

**WATER & SEWER COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES – FEBRUARY 16, 2021**

3:00 PM – Remote Participation

MEMBERS PRESENT: John Meader
Bryant Firmin
David Pepe

ALSO PRESENT: Scott Charpentier, Public Works Director
Sarah Jean, Administrative Assistant
Julianne Hirsh, Board of Selectmen Liaison

Commissioner Meader opened the meeting at 3:00 PM.

1. Consideration of minutes from the December 15, 2020 regular meeting

Motion to approve the meeting minutes of the December 15, 2020 regular meeting as amended. Vote was done by roll call Commissioner Firmin “aye”, Commissioner Pepe “aye”, Commissioner Meader “aye;” the vote by roll call was unanimous with three votes in favor.

2. Water / Sewer Building Project Update

Mr. Charpentier gave the Commission a brief update on the water / sewer building project. Mr. Charpentier stated that the contractor has temporarily demobilized from the building work until the weather stabilizes a bit. Mr. Charpentier reports that the frost walls, frost wall insulation and footings are in. The ground is also blanketed where the slab is due to the winter temperatures. Site work will continue with domestic water and sanitary sewer to the rear building. The main structure is not scheduled for delivery until May so there is plenty of time to get the slab poured once the weather is accommodating. Mr. Charpentier reports that there have been no substantial problems on the project, minor amendments and changes but nothing of substance. Mr. Charpentier reports that the project is moving along as expected. Next step is to reach out to Assabet Valley Regional Technical High School to confirm that they are on board for Fall of this year to begin interior outfitting work.

3. Reservoir Dam Removal Letter of Support

Mr. Charpentier reports that the Northborough Water Department owns a reservoir dam located in Shrewsbury and Boylston. This reservoir has not served as a water source since the 1950s and serves no functional use to the owner. The dam was found to be in poor condition and the Town of Northborough has been ordered by the Office of Dam Safety to repair, remove or breach the dam. Mr. Charpentier reports that repair makes no sense as it serves no purpose, there is no recreational value to it, and no abutting properties have deeded access to it. Mr. Charpentier reports that Reservoir Street is a public roadway in Boylston that is downstream approx. 150’ so there is a significant hazard potential there.

The State of Massachusetts has a Dam, Seawall and Levee grant program that is administered every year. They administer a loan program and a grant program, the grant

program will provide 75% grant funding for design and permitting for removal of dams, levees, and seawalls, and/or repair. We are working with Weston & Sampson to submit the grant application to fund design and permitting of the removal of the dam. Grant applications are due Friday, February 26, 2021. Mr. Charpentier reports that the expectation is that the soft cost will likely be \$175,000.00 - \$200,000.00 based on prior dam removals that he has done and based on an estimate that was done a few years ago. Mr. Charpentier reports that he will be presenting the capital plan to the Financial Planning Committee next week and this includes a 25% match, \$50,000.00. This will be utilized out of the Water Enterprise Fund free cash reserves.

Mr. Charpentier is looking for a letter of support from the Town of Shrewsbury, the Town of Boylston, and the Town of Northborough Water/Sewer Commission. These letters of support will be submitted with the grant application. Mr. Charpentier reports that a lot of legwork for this project has already been done; completion of a limited dam removal feasibility study that included a sediment sampling, hydraulic and hydrologic analysis, cost estimating, an emergency action plan with downstream mapping. Mr. Charpentier stated that he believes we are in a good position for grant consideration.

Mr. Pepe asked if the abutters have recourse? Could they submit letters against this? Mr. Charpentier reports that abutters will be notified as part of the process and can comment on the project during the public hearing process.

Motion to send a letter of support for the Reservoir Dam Removal. Vote was done by roll call Commissioner Firmin “aye”, Commissioner Pepe “aye”, Commissioner Meader “aye;” the vote by roll call was unanimous with three votes in favor.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Mr. Charpentier reports that there have been ongoing issues with communication lines between the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA) valve and the water garage. Communication lines have been problematic for a number of years and most recently went down 2 weeks ago and it never came back. Verizon was out for three days and could not track it down, essentially unable to help. Mr. Charpentier mobilized our supervisory control and data acquisition (SCADA) consultant to establish wireless communication with battery back-up between both facilities. Mr. Charpentier stated that we have started to implement the SCADA project in a very small fashion.

Mr. Charpentier reports that the capital projects will be presented to the Financial Planning Committee next week. No changes from what was previously set into the rate study for FY'22 – it includes the utility tractor, SCADA System and dam removal.

Mr. Meader asked if there were any issues with the last set of meter reads & rate increase, etc? Mr. Charpentier believes that flat sewer rate customers were quietly happy as the rates went down by 30%. Mr. Charpentier reports that questions arise every quarter around the sewer rates. Mr. Charpentier reports that revenue is on projection and things are going well and the operating budget is at or slightly below what has been presented.

Mr. Meader asked if there were any outstanding meters to be installed? Mr. Charpentier reports that there are no outstanding meters to be installed. Reporting that Badger Meter does have a new, more robust end-point communicator, that will be evaluated in the future. Mr. Charpentier reports that we have identified about a dozen customers who would benefit from this new communicator and he will be speaking with the vendor about rolling those out.

Next Meeting: The next regular meeting is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, March 16, 2021 at 3PM.

Adjourn: Motion to adjourn at 3:32 PM; Motion was done by roll call Commissioner Firmin “aye”, Commissioner Pepe “aye”, Commissioner Meader “aye;” the vote by roll call was unanimous with three votes in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah L. Jean

Documents used during meeting:

1. February 16, 2021 Meeting Agenda
2. December 15, 2020 Regular Meeting Minutes
3. Reservoir Dam Removal Letter of Support