



*Established*

*1996*

## SPRINGFIELD WATER AND SEWER COMMISSION

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### Minutes of Meeting

November 21, 2024

The Springfield Water and Sewer Commission held a public meeting on November 21, 2024, in accordance with Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023.

Chairman Rodriguez called the meeting to order at 10:03 AM 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  
Anthony Basile, Comptroller  
Domenic Pellegrino, Director of Finance  
Theo Theocles, Director of Legal Services and Procurement  
Jaimye Bartak, Communications Manager/Secretary to the Commission  
Norm Guz, Commission Counsel  
Darleen Buttrick, Director of Engineering  
Jennifer Boulais, Director of Human Resources  
Steve Frederick, Director of Wastewater Operations  
Ryan Wingerter, Director of Field Services  
Christina Jones, Deputy Director of Water Operations  
Rick Gomez, Director of IT

Participating Remotely  
Mike Olkin, Deputy Director of IT  
Raemarie Walker, Deputy Director of Finance  
Frank Zabaneh, Engineering Manager  
Kristin Monfette, Safety Manager  
Katie Shea, Educational Outreach Manager  
Christina James, Customer Service  
Nicole Boland, Customer Service Manager  
Kristin Monfette, Safety Manager

### **Business Matters**

1. Approve the minutes of the meeting held on October 24, 2024, 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 minutes of the meeting held on  
October 24, 2024.

2. Approve the minutes of the executive session on October 24, 2024, 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 minutes of the executive session held  
on October 24, 2024.

**New Business**

3. Financial Update: Report by Comptroller.

Comptroller Anthony Basile reported an ending cash balance of \$136.8 million, which represents an approximate \$400,000 positive cash flow cumulatively for the fiscal year. This will fluctuate over the year.

There is a projected negative revenue variance of \$2.4 million, reflecting decreased water and sewer billings of 4-5%. This will result in a \$2.4 million shortfall in revenue compared to the original estimate.

There is a projected unexpended operational budget balance of \$2.3 million, which will be managed throughout the fiscal year with the goal of a balanced budget.

Commission Counsel Norm Guz asked about revenue from power generation. Mr. Basile responded that the \$920,000 in estimated revenue from power generation will not be reached this year. The new projection for the year is \$450,000. Mr. Basile continued that spending may have to be curtailed to meet the revenue shortfall, possibly including delaying OPEB contributions.

Executive Director Josh Schimmel asked about how delayed OPEB contributions would impact the Commission's bond rating. Atty. Guz responded that rating agencies will be concerned if the Commission stopped making contributions to the OPEB Trust Fund and about decreasing revenue that results in operating deficits. Commissioner Rodriguez requested seeing separate line items for stabilization fund and OPEB contributions.

Mr. Basile reported that just under \$14 million has been spent from the capital budget so far, with a projected spend of \$120 million. There is \$338 million in approved appropriations.

Mr. Basile reported there was \$136 million in total cash, and that unrestricted funds represent 30% of overall cash.

There was \$5.6 million in receivables of which \$1.5 million was over 60 days old.

There was over \$1 billion in assets and \$730 million in liabilities.

4. Financial Policy Certification FY24: Report by Comptroller.

Mr. Basile reported that the Commission's financial policies for fiscal year 2024 are in compliance. As is the policy, the Comptroller and the Finance Director annually will certify that these policies are in compliance. A memo was provided to the Board.

5. Consideration of Governance Letter from Marcum FY24: Report by Comptroller.

Mr. Basile reported the governance letter is a standard procedure and lays out what Marcum presented to the Board in their audit, including that the Commission is following proper accounting procedures and that its financial statements are accurate.

6. Consideration of Utility Billing Credit Summary and Summary of Accounts Receivable October 2024: Report by Director of Finance.

Director of Finance Domenic Pellegrino reported net billings of \$9.7 million, collections of \$11.8 million, with a resulting accounts receivable balance of \$4.4 million.

There were 5,002 accounts receivable over 60 days old totaling \$1.5 million.

There were 63 credits issued totaling \$10,215.43.

**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 \$10,215.43 as presented.

7. Consideration of Engagement Letter for Commission Municipal Advisor Del Rio Advisors LLC: Report by Director of Finance.

Mr. Pellegrino reported on the renewal of its engagement with Municipal Advisor Del Rio Advisors LLC. They are paid on an as-needed basis and will be utilized for the general revenue bonds issued. They are not utilized for Massachusetts Clean Water Trust transactions.

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

**VOTED YES –**

**COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ  
COMMISSIONER OTERO**

**COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN:**

to approve the renewal of the engagement letter with Municipal Advisor Del Rio Advisors LLC.

8. Consideration of CIP Amendment No. 2025-05: Report by Director of Finance.

Mr. Pellegrino reported on a CIP amendment to move \$271,000 from the galvanized service replacement program account to the distribution system rehabilitation account to upgrade water mains in Ludlow.

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

**VOTED YES –**

**COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ**

**COMMISSIONER OTERO**

**COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN:**

to approve CIP Amendment No. 2025-05.

9. Consideration of CIP Amendment No. 2025-06: Report by Director of Finance.

Mr. Pellegrino reported on a CIP amendment to move \$1.1 million of WIFIA funds to the Birnie Avenue transmission main improvement project for emergency repairs. Commissioner Otero asked when the work would commence. Director of Engineering Darleen Buttrick responded fall 2025, as the Birnie Avenue work must wait until the Riverside Drive work is complete.

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

**VOTED YES –**

**COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ**

**COMMISSIONER OTERO**

**COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN:**

to approve CIP Amendment No. 2025-06.

10. Consideration of Change Order No. 1 to Contract 20240050 Birnie Ave Water Transmission Main Improvements Project: Report by Director of Engineering.

Ms. Buttrick reported on Change Order No. 1 to Baltazar Contractors Inc. Contract No. 20220050 for the Birnie Avenue Water Transmission Main Improvements Project.

This change order includes additions to the contract to complete emergency repairs to the existing 36” transmission main at the intersection of Riverside Road and Orchard Street. The work includes test pits, design and installation of support of excavation for the work in the vicinity of the Army Corps of Engineers flood wall, floodwall monitoring, procurement and installation of a 36-inch butterfly valve and ductile iron restrained pipe and fittings, and associated traffic control, cathodic protection, testing, disinfection, and sampling.

In addition, the change order includes the addition of 365 calendar days to the contract to accommodate the emergency work and sequence the Birnie Avenue work to occur after the emergency repairs as well as outside times of peak system demand.

The change order value is \$1,133,578.74, which will result in a change in the contract price from \$4,650,790.00 to \$5,784,368.74. The time extension of 365 calendar days results in a new contract completion date of June 23, 2026.

Commissioner Rodriguez asked about the repair of the flood wall. Ms. Buttrick responded that the City has a contract with GZA to evaluate the issues, and that the Commission is sharing information with the City on any findings its consultant produces.

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

**VOTED YES –**

**COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ  
COMMISSIONER OTERO  
COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN:**

to authorize the Executive Director to execute Change Order No. 1 to Contract 20220050 with Baltazar Contractors, Inc.

11. Consideration of Amendment No. 3 to AECOM Task Order No. 20A-17 OPM for Backwash PS and Clearwell: Report by Director of Engineering.

Ms. Buttrick reported on Amendment No. 3 to Task Order No. 20A-17 with AECOM for Owners Project Manager of the Backwash Pumping Station and Storage Tanks at West Parish Filters. The amendment includes additional scope of work related to the construction schedule extension and assistance with warranty items including correspondence, reviews, and additional onsite assistance. The amendment value is \$16,700, and completion of the task order activities is anticipated by January 2025.

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

**VOTED YES –**

**COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ  
COMMISSIONER OTERO  
COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN:**

to authorize the Executive Director to execute Amendment No. 3 to Work Order 2004-20A-17 with AECOM Technical Services, Inc.

12. Consideration of EPG Task Order No. R-21-01 \_EPG\_07 Provin Mountain Cleaning and Inspection: Report by Director of Engineering.

This item is for consideration of Task Order No. 7 with Environmental Partners Group for Cleaning and Inspection of Provin Mountain Reservoir Tanks 2, 3, and 4. The activities in this task order include removal of debris and cleaning of the tanks via divers with a vacuum sediment removal system, disposal of sediments removed, and inspection of each tank in accordance with MassDEP guidelines. The task order value is \$328,813.40. The project is anticipated to be complete by February 2025.

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

**VOTED YES –**

**COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ  
COMMISSIONER OTERO**

**COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN:**

to authorize the Executive Director to execute Task Order No. 07 with Environmental Partners Group, Inc.

13. WIFIA Quarterly Report: Report by Director of Engineering.

Ms. Buttrick reported on the WIFIA Program Quarterly Status Report for the third quarter of 2024. As of September 30th, \$251.6 million of the total WIFIA program has been expended; of that, approximately \$31 million of the WIFIA loan has been expended. Spending trended behind what was budgeted in this quarter due to delay in the first pay application for the West Parish WTP project, as well as additional planning and material procurement needed for the final tie-in of the Locust Transfer project.

Ms. Buttrick reported several significant milestones occurred during this quarter, including award of the contract for the West Parish WTP as well as award of the contract for the 42” transmission main and energy dissipation valve project. In addition, the contractor for the Provin Mountain Contract 1 improvements project achieved substantial completion. In addition, warranty work was completed for the West Parish Backwash Pump Station project, and we anticipate final completion in the next quarter.

Ms. Buttrick reported that other updates include the Locust Street project where the contractor is working to prepare for the final and most significant tie-in of the project, which is anticipated to be completed in the next quarter, weather pending. This important tie-in will connect the Main Intercepting Sewer to the new 72-inch river crossing that was installed as part of the York Street Pump Station and River Crossing project. Looking ahead, substantial completion is anticipated in the next quarter for the Provin Mountain Contract 1 improvements project, the FY24 water improvements, and the FY24 sewer improvements project.

Commissioner Otero asked when work on replacing water infrastructure the X would begin. Mr. Schimmel replied not until the next construction season.

14. Consideration of Kleinfelder Task Order 54 Under Contract R-21-01-KLF: Report by Director of Wastewater Operations.

Director of Wastewater Operations Steve Frederick reported on a contract to complete 85 linear feet of sewer assessment and cleaning as part of the Asset Management and Maintenance Program, which has been ongoing for 12 years. The program is used to target funding for infrastructure improvements.

Mr. Schimmel added that the program also helps reduce CSOs because pipe capacity is maximized through cleaning and any issues are known, saving the Commission money in the long run. Commissioner Rodriguez noted that not many utilities have such a program

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

**VOTED YES –**

**COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ**

**COMMISSIONER OTERO**

**COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN:**

to approve Kleinfelder Task Order 54 Under Contract R-21-01-KLF.

15. Consideration of 51st Supplemental Resolution for Financing of the Replacement of the West Parish Water Treatment Plant with the MA Clean Water Trust: Report by Commission Counsel.

Atty. Guz reported that the 51<sup>st</sup> supplemental resolution authorizes the Commission to issue a BAN of \$15 million at 0% interest, which will be finalized into a bond of 2% interest with a 20-year term with the SRF. There may be loan forgiveness associated with the bond at the time of issuance. The SRF funding is for the new water treatment plant.

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

**VOTED YES –**

**COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ**

**COMMISSIONER OTERO**

**COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN:** to approve the 51<sup>st</sup> Supplemental Resolution.

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

Mr. Schimmel reported that Cobble Mountain Reservoir levels are in normal ranges for this time of year.

Mr. Schimmel reported on a reorganization of customer service.

Mr. Schimmel reported on an upcoming meeting with wholesale customers about the risks associated with the new water treatment plant, including limitations to water production during the tie-in. This would only be the case if there is an infrastructure issue. Commissioner Rodriguez asked if there would be any warning time. Deputy Director of Water Operations Christina Jones responded there should be a few days warning due to storage at Provin. Peak demands often only occur for a day or two a year.

Mr. Schimmel reported on the Work for Water initiative among utilities in New England.

Mr. Schimmel reported that an update to the Administrative Order for CSOs extends its timeline to April of next year. A financial capability analysis is being updated in preparation for EPA's review of the Commission's CSO program.

Newly hired Comptroller Pat Burns will start with the Commission on December 9.

Mr. Schimmel reported on discussions about shutoff procedures. All outstanding charges, including the current balance from the past month, are due to restore service after a shutoff. This information could be better conveyed in postings and advisory letters.

Commissioner Otero asked why the current month's charges are also due to restore service, when there still might be some time left to pay that bill. Mr. Pellegrino explained that current balances are also due to prevent the account from cycling back into the shutoff program. All charges are technically "due" upon receipt, but the Commission provides a month before the bill is delinquent. Mr. Pellegrino also added that the Commission can logistically only shut off 20 customers in one day.

Commissioner Otero asked why the collection notification effort is so intensive. Atty. Guz responded it is to give customers ample opportunity to respond and also for due diligence in case accounts end up in housing court. The Commission's Rules and Regulations are applied to all customers of all types across the board.

Atty. Guz noted that currently, of the 5,000 accounts overdue, 4,249 are under \$200, and 466 are over that amount. Outreach has been effective. Customer Service Manager Nicole Boland added that of 20 shutoffs/day, 15-17 people tend to pay off the account in full that day.

Commissioner Rodriguez requested a report of how many shutoffs took place each month, and a way to track repeat offenders.

Director of Field Services Ryan Wingerter reported that the winter moratorium has set in, so work is diverting to easements.

Mr. Basile reported on preparations for the budget process.

Ms. Buttrick reported that Walsh is mobilizing for construction of the new plant, and that concrete is being poured for the EV structure.

Mr. Frederick reported that the grit project is moving more slowly than anticipated and there are a few changes orders associated with the project. Public health officials had their annual conference in Springfield and toured the wastewater treatment plant. Pathfinder Regional School's plumbing program also received a tour. The biosolids contract will sunset soon and discussions on extending for 3, 5, or 10 years are underway. A phase 1 biosolids study is nearing completion.

Mr. Pellegrino reported on an RFP for an online payment and e-billing solution that is currently receiving interest. The contract will be awarded at the end of December.

Director of IT Rick Gomez reported that cybersecurity remains a top issue. A unidirectional gateway for SCADA is being developed that will mirror the HMI screens in the control room and assist with emergency response.

Ms. Jones reported that the region is in a Level 3 Critical Drought, 1 level below the worst category. The Commission is not subject to water restrictions as outlined in the State Drought Management Plan, and maintains its own Drought Management Plan. The reservoir is still at higher levels than it was in 2020. The Commission's drought forecasting tool anticipates the reservoir to remain at normal levels by spring. A wildfire response plan is being developed. The scholarship program is open again for the STCC online class and is receiving more interest than normal.

Mr. Schimmel reported that the WMA lawsuit will have to go through the MA appeals court based on a decision by the MA Superior Court.

Director of Human Resources Jen Boulais reported on the hiring of a new payroll specialist.

Mr. Schimmel reported that staff are preparing for an internal boil water order exercise.

Atty. Guz reported that litigation related to the PLA has been dismissed with prejudice, and all parties are paying their own legal expenses. The trade unions have withdrawn their appeal filed with the Mass. Appeals court, so the case is also concluded.

The next Board meeting will be Friday December 13 at 10 AM.

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

None considered.



**AT 12:01 PM, UPON MOTION DULY MADE BY COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN AND  
SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ**

**VOTED YES –**

**COMMISSIONER RODRIGUEZ  
COMMISSIONER OTERO  
COMMISSIONER DONNELLAN:**

to adjourn.

Submitted By:



Jaimye Bartak, Secretary

Exhibits:

October 2024 Financial Report  
2024 October Finance Director Report  
Cobble Mountain Reservoir Capacity Levels  
Contracts Signed by Josh Schimmel  
Springfield Water and Sewer Commission Eng Agmt - Discl Ltr (10-25-24).pdf  
Amendment 2025-05 (Tnfs 12B-2026 to 12B-0005).pdf  
Amendment 2025-06 (Tnfs 12B-2024 to 06A-2024)  
AECOM Amend No. 3 to WO 20A-17 Summary and TO  
SWSC WIFIA Program Quarterly Report September 2024  
SWSC Contract No. 20240050 - Change Order 1  
R-21-01\_EPG\_07  
51<sup>st</sup> Supplemental Resolution