



Established

1996

SPRINGFIELD WATER AND SEWER COMMISSION

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Minutes of Meeting

April 28, 2023

The Springfield Water and Sewer Commission held a hybrid meeting on April 28, 2023, in accordance with Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023.

Chairman Rodriguez called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. and announced the Commissioners that are participating. Secretary for the Commission Jaimye Bartak called the attendance roll:

Daniel Rodriguez, Participating Remotely
Vanessa Otero, Present
Matthew Donnellan, Present

Also Present
Joshua Schimmel, Executive Director
Norman J. Guz, Commission Counsel
Anthony Basile, Comptroller
Domenic Pellegrino, Director of Finance
Steven Frederick, Director of Wastewater Operations

Participating Remotely
Katie Shea, Educational Outreach Manager
Darleen Buttrick, Director of Engineering
Christina Jones, Deputy Director of Water Operations
Kristin Monfette, Safety Manager
Jennifer Boulais, Director of Human Resources
Ryan Wingerter, Director of Field Services
Rick Gomez, Director of IT
Ashley Demarey, Deputy Director of Field Services
Raemarie Walker, Assistant Procurement Specialist
Frank Zabaneh, Senior Engineer
Jaimye Bartak, Communications Manager/Secretary to the Commission

Old Business

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.

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

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

to approve the minutes of the meeting held on February 21, 2023.

2. Update on LIHWAP Program: Report by Executive Director.

(Taken out of order)

Business Matters

3. Approve the minutes of the meeting held on March 23, 2023, 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 RODRIGUEZ

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

to approve the minutes of the meeting held on March 23, 2023.

4. Approve the minutes of the meeting held on April 19, 2023, 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 April 19, 2023.

New Business

5. Financial Report: Report by Comptroller.

Comptroller Tony Basile reported that three-quarters of the way through fiscal year cash is just under \$125.9 million, which represents a current positive variance of \$14.1 million. This variance fluctuates from month to month.

Revenue is slightly above FY23 projections. Revenue from retail water and sewer is slightly down, but will be made up with interest earnings and insurance proceeds.

It is anticipated that 97% of the operating budget will be spent, with \$1.2 million in unexpended debt service appropriations that has been deferred to the next fiscal year to offset the FY24 budget.

Spending from the capital budget is currently mostly going towards four major projects. Just under \$64 million has been spent, and just under \$85 million is projected to be spent for the fiscal year based on the cash flow of all the projects.

Approximately 32% of the cash is unrestricted, and 68% is restricted.

At the end of March, there was \$5.1 million of outstanding receivables. There was just under \$977 million in assets, and \$740 million in liabilities.

6. Consideration of Utility Billing Credit Summary and Summary of Accounts Receivable for March 2023: Report by Director of Finance.

Director of Finance Domenic Pellegrino reported that at the end of March, there were net billings of \$7.1 million, cash collections of \$9.3 million, resulting in a \$4.2 million accounts receivable balance. In March 2022, the accounts receivable balance was \$4.7 million, and in March of 2020, it was \$3.8 million prior to the pandemic.

There were 5,783 accounts with receivables over 60 days, totaling just under \$2 million. The total number of accounts continue to be elevated, however dollar balances are trending towards pre-pandemic balances.

A total of 222 credits were issued for \$36,077.37.

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

VOTED YES –

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ

COMMISSIONER OTERO

COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN:

to approve credits in the amount of \$36,077.37 as presented.

7. Consideration of CIP Amendment 2023-15: Report by Director of Finance.

Mr. Pellegrino reported on a decrease of appropriations for the water conservation program (smart meters), to help fund the water treatment plant. This funding can possibly be reallocated upon securing future funds.

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

VOTED YES –

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ

COMMISSIONER OTERO

COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN:

to approve CIP Amendment 2023-15.

8. Consideration of Amendment #3 to the Service Contract with Veolia: Report by Director of Wastewater Operations.

Executive Director Josh Schimmel reported that the Service Contract is proposed to be amended to include cleaning an additional intercepting sewer that was not included in the original contract.

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

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

to approve Amendment #3 to the Service Contract with Veolia.

9. Consideration of Amendment #4 to the Service Contract with Veolia: Report by Director of Wastewater Operations.

Mr. Schimmel reported that the proposed contract amendment allows for the drawdown of funding for ICIs at the treatment plant for the pre-purchase of materials. The Clean Water Trust has approved the revised drawdown schedule for these funds as well.

Director of Wastewater Operations Steve Frederick described the benefit of securing a price and physical materials so that materials are available when needed, particularly in an environment of supply chain disruptions and materials shortages. Commissioner Otero asked if this was regular practice. Mr. Frederick responded that such decisions are made project by project, since pre-purchasing carries risk in certain situations.

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

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

to approve Amendment #4 to the Service Contract with Veolia.

10. Consideration of Underground Storage Tank ASA Change Order #1: Report by Director of Wastewater Operations.

Mr. Frederick reported that a fuel storage tank in the wastewater plant courtyard was removed, and the contractor discovered additional contaminated soils that they were obligated to report to MassDEP. This resulted in a \$330,000 cost. Veolia reduced their fees as well to help reduce the cost.

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

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

to approve Underground Storage Tank ASA Change Order #1.

11. Consideration of Acceptance of CSO Notification Grant: Report by Executive Director.

Mr. Schimmel reported on the award of a \$70,000 grant for CSO notification to the Commission by MassDEP.

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

VOTED YES –

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ

COMMISSIONER OTERO

COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN:

to accept the grant and authorize the Executive Director to sign the grant agreement as described.

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

Executive Director Josh Schimmel reported that he had delivered the proposed FY24 budget to the Mayor.

Mr. Schimmel reported on a FERC grant application for the power plant, with a potential 30% of cost reimbursement not to exceed \$6 million. Stantec will complete the technical portions of the grant application. Mr. Schimmel requested permission to engage an external attorney to protect the Commission's right to use the hydropower facility and other legal matters for a cost not to exceed \$75,000.

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

VOTED YES –

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ

COMMISSIONER OTERO

COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN:

to engage Attorney Swigger and his firm in regards to pursuing a FERC grant for the hydropower station.

Mr. Schimmel reported on a bill currently in the legislature that would compel MWRA to pay PILOT for land that is currently underneath Quabbin Reservoir and to pay a fee for every 1,000 gallons that is withdrawn to go into a Quabbin Host Community Trust Fund. The bill also includes completing a study to expand the MWRA water supply to the Pioneer Valley, which is likely financially and technically unfeasible. This bill could eventually impact all water suppliers with water supplies located outside of their service area. The Commission engages with its watershed communities, most recently by doing pro-bono roadwork.

Mr. Schimmel commented on another bill that would re-open Cobble Mountain Road for pedestrian and equestrian traffic. Testimony and comment letters are being prepared in the case a public hearing is announced, and guidance for our legislators about protecting our water supply is also being developed. Commissioner Otero suggested outreach to the press to educate the public about the importance of protecting public water supplies.

Mr. Schimmel reported on April visits with the Massachusetts federal delegation to advocate for water infrastructure funding and support for low-income water customer assistance programs.

Educational Outreach Manager Katie Shea reported that the Pipeline Program had 43 total applicants. Interviews were conducted at high schools. Other outreach activities include recent events at the Springfield Museums, Sustainathon at STCC, hosting 5th graders at Ludlow Reservoir with MassAudubon, and hosting 7th graders from Renaissance School at the wastewater treatment plant. Mr. Schimmel added he is on the committee of a New England water workforce effort called WaterWORKS that recently launched.

2. Update on LIHWAP Program: Report by Executive Director.

(Taken out of order)

Attorney Norm Guz distributed SB894, which amends a statewide LIHWAP program. Area legislators should be encouraged to support and fund this legislation. State budget proposals for the LIHWAP program were discussed.

Mr. Pellegrino shared that approximately 3,700 customers received LIHWAP in Springfield and Ludlow this year. There are currently 573 approved CAP recipients. Mr. Pellegrino described potentially modifying the overall CAP allowance program for the next fiscal year with a goal to serve all homeowners receiving fuel assistance that qualify under our CAP program. Mr. Schimmel described potential changes to the CAP program that would mitigate the cost of the program, including limiting the CAP allowance to up to 25% or 50% of a customer's average annual bill.

Commissioner Otero noted that utilization of fuel assistance funds can spike up and down over the years, so the CAP program should likewise be similarly evaluated year to year.

Mr. Guz noted that with more data from Valley Opportunity Council, fuel assistance customers can be contacted with targeted outreach for the CAP.

Discussion continued about budget approaches for revisions to the CAP in FY24, including a budget designation up to \$450,000 for CAP, with individual credits up to \$250 not to exceed 25% or 50% of a customer's average annual bill. Mr. Schimmel recommended presenting more details on the proposed revisions to the CAP for FY24 and their potential outcomes at the May Board meeting, with the Board voting on the revisions in June.

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

The next regular Board meeting is on May 18 at 9 AM.

Voted to adjourn at 10:37 AM by unanimous consent.

Respectfully submitted,



Jaimye Bartak, Secretary

Exhibits considered:

Amendment #3 to the Service Contract with Veolia
Amendment #4 to the Service Contract with Veolia
Underground Storage Tank ASA Change Order #1
Monthly Financial Report
Utility Billing Credit Summary and Summary of Accounts Receivable for March 2023
CIP Amendment 2023-15
Contracts Signed by Josh Schimmel
Charts of Cobble Mountain Capacity
Article About Cobble Mountain Road from *The Reminder*
Board Draft Meeting Minutes from February 21, March 23, and April 19, 2023