

WMAC Meeting Minutes – January 18th, 2024

Attendees: David Crosby – Chair, David Brookfield, Anne Carney, David Hearne, Lealdon Langley, Robert (Rory) McGregor – Secretary, Chris Pimentel – Vice-Chair

Guests:

Eric Hooper – Superintendent, Department of Public Works

1. David Crosby opened the virtual WMAC meeting via Zoom at 7:30pm.
2. December meeting minutes were approved 6-0-1.
3. Eric reported that the Conservation Commission approved the site plan for the new PFAS treatment facility at Well #4. He anticipates that neighbors on Tree Lane and Pine Grove Avenue will file a protest when the Order of Conditions is published for failure to comply with wetland setback requirements for the building.
4. Eric has been meeting with Sharon's Standing Building Committee on the bid process to select a general contractor for construction of the new PFAS treatment facility. This task must be completed by June 30th, the deadline for compliance with the State Revolving Fund which will provide a zero-interest loan up to \$29M toward the project.
5. Sharon Zoning Board of Appeals will review the PFAS treatment plant design by the end of March. Building height is the issue that requires a variance.
6. Eric has estimated that annual Water Department revenue must total at least \$7M in FY2025 to cover normal operations, initiate the town pipe replacement program scheduled for the Cottage Street neighborhood, and pay for debt service related to construction of the new PFAS treatment facility. Revenue for CY2023 was \$5.7M. Estimated revenue for FY2024, which concludes June 30th of this year is \$6.0M.
7. Sharon must bond the full cost of the PFAS treatment facility before work begins.
8. Discussion on future water rates to take effect this year included a potential increase of up to 23% in the base rate and variable increases in each of the 5 tiers for residential customers. Possible use of retained earnings could reduce the amount of the proposed increases. However, the Water Department is required to hold in retained earnings an amount equal to 50% of the proposed operating budget, or \$3.5M.
9. Eric will prepare a water rate proposal for a special WMAC meeting on January 25th.
10. Discussion on a new Water Master Plan will continue at the February 15th WMAC meeting. Eric will email the existing Master Plan to WMAC members. Weston & Sampson, consultant on the Plan, will be contacted for input on new issues to consider.

11. Use of MWRA water to mitigate habitat problems in the stressed Beaver Brook watershed caused by well water pumping is an idea that WMAC would like to consider. Eric will contact Steve Estes at MWRA to find out if use of Sharon's emergency connection to Norwood could provide MWRA water for this purpose.

12. Elections for WMAC officers will be held at the February WMAC meeting. Chris Pimentel will step down as Vice-Chair. David Crosby and Rory McGregor offered to continue serving in their current positions.

13. Eric will verify that the new treatment facility can support solar panels on the roof.

14. The following report on Water Department activity in December was given by Eric:

PFAS Report

Significant drop at well #2 over the course of the Fall from 34ug/L to Non-Detect

Significant drop at well #4 also over the course of the Fall from 116 ug/L to 46 ug/L

We saw a decline in PFAS concentrations the last two years but not as drastic.

Water Pumping in 2023

403,977,000 gallons – second lowest in past 30 years

UAW uncorrected figure is 10.33%; however after subtracting hydrant flushing totals and confidently estimating water leak quantity for pipe breaks, we will be well within permit limits.

Revenue and Water Rates

Revenue for the year was \$5.818 million, sufficient to cover current operating costs but not for future anticipated costs associated with the new PFAS treatment facility. The continuing success of Sharon's water conservation program is also a potential contributor to reduced revenue.

Proposed water rates for residents and businesses must be calculated to cover future Water Department budgets of at least \$7 million/year in order to finance the debt service associated with the new PFAS treatment facility.

15. Next WMAC meeting is scheduled for January 25th 2024 at 7:30pm.

16. The meeting adjourned at 9:30pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Rory McGregor