



Established

1996

SPRINGFIELD WATER AND SEWER COMMISSION

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Minutes of Meeting

December 17, 2025

The Springfield Water and Sewer Commission held a public meeting on December 17, 2025, in accordance with Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2025.

Chairwoman Otero called the meeting to order at 12:30 PM and announced the Commissioners that are participating. Secretary for the Commission Jaimye Bartak called the attendance roll:

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

Also Present
Joshua Schimmel, Executive Director
Domenic Pellegrino, Director of Finance
Theo Theocles, Director of Legal Services
Norm Guz, Commission Counsel
Anthony Basile, Interim Comptroller
Jennifer Boulais, Director of Human Resources
Michael Hale, UMass Collins Center
Hetal Patel, Candidate for Comptroller
Christopher Gaugherty, Candidate for Comptroller

New Business

1. Report of Initial Screening Committee and Interviews with Candidates for Comptroller Position.

Director of Human Resources Jennifer Boulais introduced Michael Hale of the UMass Collins Center, who was contracted to run the search for Comptroller.

Mr. Hale reported on his background. Mr. Hale provided possible questions to ask the candidates.

Commissioners discussed whether to address residency in the interview.

Executive Director Josh Schimmel reported that the screening committee believed both candidates were capable of executing the Comptroller position. Commissioner Rodriguez noted that his areas of concern are the candidates' ability to handle the politics of the job and skills with business analysis.

- a. Hetal Patel - 1:00 PM

Commissioner Rodriguez welcomed Ms. Patel and explained the position and its role.

Commissioner Rodriguez asked Ms. Patel to provide an example of when she had to provide recommendations and defend her position.

Ms. Patel explained her experience recommending a new financial policy implementation at her current employer.

Commissioner Rodriguez asked Ms. Patel to provide an example of managing a difficult experience during the budget process.

Ms. Patel explained her experience researching a municipal department's request for an increase in a line item.

Commissioner Donnellan asked Ms. Patel to describe her experience with setting utility rates or asset management.

Ms. Patel responded that she does not have direct experience in rate setting, but is involved in the hiring of a consultant for rate analysis and projection.

Commissioner Donnellan asked Ms. Patel if she had experience managing a budget shortfall during a major infrastructure repair.

Ms. Patel answered that she has experience in capital and reserve planning, but has never had to utilize free cash.

Commissioner Rodriguez asked if Ms. Patel has experience in bonding.

Ms. Patel responded that she has such experience due to needing to fill in for a vacant treasurer position.

Commissioner Rodriguez asked if Ms. Patel had experience preparing an annual financial report.

Ms. Patel responded that she oversees an annual report completed by an external auditor.

Commissioner Rodriguez asked if Ms. Patel had experience in business analysis.

Ms. Patel responded that she does not have examples of experience with business analysis and recommendations on investments.

Commissioner Rodriguez asked about her additional experience.

Ms. Patel shared her experience working at different role in municipal finance for a smaller municipality.

Interim Comptroller Anthony Basile asked Ms. Patel to provide an assessment of her ability to adapt from a municipal environment.

Ms. Patel responded that she is collaborative regardless of the environment in which she's working.

Mr. Schimmel asked Ms. Patel to speak to her specific skillsets and how it transfers to the comptroller position.

Ms. Patel responded that her experience in the budgeting process and financial decisions is transferable.

Mr. Schimmel asked Ms. Patel to describe her accounts payable/payroll experience.

Ms. Patel responded that she supervises staff and has helped with payroll in the past when needed.

Commissioner Rodriguez asked Ms. Patel to describe why she is interested in this position, and her vision for the job.

Ms. Patel responded that she realized she had the skillset for a financial leadership role at the Commission when learning about it from a current employee, and that her vision would form around the Commission's goals.

Commission Counsel Norm Guz asked how Ms. Patel would transition to an organization that operates under Chapter 40N and differently than a municipality.

Ms. Patel responded that she has concerns about losing municipal knowledge, and that she would maintain credentials with the Massachusetts Audit Association.

Atty. Guz asked Ms. Patel how she would work with other financial team members.

Ms. Patel responded she would always try to understand the other person's perspective.

Commissioner Rodriguez asked if Ms. Patel had any questions.

Ms. Patel responded that her questions had been answered in earlier discussions with the screening committee.

AT 1:51 PM, UPON MOTION DULY MADE BY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ AND SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN

VOTED YES –

**COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ
COMMISSION DONNELLAN:**

to take a 5-minute break.

AT 2:01 PM, UPON MOTION DULY MADE BY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ AND SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN

VOTED YES –

**COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ
COMMISSION DONNELLAN:**

to re-open public session.

b. Christopher Gaugherty - 2:00 PM

Commissioner Rodriguez described the role of the comptroller and asked for Mr. Gaugherty's experience dealing with politics.

Mr. Gaugherty responded that politics have played a factor in all of his work, including time on the selectboard and as a municipal staff member, and that his current employer depends on him to represent him publicly and calmly under pressure.

Commissioner Rodriguez asked for an example of working through disagreements with a strong leadership team.

Mr. Gaugherty responded that he understands his positions should always be backed up with accurate supporting information.

Commissioner Donnellan asked how he would handle not reaching a solution.

Mr. Gaugherty responded that his response would depend on the consequences at hand.

Commissioner Rodriguez asked Mr. Gaugherty to provide an example of his business analysis experience.

Mr. Gaugherty responded that he has done pro-forma analysis of expansion opportunities for his current work at a public electric utility.

Commissioner Rodriguez asked Mr. Gaugherty about his experience with bonding.

Mr. Gaugherty responded that he had experience in a bond-rating process, and budgeting for bonds.

Commissioner Donnellan asked how Mr. Gaugherty planned to stay current with utility-specific regulations.

Mr. Gaugherty responded that he would stay apprised of GASB regulations and through working with the auditors, as well as participating in professional associations.

Mr. Basile asked for an example of a time when Mr. Gaugherty had to step in to complete a subordinate's work.

Mr. Gaugherty responded that he has stepped in for accounts payable and payroll several times. He believes that short, mid-, and long-range plans should include cross-training and succession planning.

Mr. Schimmel asked Mr. Gaugherty to explain how his current experience would transfer to the comptroller position.

Mr. Gaugherty responded that his budgeting experience at a utility, five-year capital planning, and operational budgeting would transfer well. Mr. Gaugherty stated that he is familiar with processes that require a cost justification.

Commissioner Rodriguez asked if Mr. Gaugherty had experience auditing other water/sewer utilities in his time at an accounting firm.

Mr. Gaugherty responded that he did not, but he has interest and sees opportunity for exploration and growth.

Atty. Guz asked if Mr. Gaugherty anticipated challenges switching to an independent entity governed by Chapter 40N.

Mr. Gaugherty responded that the experience will be different but that he is naturally curious and wants to learn. At his current employer, rates can be adjusted throughout the year, which is different than the Commission.

Atty. Guz asked about his experience working with other financial colleagues.

Mr. Gaugherty responded that he has significant experience working collaboratively on budget documents and preparing for bond ratings.

Atty. Guz asked how Mr. Gaugherty would adjust to working in a larger community with different needs.

Mr. Gaugherty responded that his approach would revolve around transparency and responsibility, and that he has experience with engaging his current service community.

Ms. Boulais asked if Mr. Gaugherty had experience with contentious public meetings.

Mr. Gaugherty responded that he did, particularly as a selectboard member, and that preparation is key.

Commissioner Roriguez asked if Mr. Gaugherty had questions.

Mr. Gaugherty asked if there is anything that could be done in advance to prepare for the position, and what the timeframe of the transition would be if selected.

Mr. Gaugherty left at 2:54 PM and the Commissioners discussed both candidates.

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

VOTED YES –

**COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ
COMMISSION DONNELLAN:**

to authorize the Executive Director to offer the position of Comptroller to Mr. Gaugherty and work out terms and conditions of employment, contingent on reference checks and to report back to the Board.

AT 3:11 PM, UPON MOTION DULY MADE BY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ AND SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN

VOTED YES –

**COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ
COMMISSION DONNELLAN:**

to adjourn.

Submitted By:



Jaimye Bartak, Secretary