



Established

1996

SPRINGFIELD WATER AND SEWER COMMISSION

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Minutes of Meeting

January 25, 2023

The Springfield Water and Sewer Commission held a hybrid meeting on January 25, 2023 in accordance with Chapter 107 of the Acts of 2022.

Chairman Rodriguez called the meeting to order at 9:06 a.m. and announced the Commissioners that are participating. Secretary for the Commission Jaimye Bartak called the attendance roll:

Daniel Rodriguez, Present
Vanessa Otero, Present
Matthew Donnellan, Not Present

Also Present
Joshua Schimmel, Executive Director
Norman J. Guz, Commission Counsel
Jaimye Bartak, Communications Manager/Secretary for the Commission
Anthony Basile, Comptroller
Domenic Pellegrino, Director of Finance

Participating Remotely
Theo Theocles, Director of Legal Affairs/Chief Procurement Officer
Darleen Buttrick, Director of Engineering
Bob Stoops, Chief Engineer
Frank Zabeneh, Senior Engineer
Steven Frederick, Director of Wastewater Operations
Kristin Monfette, Safety Manager
Ryan Wingerter, Deputy Director of Field Services
Nicole Sanford, Water Resources Manager
Raemarie Walker, Assistant Procurement Officer
Jennifer Boulais, Director of Human Resources
Katie Shea, Educational Outreach and Communications Specialist

Executive Director Josh Schimmel introduced Jennifer Boulais, the new Director of Human Resources.

Business Matters

1. Approve the minutes of the meeting held on December 1, 2022, without reading, because copies were furnished to each member of the Commission for their review.

UPON MOTION DULY MADE BY RODRIGUEZ AND SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER OTERO

**VOTED YES –
COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ
COMMISSIONER OTERO:**

to approve the minutes of the meeting held on December 1, 2022.

2. Approve the minutes of the executive session held on December 1, 2022, without reading, because copies were furnished to each member of the Commission for their review.

UPON MOTION DULY MADE BY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ AND SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER OTERO

**VOTED YES –
COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ
COMMISSIONER OTERO:**

to approve the minutes of the executive session held on December 1, 2022.

New Business

3. Financial Report: Report by Comptroller.

Comptroller Anthony Basile reported a total ending cash balance of \$128.7 million, an increase of \$17 million.

The revenue budget is expected to break even with the addition of a \$2.1 million insurance settlement. The revenue budget is projecting to have a year-end balance of \$99.8 million.

The operations budget is expected to be 98% spent, with unspent budget in personal services attributable to vacancies. All other accounts are spending out close to the plan despite increased cost in materials, supplies and fuel/chemicals due to current market conditions.

There was \$45.6 million of the capital budget expended through December. There are four major projects currently under construction.

There was \$44.1 million in unrestricted cash, representing 34% of cash, which will fluctuate based on next month's spending. There was \$942 million in total assets. The OPEB trust has gained \$200,000 since last year. There was \$715.2 million in total liabilities including \$592 million in long-term debt.

4. Consideration of Acceptance of Funding from Chapter 268 of the Acts of 2022 (Economic Development Bill): Report by Comptroller.

Mr. Basile requested the board accept an earmark of \$100,000 of from Chapter 268 of the Acts of 2022 (state ARPA funding) that was secured by Rep. Ramos.

UPON MOTION DULY MADE BY COMMISSIONER OTERO AND SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ

VOTED YES –

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ
COMMISSIONER OTERO:

to accept the earmark of \$100,000 from Chapter 268 of the Acts of 2022.

5. Consideration of Utility Billing Credit Summary and Summary of Accounts Receivable for November and December 2022: Report by Director of Finance.

Director of Finance Domenic Pellegrino reported net billings of \$7.1 million, collections of \$7.2 million, resulting in an accounts receivable balance of \$5.3 million at the end of December. This is 18% higher than the three-year average.

There were 7,761 accounts with receivables over 60 days old, totaling \$2.4 million, which is similar to last year but higher than pre-pandemic levels.

There were 136 credits issued in November and December for \$19,951.41.

UPON MOTION DULY MADE BY COMMISSIONER OTERO AND SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ

VOTED YES –
COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ
COMMISSIONER OTERO:

to approve credits in the amount of \$19,951.31 as presented.

6. Consideration of CIP Amendment 2023-10: Report by Director of Finance.

Mr. Pellegrino reported on a project that was part of WIFIA program. SRF funding was requested for this project as well, and approved in the Intended Use Plan for \$26.440 million. This amendment would create a new account for this SRF funding.

UPON MOTION DULY MADE BY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ AND SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER OTERO

VOTED YES –
COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ
COMMISSIONER OTERO:

to approve CIP Amendment 2023-10.

7. Consideration of CIP Amendment 2023-11: Report by Director of Finance.

Mr. Pellegrino reported on a close-out of the boat ramp project and shifting of remaining funds to another project for change-orders and to the CIP Reserve.

UPON MOTION DULY MADE BY COMMISSIONER OTERO AND SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ

VOTED YES –
COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ
COMMISSIONER OTERO:

to approve CIP Amendment 2023-11.

8. Consideration of Authorization to Borrow from the MA Clean Water Trust the Sum of \$26,440,000 for the Grit Removal System Upgrade Project: Report by Commission Counsel

Atty. Norm Guz reported that the next step in accepting SRF funding for the Grit Removal Project is to authorize borrowing.

UPON MOTION DULY MADE BY COMMISSIONER OTERO AND SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ

**VOTED YES –
COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ
COMMISSIONER OTERO
COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN:**

that \$26,440,000 has been appropriated for the purpose of financing the upgrade of the Grit Removal System at the Wastewater Treatment Plant (the “Upgrade of the Grit Removal System Project”) including without limitation all costs thereof as defined in Section 1 of Chapter 29C of the General Laws of the Commonwealth, as amended; that to meet this appropriation the Executive Director is authorized to borrow \$26,440,000 and issue bonds or notes therefore under Chapter 40N of the General Laws, that the Executive Director is authorized to borrow all or a portion of such amount from the Massachusetts Clean Water Trust established pursuant to Chapter 29C, as amended and pursuant to the provision of the Massachusetts Clean Waters Act Chapter 21 of the General Laws of the Commonwealth , as amended; and in connection therewith to enter into a loan agreement and/or a security agreement with the Trust and otherwise to contract with the Trust and the Department of Environmental Protection with respect to such loan and for any federal or state aid available for the project or for the financing thereof; that the Executive Director is authorized to enter into a project regulatory agreement with the Department of Environmental Protection, to expend all funds available for the project and to take any other action necessary to carry out the project.

9. Capital Projects Update: Report by Director of Engineering.

Director of Engineering Darleen Buttrick reported that the water treatment plant design is going well, with the recent completion of the value engineering and constructability review. DEP and MEPA are invited to events to learn about the design in early February to keep them informed ahead of permitting.

The 42” pipeline project is at 90% design, with construction starting in spring/early summer, dependent on permitting. The energy dissipation valve is at 30% design.

The clearwell and backwash pump station project is active, with operations for the tie-in planned.

Coordination with other utilities is ongoing for the Locust Street project. The Birnie Avenue transmission main repair is going out to bid.

Director of Wastewater Operations Steve Frederick reported that all three pipes are connected in the river. They are now being covered by matting and backfill. Workers are expected to be out of the river by March. There will be 2 months of dry testing of the new pump station followed by wet testing. For the ICIs, the secondary aeration basin diffusers have all been replaced and the project may be ahead of schedule. The Grit Removal project is at 100% design with construction expected in spring/summer.

10. Consideration of AECOM Amendment No. 1 to Work Order 20A-18 for Final Design and Bidding of Energy Dissipation Valve Facility: Report by Director of Engineering.

Director of Engineering Darleen Buttrick reported on advancement of design of the energy dissipation valve to 90%. Permitting and coordination is proceeding, with bidding documents expected by 2023.

UPON MOTION DULY MADE BY COMMISSIONER OTERO AND SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ

VOTED YES –

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ

COMMISSIONER OTERO

COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN:

to authorize the Executive Director to sign and execute AECOM Amendment No. 1 to Work Order 20A-18.

11. Consideration of Agreement No. 120896 with MassDOT for Improvements on St. James Avenue and St. James Boulevard and Carew Street: Report by Director of Engineering.

Ms. Buttrick reported that Commission is acting as non-participating entity on a MassDOT project on St. James Avenue. This agreement means MassDOT completes the design and work, but the Commission pays for it and inspects it. The Commission retains the right not to accept the work. Bidding for the project will take place around February 15.

Commissioner Otero disclosed that she is on the board of MassDOT. Atty. Guz responded that there is no conflict of interest because there is no personal benefit to Commissioner Otero.

UPON MOTION DULY MADE BY COMMISSIONER OTERO AND SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ

VOTED YES –

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ

COMMISSIONER OTERO:

to approve Agreement No. 120896 with MassDOT.

12. Consideration of Acceptance of CSO Clean-up Grant ISO York Street Pump Station and Connecticut River Crossing Project: Report by Director of Engineering.

Mr. Frederick reported on a grant from DEP secured by the Connecticut River Cleanup Committee with Chicopee and Holyoke. The Commission will receive a grant of \$2,480,500 for the York Street Pump Station project upon acceptance by the Board.

UPON MOTION DULY MADE BY COMMISSIONER OTERO AND SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ

VOTED YES –

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ

COMMISSIONER OTERO:

to accept the CSO Clean-up Grant of \$2,480,500 as presented.

13. Consideration of Intergovernmental Agreement with Granville: Report by Director of Water Operations.

Water Resources Manager Nicole Sanford reported on an intergovernmental agreement with Granville to assist in funding bridge repair. The plan is to repair 3 bridges in Granville, over two perennial tributaries. All of the bridges are in disrepair, and staff use them frequently. The town requested financial assistance and the Commission budgeted \$135,000 in the approved FY23 capital budget.

UPON MOTION DULY MADE BY COMMISSIONER OTERO AND SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ

VOTED YES –

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ

COMMISSIONER OTERO:

to approve the Intergovernmental Agreement with Granville as presented.

14. Consideration of Department of Industrial Accidents Safety Grant: Report by Safety Manager.

Safety Manager Kristin Monfette reported on a third grant received from the Department of Industrial Accidents. The grant is for confined space rescue training specific to the Diversion Gate House.

UPON MOTION DULY MADE BY COMMISSIONER OTERO AND SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ

VOTED YES –

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ

COMMISSIONER OTERO

COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN:

to accept the Department of Industrial Accidents Safety Grant.

15. Water and Sewer Updates: Report by Executive Director.

Mr. Schimmel reported that Bob Stoops and Joe Kruzal are retiring February 10. A new administrative assistant and water operations manager are starting shortly.

Mr. Schimmel reported that WaterISAC reports continued attacks on electrical utilities. IT staff continue to track cyber threats.

Mr. Schimmel reported on a job description for an Educational Outreach Manager to cultivate further educational programs, particularly with Springfield Public Schools. This position will take on more responsibility than the Specialist position with running in-house programs, and serving on the Steering Committee for WaterWORKS, a New England water workforce development initiative. The position will also serve on the communications team. The starting salary will be \$75,000-\$95,000.

UPON MOTION DULY MADE BY COMMISSIONER OTERO AND SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ

VOTED YES –

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ

COMMISSIONER OTERO:

to authorize the Educational Outreach Manager job description as presented.

Mr. Schimmel reported on a job description for the Facilities Maintenance Manager. This position will require a background in trades, facilities, and maintenance. The starting salary range is \$70,000 - \$90,000.

UPON MOTION DULY MADE BY COMMISSIONER OTERO AND SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ

VOTED YES –

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ

COMMISSIONER OTERO:

to authorize the Facilities Maintenance Manager job description as presented.

Mr. Schimmel reported that customer service was sending out delinquent account notices to accounts with a \$100 balance or greater. The notices include information about customer assistance programs.

Educational Outreach Specialist Katie Shea reported on the development of the summer internship program with Springfield Public Schools's Internship and Pathways Program. The summer program will include learning and mentorship opportunities, including exposure to construction activities. Commissioner Otero asked if it would include classroom time. Ms. Shea responded it may include MWWA's Introduction to Water Treatment class.

Ms. Shea also reported that MassAudubon has received a grant from NOAA that will provide field trips to Ludlow Reservoir for 5th graders. Ms. Shea reported that two scholarship recipients completed their STCC course in the fall and another group of three scholarship recipients from Springfield, Agawam and Westfield are starting this week.

Mr. Schimmel reported that there is a \$137 million funding gap for the water treatment plant. Mr. Schimmel has spoken with WIFIA staff, but WIFIA rates are not as low as they were.

Mr. Schimmel reported the legislative coffee hour was successful with active discussion, and stronger relationships as an outcome.

Mr. Schimmel reported that the Water Management Act revisions have been finalized, and there is a potential exemption for the Commission.

The next Board meetings will be held on Tuesday February, 21 at 9 AM and Thursday, March 23 at 9 AM.

16. Consideration and/or action on any other matters that may come before the Commission at this meeting.

None considered.

Executive Session

17. Discussion of New Water Management Act Legislation: Report by Executive Director/Commission Counsel.

AT 10:21 AM UPON MOTION DULY MADE BY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ AND SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER OTERO

**VOTED YES –
COMMISSIONER OTERO
COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ:**

to enter into executive session to discuss litigation strategy related to recent amendments adopted in regard to the Water Management Act. It was determined that holding discussions in open session would be detrimental to the Commission's position litigating actions to said amendments. It was announced that public session will not resume at the end of executive session.



Exhibits considered:

Draft December 1, 2022 Meeting Minutes
Monthly Financial Report
Chapter 268 of Acts of 2022 Economic Development Bill Contact Collection Form
November and December Utility Billing Credit Summary and Summary of Accounts Receivable
CIP Amendment 2023-10
CIP Amendment 2023-11
Capital Projects Schedule 2022 Q4
AECOM Amendment 1 EDV Summary
Non Participating Agreement – Springfield Agr # 120896
Intergovernmental Agreement with Granville
Clean Water Trust Loan Forgiveness Letter
Letter from Gov. Baker Re. Workplace Safety and Education Grant Award
Customer Assistance Program Memorandum
Educational Outreach Manager Job Description
Facilities Maintenance Manager Job Description
Contracts signed by Joshua Schimmel
Cobble Mountain Reservoir capacity chart