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**Water Commission Minutes**  
**Monday, October 15, 2018**

**Approved: 10/29/18**

Chairman Karl Huber called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm

Members present: John O'Brien, Scott Wilkins

Meeting held: At the Dunstable Town Hall, 511 Main Street, lower level

In attendance: David Bray, Deb Trumbull, SWSS; Leah D. Basbanes, BOS; Alan Chaney, Conservation Commission; Harold Simmons, Advisory Board;

**Reviewed & Signed:**

- Monthly bills
- Monthly payroll

**Meeting with Small Water Systems Services Water Operator & Approval of Contract with SWSS for the period under the 90-Day Declaration**

Mr. Huber started off by introducing those present and gave a brief overview of the current situation. The department has been working with various entities to get water operator coverage since January. Through many transitions and changes, the department has arrived at its current status. SWSS is the water operator for GDRSD. SWSS has a maintenance group that will provide some resources that the department didn't have before. From there Mr. Huber went over the 90-Day Declaration and the 90-day contract that is currently in place. This was initially signed by the Chief Procurement Officer. The main goal tonight is to ratify the 90-day contract and to share with SWSS what needs to be done to the system. There will need to be a long term contract, which will require an RFP. The CPO is currently working on drafting such an agreement. Mr. Huber then gave SWSS a run down on the water infrastructure project, including its goals, the cost, and the various improvements and fixes that will be done. SWSS is already familiar with Wright Pierce having worked with them in the past. Mr. Huber then shared with Ms. Trumbull a list of all of the system needs that have been determined, apart from the water infrastructure project, that have been identified by White Water and Pepperell. The 90-day contract with SWSS started in October and runs through until early January.

There are a lot of things that have to be done along the way to resolving the various issues that the department is facing. The system is old, and there are a lot of small things that collectively are adding up. Ms. Trumbull then introduced herself. She is the founder and owner of the company and manages the office and administration of contracts. Ms. Trumbull thanked the Water Commission for being willing to work with SWSS noting the company was started 24 years ago when she left the Littleton Water Department to start the company. The first town SWSS worked for was the Town of Norfolk. SWSS has since expanded to over 30 employees. SWSS currently works in multiple municipalities and political entities, including Fort Devens, Georgetown, and Rowley. She noted that the list of clients continues to expand. SWSS also does other work, such as sewer. Mr. Bray then introduced himself; he is the water operator that has been assigned to Dunstable as well as SWSS's operations manager. From there Ms. Trumbull reported on her discussions with DEP since taking Dunstable on. Not to toot their own horn, but DEP is usually pleased with SWSS's work in other municipalities and appears happy to have them assist Dunstable. Ms. Trumbull then went over what SWSS will do, and won't do for the town. They are flexible and willing to do just about as much or little as the town wants. Mr. Huber responded that the department really doesn't have a lot of

resources outside of clerical. What SWSS can offer is exactly what the department needs at this point. The department does as much as it can with the resources and staffing it has. Mr. Bray then interjected to report on where things stand with the meter reading that needs to be done. He also reported on the alarms that have already been received and how he's worked with the department's clerical, Ms. Bresnick, to get him put on all the alerts and alarms for the system.

He's also spoken with the former Water Superintendent who has promised to show him the system and identify everything he needs to know. One of his concerns is the KOH valve and the pH issue that's persisted. He is doing tests to try to figure out the root of the problem and identify resolutions. Ms. Basbanes noted that the KOH valve is on the list for fixing. Mr. Huber agreed noting that it has been a persistent problem. Ms. Trumbull then asked some questions about the VFD. Mr. Wilkins reported that a VFD has been installed on Well No. 1 and noted that Well No. 2 does not yet have a VFD. Mr. Bray suggested that a VFD be installed on the second well. Although, he did note how VFD's can have some problems. There is a certain flow that has to go through for things to work fully properly in all circumstances. It needs to be set a certain way. Ms. Trumbull then asked some questions about DEP's ACOP and made some suggestions for how to address the requirements as well as how to deal with the KOH valve. She made a few suggestions for how to handle some of those problems from a design standpoint as part of the overall water infrastructure project and used an example from the Town of Spencer to illustrate the issues. Just one KOH misfire in Spencer caused about a 100 people to be harmed and their Water Commission was fined. As a result, Spencer had to put measures in place for added safety.

Mr. Huber then suggested SWSS should talk to Wright Pierce about seeing how SWSS's suggestions could be incorporated into the project. SWSS's main recommendation is having a small storage tank close to the wells for the blending process. This coupled with a pH monitoring device at the tank would help a great deal. It would help stop an imbalance from ever getting to a tap. Mr. Bray noted that the only thing about that resolution is that it might require an extra pump be installed. But that would be something for the engineers. Mr. Huber expressed confidence that SWSS should sit down with Wright Pierce and suggested a meeting be scheduled. Ms. Trumbull suggested such a meeting should be scheduled soon as Mr. Bray will be taking some equipment to Florida for recalibration. Mr. Huber suggested it may be easiest to simply authorize Wright Pierce and SWSS to talk to each other without the Commission. Mr. Wilkins then returned discussion to the water infrastructure project and how it may address some of these concerns, and ways that everything can be incorporated. The water quality is great; it is the distribution system that is struggling. Ms. Basbanes noted that some of the issues being discussed will be resolved under current plans for the infrastructure project. The town is planning on replacing the hydropneumatic tanks with an atmospheric tank in the form of a pedestal water tower.

Discussion then shifted to the KOH problem and how to handle things in the near term to prevent further incidents. Mr. O'Brien then asked SWSS whether there would be anyway to incorporate their recommendations and perhaps downsize the current project by changing out the kinds of tanks used. Mr. Bray had some suggestions. Ms. Basbanes interjected to remind those present that the infrastructure project cannot leave behind the towns upcoming projects. With a planned affordable housing project and the future placement of a public safety building, the system must be built to handle them. She noted the dimension of the affordable housing and the current pressure and pipe size in that area doesn't appear to be capable of supporting it, which is why those needs should be incorporated in the project. There was then some discussion of the various pipe sizes used in the system. Mr. Huber finished the discussion by thanking both Mr. Bray and Ms. Trumbull for coming and asked Ms. Trumbull to reach out to Wright Pierce. He further asked SWSS to continue to work with the department on developing a long term contract. Meters will be read this week and flushing will be done as well. It was also agreed that SWSS will assist with the Lead & Copper testing.

### **Infrastructure Project Update**

Mr. Voelker reported on his communications with Jim Cray at Wright Pierce. Mr. Cray has reported that Wright Pierce remains on track to have the complete design of the project by December at

which point the finished plans and specs will be sent to DEP for final review and approval. Mr. Huber then reported on his discussions with DEP as to the ACOP and some of the amendments and extensions that will need to be done. Mr. Wilkins had some concerns about the KOH valve and chemical feed issue noting that it is kind of too late to redesign the project, which some of SWSS's recommendations could cause. Mr. O'Brien suggested seeing what happens once Wright Pierce and SWSS meet to discuss the topic. He noted that every operator has different ideas. So things should be considered, but that said the department has to not spin its wheels changing direction. Mr. Huber agreed suggesting that the department has to figure out what can be done within the project and what should be resolved as a fix outside of that. This prompted discussion of how the project got to where it is now, and the decisions made on the way. Mr. Wilkins noted that some of it was logistical. Mr. Huber noted that things are somewhat precarious as a result of the timelines between DEP and the towns Annual Town Meeting.

### **FY19 Budget**

The Commission discussed the initial bill from SWSS, which was \$5,746. The bill from Pepperell for their 3-month support was \$15,000, or \$5,000 per month. This means that water operator costs since the start of FY19 have come in over \$20,000 not even counting the final few White Water bills since July. The Commission then finished with discussion over the remaining budget and where things stand financially.

### **Authorization of Accounts Payable & Payroll**

Mr. Huber reported on the bills paid. These included the final White Water bills, the bill from Pepperell for its support from July 1st through October 5th, the initial bill from SWSS, as well as the usual bills from National Grid, Wright Pierce, and other vendors. The Commission also signed payroll for water employees. The Commission finished by discussing questions regarding the Wright Pierce bills.

### **Minutes**

The Commission considered its minutes from September 26<sup>th</sup>, 2018. Seeing no necessary changes or modifications, the Commission proceeded with adopting them.

A motion was made by Mr. O'Brien to adopt the minutes of September 26<sup>th</sup>, 2018. The motion was seconded by Mr. Wilkins and passed by majority vote.

### **Additional Topics Discussed Not Noted on the Agenda**

#### **Lead & Copper Testing**

DEP has sent a letter approving of the Lead & Copper testing sites that White Water and Pepperell put together for the town. SWSS agreed to assist with this testing. Mr. Bray simply requested the testing sites be provided to them. Mr. Voelker immediately provided Mr. Bray with the DEP's letter regarding the Lead & Copper which includes the list of test sites.

#### **Alarm Response**

DEP wants to see the department improve alarm time responses. Mr. Haddad has recommended to the Commission that a support person for response to alarms be hired. It was suggested that someone be hired who lives in town. The current proposal could easily cost \$14,000 a year. That cost could be prohibitive for the department. The Commission noted that Mr. Bray lives in Dracut and should be able to respond within 30 minutes or so. DEP has not yet put anything in writing about how fast the response time should be or how soon the department should act on this. As a result, the Commission felt the matter should wait for the time being. Mr. Simmons noted some examples of pay for emergency response in other departments that is considerably lower than that cost. Mr.

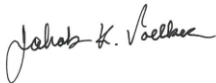
O'Brien felt that the cost is too high and without a direct time mandate from DEP, it doesn't make sense at this stage. Further, SWSS manages the GDRSD High School's system as well as a water system in Westford. So an operator should be nearby on a regular basis.

### **Beaver Problem**

Mr. Wilkins noted that the department needs to look into a beaver issue that may impact the system as the beavers are in a wetland by the wells. The most recent season for beaver trapping has been missed, but the department should address the problem by the next season. Mr. O'Brien noted that the population has been exploding and removing them shouldn't harm the species. Mr. Huber agreed noting that they could pose a contamination issue for the towns wells if not removed. Further they may impact culverts in the area and town infrastructure. Mr. Simmons generally agreed noting that the damage they could do in that area is not insignificant.

Motion to adjourn at 7:15 pm by Mr. O'Brien and seconded by Mr. Wilkins. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted by



Jakob K. Voelker  
Administrative Assistant  
Dunstable Water Department