



Established

1996

SPRINGFIELD WATER AND SEWER COMMISSION

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Minutes of Meeting

May 18, 2023

The Springfield Water and Sewer Commission held a hybrid meeting on May 18, 2023, in accordance with Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023.

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, 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
Theo Theocles, Director of Legal Services
Jaimye Bartak, Communications Manager/Secretary to the Commission

Participating Remotely

Katie Shea, Educational Outreach Manager
Darleen Buttrick, Director of Engineering
Steven Frederick, Director of Wastewater Operations
James Laurila, Director of Water Operations
Christina Jones, Deputy Director of Water Operations
Kristin Monfette, Safety Manager
Jennifer Boulais, Director of Human Resources
Rick Gomez, Director of IT
Ashley Demarey, Deputy Director of Field Services
Raemarie Walker, Assistant Procurement Specialist

Business Matters

1. Approve the minutes of the meeting held on April 28, 2023, without reading, because copies were furnished to each member of the Commission for their review.

Commissioner Donnellan noted a necessary correction to item 4.

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 28, 2023 with a correction of item 4.

New Business

2. Financial Report: Report by Comptroller.

Comptroller Tony Basile reported \$123.6 million in cash at the end of April, with an increase in cash flows of \$11.8 million YTD.

There is projected \$101.1 million in total revenue for the fiscal year, which is \$1.4 million more than anticipated due to interest earnings and insurance proceeds. There is \$2.7 million in interest earnings projected due to higher interest rates.

The operating budget is expected to be 97% expended, with the variance reflecting unspent funding in the debt service. This \$1.2 million is to be utilized and will offset the debt service and reserve requirements in the FY24 budget.

In the capital budget, \$65.5 million has been expended on four major ongoing projects.

There was \$123.6 million in cash, of which approximately 30% is unrestricted and used for working capital and advances.

There was \$6.6 million in receivables, of which \$2.2 million is over 60 days old. There were \$980 million in total assets. There is just over \$6 million in the OPEB trust. There is \$735 million in long-term debt.

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

Director of Finance Domenic Pellegrino reported there was \$6.9 million in net billings, \$5.3 million in payments, with an accounts receivable balance of \$5.8 million. Mr. Pellegrino noted that the accounts receivable balance is higher than the three-year average and that it was also elevated because April 28 is the last business day reflected.

There were 5,732 accounts with receivables over 60 days old representing \$1.7 million. There were 167 credits issued for a total of \$23,558.32.

Commissioner Otero asked the status of LIHWAP funding. Mr. Pellegrino responded that there were 3,800 applicants in the database and approximately 70% have been reviewed. The goal to review them all by June 30. The LIHWAP program pays arrears first. The credit has been scaled down from \$450 to \$200.

Commissioner Otero asked how the state identifies arrears. Mr. Pellegrino responded that the Commission identifies them through the state portal. Approximately 85-95% of applicants are current

with their bill. Commissioners Otero and Rodriguez remarked that that trend shows that water is being prioritized among household bills, even in households of limited means.

Commissioner Otero noted that the existing CAP program could be supplemented with state LIHWAP funding should it be passed in the state budget.

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 \$23,558.32 as presented.

4. Consideration of Updates to the CAP: Report by Director of Finance.

Executive Director Josh Schimmel discussed proposed changes to the CAP program based on existing data. Mr. Pellegrino noted that most CAP customers' annual bills are under \$500. If the CAP program were adjusted to offer a credit of 25% of the average annual bill up to \$250, the program would reach more people as the annual credit would be approximately \$103.

Commissioner Otero suggested coordinating with VOC to mail CAP applications to their LIHEAP mailing list. Commission Counsel Norm Guz suggested considering sending a separate mailing from the Commission itself in order to help customers understand it is a Commission (not state) program.

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

VOTED YES –

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ

COMMISSIONER OTERO

COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN:

to approve the revised CAP program for FY24 as Presented.

5. Consideration of Awarding the City of Springfield Paving Alternate No. 1 Work: Report by Director of Legal Services and Procurement.

Director of Procurement and Legal Services Theo Theocles reported on bidding for the annual paving contract with the City of Springfield. This year the Commission opted to have an alternate separate contract for Commission work. The best bid was Palmer Paving for \$522,106, subject to approval of the FY24 budget.

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

VOTED YES –

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ

COMMISSIONER OTERO

COMMISSIONER D:

to approve the award of the City of Springfield Paving Alternate No. 1 Contract as presented.

6. Consideration of Contracts with Atty. Liebel, Atty. Murphy, Murphy McCoubrey, Atty. Leiter, Atty. Chadwell for Legal Services: Report by Commission Counsel.

Atty. Guz reported on the renewal of contracts for Atty. Liebel, Atty. Murphy, Murphy McCoubrey, Atty. Leiter, Atty. Chadwell for FY24 legal services related to claims, disability/bargaining, general counsel, bid protests/construction contracts, and personnel/human resources, respectively. All contracts will remain at the same amount and hourly rate.

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

VOTED YES –

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ

COMMISSIONER OTERO

COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN:

to approve the contracts for FY24 legal services as presented.

7. Consideration of Contract with Peter Karalekas for Professional Services: Report by Executive Director.

Mr. Schimmel reported on a contract renewal for professional consulting services by Peter Karalekas related to water operations.

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

VOTED YES –

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ

COMMISSIONER OTERO

COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN:

to approve FY24 Contract with Peter Karalekas for Professional Services.

8. Consideration of Contract with Jim Constantino for Professional Services: Report by Executive Director.

Mr. Schimmel reported on a contract with retired Commission employee Jim Constantino to resolve border accounts with Longmeadow.

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

VOTED YES –

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ

COMMISSIONER OTERO

COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN:

to approve contract with Jim Constantino for Professional Services as presented.

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

Mr. Schimmel reported that Cobble Mountain Reservoir is currently full.

Mr. Schimmel reported that the Communications Manager presented in-person testimony in Boston on a bill to re-open Cobble Mountain Road. Rep. Puppolo and Mayor Sarno also sent in comment letters.

Mr. Schimmel reported there is currently an \$8 million line item from Sen. Oliveira in the Senate budget for the new water treatment plant. The line item must survive the reconciliation process.

Mr. Schimmel reported an application for a \$5 million earmark for the water treatment plant was submitted by the Commission and presented to the federal Committee on Environment and Public Works for appropriations by Senators Warren and Markey. The Western Massachusetts regional director from Sen. Warren's office will visit West Parish Filters next week.

Educational Outreach Manager Katie Shea reported that there were approximately 45 applicants for the Pipeline Program and 12 interns are being selected. Ms. Shea reported there is a leadership lunch scheduled for August 2. Commissioner Otero asked about the types of students applying. Ms. Shea responded a mix of students wishing to enter college and the labor force.

Mr. Schimmel reported that the Clean Water Trust issued \$15 million in two separate loans for the water treatment plant. The loans include some debt forgiveness.

Director of Engineering Darleen Buttrick reported that the water treatment plant is at 60% design. Local permitting is currently underway, and informational session for prospective bidders are also being held. The sessions are to ensure that any bidders are DCAMM-certified at the necessary contract limits. The raw water transmission main and energy dissipation valve are in final design. Pump materials for the backwash pumps are delayed, but the project is expected to be complete in the fall. The Locust Street project is ongoing. FY23 sewer improvements are also ongoing, and work is now complete on Main Street at Court Square. The Bernie Avenue pipeline is online at a reduced rate, and 60% design for its replacement is currently being peer-reviewed. An alternatives analysis for the hydropower plant was completed and will be used for a conceptual design of the recommended alternative. Staff are currently working on a Sect. 240 FERC grant for the hydropower station. Repairs to Provin Mountain are at 90% design.

Director of Wastewater Operations Steve Frederick reported that the York Street Pump Station is currently undergoing wet trials. Issues with the new influent structures are currently being addressed. At the wastewater treatment plant, basin #2 is currently offline for upgrades. The already-upgraded basins are working well. Bids for the grit removal project are incoming.

Director of Field Services Ryan Wingerter reported that Field Services are conducting shutoffs and turn-ons as necessary. There have been 417 galvanized service replacements. The meters group is working on replacing some traditional meters with smart meters at strategic sites.

Mr. Theocles reported that procurement has been busy with an aggressive capital schedule, including for the grit removal project and informational sessions for the new treatment plant.

Mr. Basile reported that the Commission’s auditor Melanson Heath has been acquired by Markum, a national firm, though no major changes are expected at this point.

Mr. Pellegrino reported that a bond resolution review is in the final stages. This occurs every three years.

Safety Manager Kristin Monfette reported that training is underway for full-time hires and summer interns/Pipeline Program interns. Coordination with Engineering is also ongoing for several safety retrofit projects (“prevention through design”).

Director of Human Resources Jennifer Boulais reported that she is working with the Safety and Educational Outreach managers on building a thorough, welcoming, and inclusive workplace culture and community. Ms. Boulais reported that she is also working on onboarding summer employees. Commissioner Otero asked about hiring. Ms. Boulais reported there are many new hires in the queue, and that managers have been happy with the quality of the new hires. Commissioner Otero recommended that an upcoming event at Springfield College with the Secretary of Labor and Education may be a good opportunity to incorporate utilities in the talent and workforce discussion.

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

Commissioners considered a proposed salary increase of 6.4% for the executive director.

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

VOTED YES –

COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ

COMMISSIONER OTERO

COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN:

to approve a salary increase of 6.4% for the executive director.

Adjourned by unanimous vote at 10:16 AM.

Submitted By:



Jaimye Bartak, Secretary

Exhibits considered:

Financial Report

Jim Constantino Consultant Contract

2023 April Finance Director Report

Proposed Updates to the CAP Program

Legal Services Contracts & Summary

Peter Karalekas Contract

Contracts Signed by Josh Schimmel

City of Springfield Paving Alternate No. 1 Work Award

Cobble Mountain Reservoir Capacity