

Town of *Dunstable*
Joint Meeting of the Board of Selectmen, Water Commissioners and Advisory Board
Discussion on the Water System Project
September 10, 2015
Town Hall, Dunstable, MA 01827

Convened: 6:00pm

Present: Selectmen Kenneth J. Leva and Walter F. Alterisio; Town Administrator Tracey Hutton; Water Commissioners Bryan Conant, Bob Gamache and Mark Cullen; Advisory Board Members Ron Mikol, Harold Simmons, Dana Metzler, Christine Muir, Pamela Crocker and Aime Stevens; Fire Chief Brian Rich; Town Counsel Rich Larkin; and Tighe and Bond engineers Tom Mahanna and Jeff Faulkner.

Discussion took place on the failed August 25th ballot question for the water department project. Bryan explained that the Water Commissioners haven't had a meeting to discuss the outcome of the vote and what should be done to address the aging tanks. Walter said that when the town made the decision 90+ years ago to start a municipal water department, in the eyes of the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), the "Town" has an obligation to ensure that safe clean drinking water is available to its residents on the water line.

Reasons Why the Article May Have Failed

- 1) Residents have unanswered questions and are not well informed.
- 2) Incorrect information about the project was passed around by residents.
- 3) Residents feel that since they are not on town water, they shouldn't have to pay for the project.
- 4) It is unclear whether betterment fees or assessments can be charged to water customers and if so, for what and how much.
- 5) Residents feel that the town has too many agendas, i.e. provide water for senior housing/Mixed Use District, increasing water to hydrants for fire protection, replacing hydropneumatic tanks with a storage tank and replacing undersized mains.
- 6) Project is too large and expensive for taxpayers.

Discussion on Alternatives

Since voters made their intentions clear, Skytop Lane (Blanchard Hill) was brought up as an alternate site for a storage tank. This parcel is under the management of the Water Department. A storage tank at the site would be gravity fed thus a booster station would not be required, making it an easier and less expensive system to operate. The Department could potentially pick up an additional 65+ customers that would pay a betterment fee for a water main that would go from the pump station to the top of the hill.

Also mentioned was replacing just the hydropneumatic tanks. Bob Gamache said that people are thinking short term and feels that that idea would be a waste of \$750,000 since the tanks would need to be replaced within 30 years.

Tighe and Bond Comments

Tom Mahanna was asked for his thoughts. Tom said he and Jeff Faulkner are frustrated with the outcome of the vote and are concerned with the multiple failures of the two hydropneumatic tanks. The next failure could be catastrophic and when that occurs, the system will lose pressure and customers won't have water. The existing set up does not provide fire protection for the hydrants or the ability for the system to expand.

Board of Selectmen Comments

Walter said that at the June DEP meeting, the DEP voiced their concerns and expects the Town to have a plan in place if a failure were to occur. The DEP is looking for specifics such as vendors to supply temporary water, equipment that is needed to be brought in, plans for the children at the Swallow Union Elementary School, etc. They also want to know that the Town is moving forward with a permanent solution. Although the DEP said they do not like to assess fines to towns, Dunstable could be fined up to \$25,000 per day/per violation if they are not ready for the failure of the tanks.

Resident Comments

Pawel Chadzynski said he was appreciative of the work everyone has done thus far and understands that a lot of money has been spent on engineering to get to this point. He said that the public has spoken and if the Town would like to have a project approved, much educating needs to be done. Most residents understand that there is a problem but don't know what the town's priorities are. Attorney Larkin explained that the Town can carry out public education before the setting of a town meeting date but once the date has been chosen, you cannot "sell" the project to the residents.

List of Items to Be Done Before the Next Meeting

- 1) Emergency plan must be completed. The Water Board will work with the Advisory Committee on the costs to the Town.
- 2) The Town needs to identify a permanent solution to the aging hydropneumatic tanks.
- 3) Attorney Larkin and Town Administrator Tracey Hutton will work on identifying any betterment fee for the new water main going from the pump station to Skytop Lane.
- 4) Attorney Larkin will review any conservation restrictions on Skytop Lane.
- 5) Tighe and Bond will give the Water Board estimates on the cost of a storage tank located on Skytop Lane including operating costs and ideas for security.
- 6) Determine how the alternative project will be paid for.

The meeting concluded at 7:29pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Cheryl A. Mann