



*Established*

*1996*

## SPRINGFIELD WATER AND SEWER COMMISSION

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### Minutes of Meeting

March 23, 2023

The Springfield Water and Sewer Commission held a hybrid meeting on March 23, 2023 in accordance with Chapter 107 of the Acts of 2022.

Chairman Rodriguez called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m. 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  
Norman J. Guz, Commission Counsel  
Jaimye Bartak, Communications Manager/Secretary for the Commission  
Anthony Basile, Comptroller  
Domenic Pellegrino, Director of Finance

#### Participating Remotely

Darleen Buttrick, Director of Engineering  
Frank Zabeneh, Senior Engineer  
Steven Frederick, Director of Wastewater Operations  
Kristin Monfette, Safety Manager  
Ashley Demarey, Deputy Director of Field Services  
Nicole Sanford, Water Resources Manager  
Nicole Boland, Collections Manager  
Raemarie Walker, Assistant Procurement Officer  
Jennifer Boulais, Director of Human Resources  
Katie Shea, Educational Outreach Manager  
Jim Laurila, Director of Water Operations  
Christina Jones, Deputy Director of Water Operations

### Business Matters

1. Approve the minutes of the meeting held on February 21, 2023, without reading, because copies were furnished to each member of the Commission for their review.

Tabled.

## **New Business**

### 2. Financial Report: Report by Comptroller.

Comptroller Anthony Basile reported an ending cash balance of \$121.5 million, which represents a cumulative \$9.8 million increase and a positive cash flow.

The revenue budget has a positive variance of \$640,726, due to increased interest earnings and the insurance settlement for the 42" pipeline. The revenue budget is expected to total the estimated \$100.3 million.

The operations budget is expected to be 97% expended. It is anticipated there will be over \$800,000 unexpended due to vacancies, but there will be shortfalls in other operations accounts, and 98% of the operations budget is expected to be spent. Any remaining operations budget will be rolled into reserve requirements.

Mr. Basile reported that just over \$58 million of the capital budget has been spent to date, with four major projects underway. In coming years it is anticipated that there will be over \$100 million in annual capital expenditures as the Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Renewal Program is fully executed.

There was \$121.5 million in total cash. Of that, approximately 30% is unrestricted, which corresponds to the Commission's financial policies.

There was \$7.2 million in receivables, with \$2.4 million over 60 days old.

There was \$973 million in assets and \$738 million in liabilities, of which \$615 million is long-term debt.

Commission Donnellan asked when shutoff season began. Director of Finance Domenic Pellegrino responded that shutoff season spans March 15-October 31.

### 3. FY 2023 O&M Amendment #1 Transfer of Funds: Report by Comptroller.

Comptroller Anthony Basile reported that some operations accounts have experienced shortfalls due to increased costs in fuel oil, diesel, etc. This amendment would transfer \$116,000 from the Personal Services account to address the shortfall.

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

**VOTED YES –**

**COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ**

**COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN:**

to approve FY23 O&M Amendment #1.

### 4. Consideration of Utility Billing Credit Summary and Summary of Accounts Receivable for February 2023: Report by Director of Finance.

Mr. Pellegrino reported net billings of \$7.7 million, with an accounts receivable balance of \$6.4 million. Outstanding receivables are slightly higher than the 3-year average.

There were 6,528 accounts with receivables over 60 days old, representing \$2.4 million. This is similar to last year, but higher than prior to the pandemic.

Mr. Pellegrino reported that a landlord with a large outstanding balance recently paid \$100,000 due to efforts by Director of Legal Services Theo Theocles. Efforts to collect remaining funds are taking place in housing court.

There were 229 credits issued, totaling \$41,243.36.

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

**VOTED YES –**

**COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ**

**COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN:** to approve credits in the amount of \$41,243.36 as presented.

5. Consideration of CIP Amendment 2023-13: Report by Director of Finance.

Mr. Pellegrino reported on a CIP amendment to close out the Locust Transfer Project design account and move \$203,298.23 to the CIP reserve account.

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

**VOTED YES –**

**COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ**

**COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN:** to approve CIP Amendment 2023-13.

6. Consideration of CIP Amendment 2023-14: Report by Director of Finance.

Mr. Pellegrino reported that three other projects are complete or ended, and \$395,651.58 will be returned to the CIP reserve account.

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

**VOTED YES –**

**COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ**

**COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN:** to approve CIP Amendment 2023-14.

7. Consideration of Third Amendment to Town of Longmeadow Wastewater Treatment Agreement: Report by Commission Counsel.

Commission Counsel Norm Guz reported that the Town of Longmeadow's water contract needs to be extended due to unresolved issues related to border accounts. The wastewater contract is related so should be extended until the border accounts are resolved. Key staff at the Town and the Commission have left, causing the delay.

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

**VOTED YES –**

**COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ**

**COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN:**

to authorize the Executive Director to execute the third amendment to the Longmeadow wastewater contract as presented.

8. Update on LIWAP Program: Report by Executive Director.

Mr. Pellegrino reported that he was in the process of validating accounts provided by Valley Opportunity Council for eligibility for the Low Income Household Water Assistance Program. There have been 366 accounts in Springfield and 12 in Ludlow approved so far.

Commissioner Rodriguez recommended further discussion at the next regular Board meeting.

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

Mr. Schimmel reported on contracts he signed with the Board's authorization.

Mr. Schimmel reported Cobble Mountain Reservoir is full and spilling over the spillway, and that the Diversion Gates are open.

Mr. Schimmel reported that employee turnover is elevated in recent months due to the tight labor market. Mr. Schimmel reported that the Human Resources Director was working on an organizational chart of all job positions and salary ranges. Mr. Schimmel requested authorization to escalate salaries and amend job descriptions for existing positions as necessary. And to create new positions as needed in order to maintain appropriate staff levels, stabilize employee turnover, and provide growth opportunities for existing employees. New or adjusted Director or Deputy Director positions would continue to be presented to the Board for approval.

Commissioner Rodriguez responded that he was comfortable authorizing the Executive Director to define salaries based on a variety of information, as that is beyond the Board's expertise, but that he felt the Board should approve the general organization structure or an increase in headcount. Mr. Schimmel agreed that annually staff would prepare an organizational chart for the Board with all positions. New positions can be created as long as the funded headcount for the FY is not exceeded. Commissioner Rodriguez requested notification if personnel costs would go over budget.

Human Resources Director Jennifer Boulais reported on a proposed position for a Chief Water Treatment Plant Operator. This position would be above the senior plant operator and work with the process control manager and water operations manager. This position is necessary due to the upcoming transition to the new water treatment plant, which will require new SOPs, trainings, and documentation of current processes that need to be changed. The proposed starting salary is \$90-110,000.

Ms. Boulais presented an update to the Director of IT position, with a proposed salary range of \$115-\$130,000, and a new Deputy Director of IT position, with a proposed salary range of \$105-120,000.

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

**VOTED YES –**

**COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ**

**COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN:**

to approve the Chief Water Treatment Plant Operator and Deputy Director of IT positions, and update to the Director of IT position.

Educational Outreach Manager Katie Shea provided an update on the new Pipeline Program.

Mr. Schimmel reported on Customer Service Manager Gloria Williams’s recent “Remarkable Woman Award” by 22 News. Mr. Schimmel cited Gloria’s work helping grandparents raising their grandchildren as an example of the great community-oriented qualities found among Commission staff. Commissioner Donnellan agreed and remarked that he did not know she had written three books, and that she is a wonderful human being.

Mr. Schimmel reported that another public notification about HAA5 will be released April 7.

Mr. Schimmel reported that the Communications Manager submitted an application for a \$5 million federal earmark for the new water treatment plant, and that legislative outreach continues.

Mr. Schimmel reported that he is meeting with the SRF executive committee next week to discuss financing for the new water treatment plant.

Atty. Guz reported that the existing open meeting law is set to expire March 31. If it is not extended, the Commission would have to resume in-person public meetings, and that at least two Commissioners would need to be in-person at a Board meeting, including the Chair.

Mr. Schimmel reported that there were no updates to the Water Management Act (WMA) litigation. Staff requested a determination from DEP about whether the Commission’s water supply would qualify for an exemption under the updated WMA regulations.

Mr. Schimmel reported that the 42” pipeline litigation is ongoing, and there will be an update in a few months.

Mr. Pellegrino reported that he continues to process LIHWAP credits and prepare for budget season.

Mr. Basile reported that his work was centered on preparing for the FY24 budget.

Ms. Boulais reported that she was continuing to work on updating job descriptions and reviewing compensation portions of the budget.

Mr. Schimmel introduced Collections Manager Nicole Boland, and remarked she has been doing a great job since she started in June.

Director of Water Operations Jim Laurila reported that Water Operations staff continued to work on coordination related to the clearwell project, that the design of the new water treatment plant was ongoing. Mr. Laurila reported that the source water quality monitoring project was resuming, and new nozzles and air vents were being installed on the rapid sand filters to prepare for summer demand.

Director of Engineering Darleen Buttrick reported that the 60% design phase of the water treatment plant was underway, and MEPA has provided its approval of the design. There will be informational sessions for prospective bidders in May and June. The EDV facility is at 90% design. The clearwell and backwash pump station project is deep into the construction phase, with pipe connections being made on the West Parish Filters campus. The Locust Street Transfer project will be mobilizing soon. The Court Square main replacement project should be finished before the pancake breakfast. The emergency repairs on Birnie Avenue are completed and being tested, and permanent repairs are at 60% design.

Director of Wastewater Operations Steve Frederick reported that the York Street Pump Station is set to begin commissioning. Bar screen testing and dry testing for sensors and meters are beginning, and pumps will be tested next week. The ICI projects are moving forward, including baffle walls for aeration basin 1. The electrical distribution system project will ramp up later in the year. The grit removal project will be going out to bid in April.

Safety Manager Kristin Monfette reported she is working with Engineering on safety upgrades for confined spaces, trainings, emergency response planning, and updating emergency contact information.

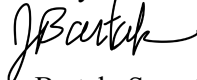
Water Resources Manager Nicole Sanford reported she submitted the annual watershed update to DEP, and is working on coordination with the contracted foresters. The Borden Brook crew is continuing to work on cleaning up recent storm damage.

Deputy Director of Field Services Ashley Demarey reported that crews continue to replace galvanized services and leak detections in the downtown area.

The next meeting is on April 19 at 1 PM to discuss the draft FY24 budget.  
The next regular Board meeting is on April 28 at 9 AM.

Voted to adjourn at 10:15 AM by unanimous consent.

Respectfully submitted,



Jaimye Bartak, Secretary

Exhibits considered:

Draft February 21, 2023 Meeting Minutes  
Monthly Financial Report  
February Utility Billing Credit Summary and Summary of Accounts Receivable  
LIHWAP Contract with Valley Opportunity Council  
CIP Amendment 2023-13  
CIP Amendment 2023-14  
Longmeadow Wastewater Contract Amendment  
Administrative Assistant Job Description  
Advanced Metering Infrastructure Data Analyst Job Description  
Assistant Collections Manager Job Description  
Billing Data Entry Supervisor Job Description  
Chief Operator Job Description  
Deputy Director of IT Job Description  
Director of IT Job Description

Forest Ecologist Job Description  
Contracts signed by Joshua Schimmel  
Cobble Mountain Reservoir capacity chart  
22News Story About Gloria Williams