



Established
1996

SPRINGFIELD WATER AND SEWER COMMISSION

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Minutes of Meeting

April 24, 2025

The Springfield Water and Sewer Commission held a public meeting on April 24, 2025, in accordance with Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2025.

Chairman Rodriguez called the meeting to order at 1:01 PM 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, Present

Also Present
Joshua Schimmel, Executive Director
Domenic Pellegrino, Director of Finance
Theo Theocles, Director of Legal Services and Procurement
Norm Guz, Commission Counsel
Patrick Burns, Comptroller
Ryan Wingerter, Director of Field Service
Darleen Buttrick, Director of Engineering
Steve Frederick, Director of Wastewater Operations
Jennifer Boulais, Director of Human Resources
Rick Gomez, Director of IT

Participating Remotely
Katie Shea, Educational Outreach Manager/Acting Secretary for the Commission
Raemarie Walker, Deputy Director of Finance
James Laurila, Director of Water Operations
Christina Jones, Deputy Director of Water Operations
Frank Zabaneh, Engineering Manager
Ashley Demarey, Deputy Director of Field Services

Business Matters

1. Approve the minutes of the meeting held on March 20, 2025, without reading, because copies were furnished to each member of the Commission for their review.

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

VOTED YES –

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ

COMMISSIONER OTERO
COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN:

to approve the minutes of the meeting held on
March 20, 2025.

Old Business

2. Consideration of Modified Staff Retention Strategy: Report by the Executive Director.

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

VOTED YES –

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ
COMMISSIONER OTERO
COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN:

to remove this item from the agenda.

New Business

3. Financial Update: Report by Comptroller.

Comptroller Patrick Burns reported an ending cash balance of \$132.7 million, with a YTD negative cash flow of \$3.7 million.

The revenue budget has a projected negative variance of \$609,279, which will be absorbed by a \$1.8 million shortfall in expenditures.

The operations budget is 74% spent out, with a projected spend-out of 98% by the end of the fiscal year.

A total of \$54 million of the capital budget has been spent, with \$111 million expected to be spent by the end of the fiscal year, particularly as construction at the treatment plant increases.

There was \$132 million in cash, of which \$29.6 million was unrestricted, representing 22% of overall cash.

There was \$6.6 million in receivables, of which \$2.3 million was over 60 days old.

There was \$1,018,511,339 in assets and \$720,032,231 in liabilities at month's end.

4. Consideration of Utility Billing Credit Summary and Summary of Accounts Receivable March 2025: Report by Director of Finance.

Director of Finance Domenic Pellegrino reported net billings of \$8.3 million, collections of \$9.8 million, and an accounts receivable balance of \$5.6 million.

There were 6,083 accounts with receivables over 60 days old, representing \$2.3 million.

There were 85 credits issued totaling \$17,642.93.

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

VOTED YES –

**COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ
COMMISSIONER OTERO
COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN:**

to approve credits in the amount of \$17,642.93
as presented.

5. Consideration of CIP Amendment 2025-10: Report by Director of Finance.

Mr. Pellegrino reported on a transfer request for \$50,000 from the Provin Mountain Security Fencing Project to the Water Treatment System Improvements account. Revisions to the Provin project reduced costs that can be directed to small capital improvements at the West Parish WTP.

Commissioner Otero asked if there were any more account transfers anticipated, and whether transfers of this size need approval. Mr. Pellegrino responded that any appropriation transfers between capital project accounts needs Board approval. Mr. Schimmel added that transfers are typical at the end of the fiscal year.

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

VOTED YES –

**COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ
COMMISSIONER OTERO
COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN:**

to approve CIP Amendment 2025-10.

**6. Consideration of Award of Executive Director's Authority to Execute Contracts: Report by the
Commission Counsel.**

Commission Counsel Norm Guz discussed a clarification to the policy regarding the Executive Director's authority to execute contracts under \$250,000. The Executive Director does not have authority to execute personal services contract for legal or financial advisors or accounting. The previous language did not include this clarification.

Commissioner Rodriguez asked if the Executive Director must inform the Board in writing. Director of Legal Affairs Theo Theocles responded yes. Commissioner Otero asked if the authority extended to renovations to existing Commission buildings or infrastructure. Mr. Schimmel responded yes, if it is below \$250,000 in cost, but purchasing restrictions are still subject to MGL.

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

VOTED YES –

**COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ
COMMISSIONER OTERO
COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN:**

to approve the revised Award of Executive
Director's Authority to Execute Contracts.

7. Water and Sewer Updates: Report by the Executive Director.

Mr. Schimmel reported that Cobble capacity levels are lower than average, due to utilizing the diversion gates for the power plant project. West Parish staff are not concerned about the levels.

Mr. Schimmel reported that a public notice for HAA5 was issued in early April. The MCL exceedance this quarter was based on the average, with only one site over the MCL.

Mr. Schimmel reported on enhancements to customer assistance programs for FY26. The value of the CAP and Senior/Disabled/Disabled Veteran discounts were proposed to increase. The non-beneficial (leak) abatement limit will be lowered to once every five years. The Disabled Veteran discount eligibility will be lowered to 10% disabled. Staff looked into lowering the Senior discount to age 65, but the cost was too impactful to the rate. The City offers a tax abatement for homeowners over age 65, but \$800,000 of the \$1 million in abatements provided is reimbursed by the state.

Commissioner Rodriguez asked what the cost range would be by lowering the age limit. Mr. Pellegrino responded if the number of discounts increased by 3-4,000 people, at \$126 per discount, the result could be \$400,000 - \$600,000.

Commissioner Otero asked how much the other changes would cost. Mr. Pellegrino responded that the expanded eligibility for Disabled Veterans would cost \$27,000. Commissioner Rodriguez asked why the Commission doesn't qualify for state reimbursement. Mr. Burns responded that Chapter 59 governs taxation on real estate. Atty. Guz added that abatement on real estate is also based on income, but the Commission does not have that threshold.

Commissioner Otero noted that because the Commission is quasi-governmental it tries to act like a government agency, but as a utility it does not have the same capacity as a municipality. Mr. Schimmel agreed and added that the budgets of many municipalities is 50% state funding.

Educational Outreach Manager Katie Shea reported that there were 100 Pipeline Program applications, with 35 interviews being conducted. Hiring decisions will be made in May.

Mr. Pellegrino reported that the proposed budget will be finalized and submitted to the Mayor and City Council on May 1. Postings for shutoff began March 17.

Mr. Burns reported that he is working on cleaning up and closing out year-end purchase orders.

Director of Human Resources Jennifer Boulais reported that it is open enrollment season. Safety, health, and wellness events are being held at individual locations. Work continues to make Checkwriters more efficient.

Director of Engineering Darleen Buttrick reported that tie-in #2 was recently completed at the WTP, with 3 more to go. Tie-in work is behind schedule by about one month. Work on manhole sections and concrete work on tank walls of the 42"/EDV project is continuing, but wrong sections of the pipe arrived. The manufacturer must re-make the incorrect sections, which pushes completion from December to February/March. QA/QC issues have been occurring on several projects.

Ms. Buttrick continued that the lagoon cleaning project will be mobilizing as early as next week. The Locust Street project is wrapping up. The Riverside Road water main will be back online in the next week or two. Mr. Schimmel added that staff met with the City on its investigatory work with respect to the flood wall.

Ms. Buttrick continued that the St. Michaels sewer repair project is out to bid. The FY25 sewer improvements bid will end in early June. The Cobble Mountain hydropower station project is underway now, with site visits to advance design. New conductors are also being added to recently replaced electric

poles connected to the hydropower station. The hydropower plant needs to be offline to do the work safely.

Mr. Theocles reported that there are emerging legal issues with several projects. Collections are addressed at housing court every other Friday, with \$40,000 recently collected from a delinquent landlord. The MWBE/residency utilization numbers for the WTP project look positive.

Director of Wastewater Operations Steve Frederick reported that Eversource will be arriving to finish the electrical wiring project at the wastewater treatment plant. The grit project is ongoing but also experiencing issues with QA/QC. There is a new contract for biosolids this year, with the costs starting to increase. The grit project may positively impact biosolids once it is complete.

Director of Field Services Ryan Wingerter reported that a 1,000' water main replacement is underway in Ludlow. Field Services is also assisting in the flushing of the Riverside Road transmission main.

Commissioner Otero asked about the status of the X project. Ms. Buttrick responded that water and sewer infrastructure will be worked on in the next construction season. Stormwater work was done first.

Mr. Schimmel reported that WIFIA would be completing an on-site inspection on May 16 as part of the auditing process.

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

The next Board meeting will be on Thursday May 22, 2025 1:30 PM.

**AT 1:50 PM, UPON MOTION DULY MADE BY COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN AND
SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER OTERO**

VOTED YES –

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ

COMMISSIONER OTERO

COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN: to adjourn.

Submitted By:

Jaimye Bartak, Secretary

Exhibits:

March 2024 Financial Report

2024 March Finance Director Report

Cobble Mountain Reservoir Capacity Levels

Contracts Signed by Josh Schimmel

CIP Amendment 2025-10