchase a vehicle, which had already been approved by the city council but still required the Commission's approval. Mr. Amaral also presented a memo regarding a

capital improvement plan that included equipment for highway, water, and sewer. The plan was well-received, with members noting its usefulness in future budget discussions. Mr. Amaral said he welcomes any comments on the memo.

Commissioner Simon made a motion to approve the 1-ton truck for \$130,000 to purchase from Water free cash. Commissioner Simon seconded.

Vote: Creelman yes, Jones yes, Suozzo yes, O'Brien yes, Simon yes

- Mr. Amaral asked the Commission why is it you only get an abatement every 10 years? He asked is it something we want to revisit or stick with it. He said residents ask who came up with that number. It was determined that the policy needs to be tightened up.

Commissioner Simon made a motion to accept Mr. Amaral's proposal to rewrite the abatement policy for the terms to be discussed. Commissioner O'Brien seconded.

Vote: Creelman yes, Jones yes, Suozzo yes, O'Brien yes, Simon yes

- Contract for OPM Services for Secondary Clarifier to MPH Project Management. Mr. Watkins stated the project is funded and it is a City generated contract.

Commissioner O'Brien made a motion to accept the contract for OPM Services for Secondary Clarifier. Commissioner Simon seconded.

Vote: Creelman yes, Jones yes, Suozzo yes, O'Brien yes, Simon yes

- Contract for On-Call Engineering Services to Winter GEC, LLC.

Commissioner Suozzo made a motion to approve the contract for On-Call Engineering Services to Winter GEC, LLC. Commissioner O'Brien seconded.

Vote: Creelman yes, Jones yes, Suozzo yes, O'Brien yes, Simon yes

5. Old Business

- Mr. Watkins informed the Commission the RFQ for on-call OPM services for water/sewer projects has been finalized. The Commission reviewed and looked at the scope at the last meeting. He stated he did some tweaking to the up-front language and added the contract. Mr. Watkins is presenting the final version before it is posted on line.
- Contract to Weston & Sampson: Pump Station Maintenance & Repair Services

Commissioner Creelman made a motion to approve the Pump station and Repair Services contract. Commissioner Simon seconded.

Vote: Creelman yes, Jones yes, Suozzo yes, O'Brien yes, Simon yes

6. Confirm Next Meeting

- February 28, 2024 at 4:00 pm

7. Warrant and Contract Signing

Commissioner Simon made a motion to approve the warrants as presented. Commissioner Creelman seconded.

Vote: Creelman yes, Jones yes, Suozzo yes, O'Brien yes

8. Adjournment

Adjourned 6:30 pm.

Commissioner Suozzo made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner O'Brien seconded.

Vote: Creelman yes, Jones yes, Suozzo yes, O'Brien yes

Respectfully Submitted By: Karen Bush