

WMAC Meeting Minutes, February 19, 2015

Attendees: David Crosby - Chair, Paul Lauenstein – Vice Chair, Chris Pimentel, and David Hearne

Guest: Eric Hooper, Superintendent - Sharon DPW

1. Minutes from the January 15 meeting were approved as amended.

2. Report from the Water Department, by Eric Hooper

a) Meetings of Sharon Water Dept. officials with Town of Norwood officials regarding the OP 5 emergency connection to MWRA were scheduled twice, but each time had to be postponed due to weather.

b) Approximately 33 million gallons were pumped, and 29 million gallons billed, in January. Unaccounted-for water for January was estimated at 12%.

c) Establishment of a \$25,000 fund from which residents would be able to borrow funds to fix service line leaks will be on the Town Meeting warrant this coming May.

d) Approximately \$400,000 in retained earnings from FY 2014 (i.e. the year ended June 30, 2014) plus \$841,420 in one-time revenue from the sale of cell-phone antenna leases on Sharon's water tanks will help defray the cost of capital projects.

e) Readings of groundwater levels at the monitoring wells has been impeded by deep snow. Nitrate readings have also been delayed.

f) A \$15,000 update of the Master Plan has been commissioned to identify and prioritize projects that will be needed over the next 20 years and their costs. These projects include replacement of radio meters, automation of leak detection, maintenance of water storage tanks, and implementation of a system to provide customers with more feedback on their water usage. When the current drive-by radio meters need to be replaced, a new generation of fixed-network radio meters will provide real-time monitoring features to better manage the water distribution system and detect leaks. The process of replacing the meters will span several years, and should be initiated before the batteries in the current radio meters begin to die.

g) An additional \$15,000 will be used to evaluate projects needed to cleanse and infiltrate storm water to recharge aquifers, and help the town comply with conditions in its [Water Management Act](#) withdrawal permit and its [National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System \(NPDES\)](#) permit. The amount of credit that infiltration projects might provide toward satisfaction of permit requirements is related to the hydrologic unit code (HUC) level that the project affects. In other words, infiltration projects that only affect a small sub-basin might receive less credit than infiltration projects that affect a larger sub-basin. The degree to which an infiltration project improves the quality of water recharged to the aquifer is an important consideration.

The question of whether these analyses present an opportunity to help resolve recent issues surrounding the water level in Lake Massapoag was raised.

3. Irrigation policy

a) Irrigation system regulations

Eric Hooper reported that Nancy Fyler and Ian Cooke of the Neponset River Watershed Association had recommended performance requirements for lawn irrigation systems in Sharon. Certified private contractors should inspect lawn irrigation systems for backflow prevention, leaks, properly-aimed spray nozzles, appropriate programming of the system controller, functioning of rain gauge or soil moisture detector, etc. A tune-up should be done in spring to ensure efficient water use during the summer irrigation season, and then the irrigation system should be winterized in fall. The idea of the Water Department or some other entity training, certifying and listing lawn irrigation professionals was discussed, as was the idea of requiring owners of automatic irrigation systems to obtain an annual permit from the town, based on proof that the system had been inspected by a certified lawn irrigation professional.

An inventory of households that are equipped with automatic lawn irrigation systems is needed. An intern could accomplish this.

The hope was expressed that Nancy Fyler and/or Ian Cooke would attend a future WMAC meeting to discuss how to ensure that irrigation systems are operated as efficiently as possible.

b) Separate meters for irrigation systems

There was a debate over whether Sharon's steeply ascending block rate structure accomplishes the same objective as separate irrigation meters would, in terms of providing a strong incentive to curb non-essential water use while charging a lower rate for water used for essential domestic purposes. It was pointed out that even in winter some households use excessive amounts of water, which has nothing to do with lawn irrigation. On the other hand, the information provided by separate irrigation meters could be useful, and water used for lawn irrigation could be more precisely targeted for higher water rates. The question of whether an expenditure of up to \$500,000 for separate irrigation meters could be justified was raised.

There was consensus that an inventory of automatic irrigation systems in Sharon is needed.

4. The next meeting will be Thursday March 19 at 7:30pm at the Community Center.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul Lauenstein