

Mr. Fox opened the April 12, 2022 Board of Water Commissioners meeting at 6:30 PM and announced it as audio and video recorded. Messrs. John Miller; Dedham, Eric Merithew; Dedham, Robert Lexander; Dedham, Andrew Kara; Westwood and Jim Fox; Westwood each announced his presence. Blake Lukis, Bob Marsh, Pauline Donaghue, Steve Locke, were also present. Gary Yessaillian; Westwood, joined the meeting during the Treasurer's Report.

## **MINUTES**

Mr. Fox asked for a motion for approving the minutes of March 15, 2022. Mr. Kara put forward the motion and Mr. Lexander seconded it. Mr. Fox asked if there was any discussion and hearing none he called for a roll-call vote. Messrs. Kara, Merithew, Lexander, Miller and Fox all voted Aye.

## **TREASURER'S REPORT** **Financials and Warrants**

Ms. Donoghue reported warrants numbered 20-27 for the period March 15-April 5, 2022 for \$746,773.09. She next referred to the Treasurer Report and noted the unreconciled balances of \$7,694,159.00 as of 3/31/2/28/22 and the reconciled balances of \$7,751,128.00 as of 2/28/22. Mr. Miller noted a drop in cash of \$3MM since January 2021. Mr. Marsh noted that plans for borrowing will likely occur in 2024/25 and will be firmed up next quarter with an updated five-year plan. He said that the 2022 budget projects a loss of \$198,000. Mr. Lukis added that significant capital spending occurred over the year and that there had been significant use of MWRA water this year to date. Ms. Donaghue noted that \$200,000 has been moved from the MMDT account to Dedham Savings since substantial completion on the MWRA financed project was achieved. The interest rate is better and MMDT has no FDIC insurance protection.

## **BUSINESS MANAGER'S REPORT**

Mr. Marsh said that the audit is progressing and on schedule to be completed in May and likely to be presented to the Board in late June. The financials through February are completed and we will likely present first quarter results at the next meeting.

## **OPERATIONS MANAGER REPORT**

Mr. Locke reported that there were two service leaks and a 6" main break on Alden Rd in Dedham since the last meeting which caused about 2 million gallons of water loss. He noted that we are averaging 3.6 million gallons per day, or slightly over average. He said that Miles Leak Detection will be conducting a comprehensive system survey for \$19,499 and starting on April 19. He expects to save \$10,000-\$15,000 on what was budgeted for leak detection. He noted that two minor punch list items remain on the White Lodge Treatment Plant Improvements Project and a final walkthrough is scheduled for May 4. Retainage has been reduced from 5% to 2%, he

noted. Next, he noted that the office generator has been repaired and is back in service as of today. The final costs for the claim will be provided to Corcoran and Havlin. Mr. Locke said that the chemist vehicle has arrived and was \$34,000 versus a budget of \$40,000 and the old vehicle sold for \$5000., for an \$11,000 savings on the vehicle budget. Regarding the 2022 water main projects, Mr. Locke said that we are proceeding, will be completing the design, and bidding soon and hope the supply chain issues affecting pipe do not stall the project. Next, Weston and Sampson are finalizing the 480V, 3-phase electrical design for the mixers and vents project and he said he expects it will go out to bid in May. Next, he said that the Asset Management project is 80% complete and that there had been a few meetings with Rostech and Utility Cloud to discuss integration and data transfer between the two platforms. He said we are moving into the training phase of the project. Rostech will be coming to Dedham for three days next week to discuss not only Utility Cloud integration but enhancements to the billing system including mobile ops, delinquencies, lien processing, and the enhanced customer portal. There will be much training coming up, he noted. Lastly, he said that Weston and Sampson will soon kick off the water treatment study and have scheduled a walkthrough of Bridge Street on April 28. Mr. Miller asked for an update on plant automation. Mr. Locke said that Rick has ordered the iron and manganese analyzers and expects the final component parts to be delivered any day and then a contractor will be scheduled to install. Mr. Lukis reminded the board that this was discussed last month and that the only project anticipated and budgeted for this year, dedicated towards automation, are these analyzer installations. Mr. Fox asked for a big picture schedule that perhaps is tied into the five-year plan but that would detail the improvements, costs and timelines to maximize the benefits of the Bridge Street Plant project. Mr. Lukis explained that the issue is not Bridge Street but rather the need to automate all the remote facilities which are currently done manually or remotely by the operator at Bridge Street. Mr. Merithew said that even if Bridge Street is running in automatic mode, the plant operator at Bridge Street must remotely operate the other system facilities. Mr. Fox asked when we could start to see some benefits. Mr. Lukis said he could expand upon the presentation he had previously made on the timelines and rough budget numbers for automation; however, he emphasized the need to keep water quality issues at the forefront. He said he had seen a presentation that Eileen Commene had made to the Board on potential PFAS removal costs that estimated a cost of \$8-10MM. This level of investment in water quality should take precedence over automating the remote facilities, Mr. Lukis said. Mr. Fox suggested that while the PFAS and water quality issues are paramount, a dual track should be pursued to achieve automation because of the potential cost reduction. Mr. Merithew said that much of this discussion took place in the Capital Budget subcommittee meetings and perhaps had not been sufficiently explained to the full Board. He explained that the focus for the budget was a reduction in TTHMs and funding a study for detailing alternative solutions along with estimated costs and timelines for PFAS reduction, should it be required. There was a discussion on the additional purchased water from the MWRA that was done to reduce the TTHMs to attempt to remain in regulatory compliance but that comes at considerable cost not in the budget. Mr. Merithew asked if there were other reasons to continue blending with MWRA. Mr. Lukis answered that blending with the MWRA directly at the plant effluent would be a potential solution to reduce PFAS., which will be studied this year. At Bridge St, PFAS removal treatment as an option, potentially could reduce the organics levels that drive the TTHM results. At White Lodge, an MWRA blend at the plant effluent would not only reduce PFAS and TTHMs but additionally would help reduce sodium levels, he added. This would require pipeline extensions from the MWRA directly to each plant, he explained, whereas the blending to reduce

TTHMs occurs at the current MWRA interconnection points. Mr. Fox suggested that the purchase of additional MWRA water for blending will increase costs. Personnel cost savings from automation might help fund some of these water quality solution costs. The possibility of grants was also discussed. Mr. Lukis pointed out that the Weston and Sampson report on automation did not anticipate any staff reductions or cost savings associated with automation. While the potential is there to reduce a shift or two, there is an offset because of the maintenance costs on the new equipment. There was a discussion on the Weston and Sampson report. Mr. Yessaillian suggested that we need additional explanation and better understanding from Weston and Sampson. Mr. Lukis suggested that the report be peer reviewed and he would bring the Board some proposal from treatment plant operations consultants.

### **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Mr. Lukis referenced the updated contract spreadsheet he had posted including the supervisor's vehicle, the leak detection contract and the \$16,000 landscaping contract he awarded to San Marino. Next, he referred to his bonus recommendations for non-union staff included in the package and requested the board approval. He noted he is requesting \$32,000 although \$45,000 has been accrued. Mr. Lexander expressed concern for the bonuses for the male versus female staff. Mr. Lukis said that the percentages of the bonuses on base pay was higher with one exception for the female staff members. Mr. Fox asked for a motion on the matter. Mr. Lexander made a motion that the \$32,000 total of bonuses as presented be granted. Mr. Merithew seconded the motion. Mr. Fox called for a roll call vote. Messrs. Yessaillian, Kara, Merithew, Lexander, Miller and Fox all voted Aye. Mr. Lukis discussed the updated PFAS data and that we continue to be in compliance. The individual wells have all been tested. He noted that two of the individual wells at White Lodge exceed 21 parts per trillion level but because the sampling is at the plant effluent, the lower levels in the other three wells have kept us in compliance. Next, he discussed the recent meeting with Representative McMurtry along with Mr. Marsh and Mr. Locke. Mr. Yessaillian explained that the board was not aware of the unfunded liability until years after joining due to a GASB reporting requirements in our financial statements. Representative McMurtry will make inquiries into the situation. Mr. Lukis reported that the annual statistical report will be submitted to the DEP this week and that the unaccounted-for water percentage was 20.9%. He noted that the DEP wants systems to show levels of 15% or less. He said he is optimistic that the metering changes to the ultrasonic type will reduce the unaccounted-for water. He noted that the office is now open to the public. He announced that a new recording secretary, Kathleen Reynolds, accepted an offer verbally today and will be at the next meeting. Next, he described the office administrator position stemming from the receptionist position and recommends that the position be further upgraded to include a communications skill set for maintaining social media and attending public meetings. Last year, \$10,000 was expended with Capital Strategic Solutions which could be eliminated. If the pay rate could be increased from \$50,000 to \$60,000-\$65,000, he believes they can attract qualified candidates. A lengthy discussion ensued. Mr. Lukis added that both Stephanie Costa and Matt Lanen need assistance in the cross-connection program and distribution areas. He offered to prepare a revised job description, including communications skill sets and increased pay, for the board's consideration. Next, he discussed the rebate program and proposed that a limit of say \$4,000 be made available on a first come first served basis. There was a discussion on the current

level of spending, which Mr. Lukis said he would provide, and the justification of the program, given the current water efficiency of fixtures and appliances. Lastly, he likely will recommend that the Dropcountr program at \$14,700 be discontinued and that the customer portal be enhanced to allow two-way communication between the District and its customers. Currently 1,700 customers out of 14,000 are enrolled but Dropcountr could not provide information on current actual use of the platform.

There was a discussion on in person versus virtual meetings and will be discussed more at the next meeting. Mr. Lukis pointed out that an in-person meeting would require a quorum physically present even if a virtual meeting were simultaneously offered. The current regulations are set to expire July 15<sup>th</sup> unless the governor extends it.

Mr. Fox called for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Lexander put that motion forward and Mr. Miller seconded the motion. Mr. Fox called for a roll call vote and Messrs. Yessaillian, Kara, Miller, Merithew, Lexander and Fox all voted Aye.