



DEDHAM-WESTWOOD WATER DISTRICT
General Business Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, December 20, 2022 | 6:30 PM

Hybrid Meeting
In-Person Attendance at 50 Elm Street in Dedham, MA 02026

Announcement of the Audio and/or Video Recording

The Chair, James Fox, called the meeting to order at 6:30p.m. and announced the meeting would be audio- and video-recorded.

Attendance

James Fox, Chair (remote)

Robert Lexander, Vice-Chair

Andrew Kara, Clerk

Eric Merithew, Member

Gary Yessaillian, Member

John Healy, Member (remote)

Blake Lukis, Executive Director

Bob Marsh, Business Manager

Pauline Donoghue, Treasurer

Steve Locke, Operations Manager (remote)

Roll-Call Attendance

Messrs. Fox, Lexander, Kara, Merithew, Yessaillian, and Healy Present.

Mr. Fox confirmed a quorum present.

Approval of Minutes of November 22 & December 6, 2022

Mr. Fox called for a motion to approve the meeting minutes for November 22 and December 6, 2022. A motion was made by Mr. Yessaillian to approve the minutes as reviewed for November 22 and December 6, 2022; the motion was seconded by Mr. Kara. With no additional discussion necessary, a roll-call vote was taken.

Roll-Call: Messrs. Fox, Lexander, Kara, Merithew, Yessaillian, and Healy voted Aye.

Motion passes unanimously.

Financials and Warrant

Warrant

Ms. Donoghue presented approved Warrants 88-91 for December 5 to 13 activity.

Treasurer's Report

Ms. Donoghue highlighted:

- Unreconciled cash balance at November 30, increased from October.
- Reconciled cash balance through October.
- Monthly summary of reconciled cash and disbursements through November.
- Monthly summary of reconciled cash and disbursements for prior year 2021.

Ms. Donoghue reported the December 6 payment was made for the general obligation bond in the amount of \$310,125.

Members voiced approval of Ms. Donoghue's notification of a below-market-cost T-bill purchase which will result in significantly higher interest than in-bank, and that additional T-bill purchases will be made when funds are available. Mr. Fox acknowledged Mr. Kara suggested T-bill purchases.

Business Manager Report

Action on Annual Audit

Mr. Marsh informed that the audit firm engagement letter confirmed fees will increase annually by 4%, where other firms' fees rise annually by 5-6%.

Mr. Marsh requested a motion to approve the engagement letter. Mr. Lexander read the motion: The Dedham-Westwood Water Commissioners vote to approve the engagement letter from Melanson for the annual audit services for years 2022, 2023, and 2024 for the amounts listed:

- 2022 for \$25,500
- 2023 for \$26,500
- 2024 for \$27,500

Mr. Yessaillian motioned to approve the engagement letter; the motion was seconded by Mr. Merithew.

Mr. Fox asked if a three-year contract would be at a fixed rate to save on costs. Discussion was held regarding reasonable audit fees.

A roll-call vote was taken.

Roll-Call: Messrs. Fox, Lexander, Kara, Merithew, Yessaillian, and Healy voted Aye. Motion passes unanimously.

Review of updated Long-Range Plan

Referring to on-screen, Mr. Marsh introduced the Profit & Loss scenarios, stating the first includes the basic assumptions previously discussed regarding expenses increasing and the operating budget impact by Capital projects, showing that to balance the budget compounding must be consistent, referring to the July commercial rate tier increase allowing the 5% rate in 2023.

Mr. Marsh answered Mr. Yessaillian's question regarding pension liability expense, and additional discussion was held.

Introducing the second scenario, Mr. Marsh noted that the same Capital expenses and cash are included with a flat-rate increase of 5% and the addition of a debt fee for principal and interest payments for the PFAS treatment upgrades. This would be assessed separately and billing will end upon the payoff of the debt.

Further discussion was held, including Mr. Lukis summarizing the scenarios as the first staying the same including funding of debt services and the second for moving forward by changing how recuperate debt payments. Mr. Lukis broke down the fee to per-customer for years, and mentioned some options and showed concepts to diversify revenue.

Mr. Fox commented on accomplishing the aggressive Capital improvement campaign but questions if the increased pace has some moving too quickly, wanting to be prudent so not too much burden on the taxpayers. In response, discussion was held regarding improvements, caution relative to future understanding, PFAS upgrades, city/town aid, etc. Mr. Merithew clarified steps with first needing a pilot test for effectiveness and funding answers, mentioning Intended Use Plans (IUP's) relative to PFAS. Regarding compounds, Mr. Lukis stated the forward move must be made on MCLs, with regulations coming; must use treatment or alternate source. Mr. Fox responded that all must be considered concerning 2024 and beyond, possibly defrayed by a State fund/bond.

Additional discussion ensued regarding funding and budgeting for decision making.

Mr. Lukis will again forward the scenarios comparing the cost to produce water locally versus MWRA purchase. Mr. Marsh mentioned the risk management topic Mr. Healy raised. Some discussion regarding risk and fees was held, with Mr. Fox suggesting the District keep options open regarding well and MWRA usage for careful spending especially when change encountered. Mr. Healy voiced the want of the Board to leave a legacy for future Members, this being an opportunity for public relations. Mr. Fox added of the need to inform taxpayers of where their dollars are spent, suggesting a public relations firm used. Mr. Lukis reminded of the internal Communication Communicator and stated a firm had been used for specific services rather than put on retainer, and Mr. Yessaillian suggested looking at still-available funds to apply to PR services.

Referring to the on-screen profit & loss blue area, Mr. Marsh stated both are the same, with the timing different.

Operations Manager Report

Pumping and Operational Report

Mr. Locke informed that daily pumpage for week ending December 18 was 3.54 million gallons, where week ending December 11 showed daily pumpage at 3.461 million gallons. He stated these readings are tied with the Main and Service Break Report showing one 6" main break. Alerted to by Mr. Yessaillian, a customer service leak was located; Mr. Locke reported it has been left running into a catch basin.

Action on Veterans Road Water Main Replacement

Mr. Lukis posted the Veterans Road Water Main Replacement project's ten bids' results. Some discussion regarding contractors was held. Mr. Locke read the requested motion:

The Dedham-Westwood Water Commissioners vote to approve the Veterans Road Water Main Replacement contract with Oliveira Construction, Inc. of Somerset, MA in the amount of \$735,540.00 and that the Executive Director be authorized to sign the contract.

A motion was made by Mr. Lexander to approve the Veterans Road Water Main Replacement contract; the motion was seconded by Mr. Healy.

Mr. Lukis commented on the water main break, and Mr. Healy voiced appreciation of the competitive bidding.

A roll-call vote was taken.

Roll-Call: Messrs. Fox, Lexander, Kara, Merithew, Yessaillian, and Healy voted Aye.

Motion passes unanimously.

Update on New & Existing Projects

Mr. Locke reported the audit of the filter media at the White Lodge treatment plant is completed and results are expected next week.

Focus is now on 2023 Capital items, as Mr. Locke stated.

Executive Director Report

2023 Contracts Executed

Mr. Lukis reported:

- 2500 Chevrolet Silverado ordered;
- Toyota forklift for production department ordered;
- Weston & Sampson on-call engineering services contract signed;
- 2023 Ford F150 all-electric Lightning truck ordered, this model being the only way to acquire a Ford F150 in 2023; a \$7,500 electrical-vehicle grant was secured. For this vehicle, a quote for charger installation will be requested from the electrician completing the security upgrades. With 230 miles per charge, this vehicle means fuel savings.

Review and Discussion of Classification and Compensation Plan

As expressed in February, the customer service representatives' pay scale has been a concern, resulting in the formation of a sub-committee to create a classification plan devised with the human resources firm OneDigital. Mr. Lukis displayed the ten grades planned, informing that positions are classified at the 50th percentile.

Referring to the chart, Mr. Lukis answered questions regarding employees' current standing, gaps, OneDigital's memo, performance rating merit-based increases recommendation, displaying the X/Y graph of range standing versus performance rating & annual evaluation.

The positives of this system versus the prior lack of a system were discussed. Mr. Lukis informed that the information is available on Basecamp, with the intent to adjust and update

yearly. Board Members voiced approval of the long-overdue structure. Mr. Fox mentioned the probable need for lower salaries to be increased since will not meet others' with 3-4% increases.

November 2022 PFAS Results

Mr. Lukis posted the year-over-year results at November, stating the District remains in compliance with White Lodge at 17.1 and Bridge Street 16.9.

Some discussion was held regarding history, which wells are on, rain, and watershed levels. At Mr. Fox's suggestion to track with a graph, Mr. Lukis responded that updates are kept with every sampling.

Additional discussion ensued regarding individual site pumpage, with Mr. Locke informing that PFAS increases when wells are offline, Mr. Merithew inquiring on a flatten-out date, and Messrs. Yessaillian and Lexander commenting on well connections and footage.

Mr. Lukis informed that an announcement on the water rate potentially increasing in January would be sent to the media along with rate tables.

Old/New Business*

Mr. Lukis suggested not returning to tonight's open meeting after Executive Session.

Mr. Lukis announced the application of Mr. Mark Phillips for the open Westwood Commissioner seat has been approved, with Mr. Phillips appointed to the Dedham-Westwood Water District Board.

Lead by Mr. Fox, Members thanked Mr. Kara for his time and contributions to the District, stating he will be missed.

Executive Session

Pursuant to MGL c.30A Sec. 21(a) Exemption 3 - To discuss strategy with respect to litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares.

Mr. Fox requested a motion to adjourn to Executive Session. A motion was made by Mr. Yessaillian to adjourn the open meeting to enter Executive Session under MGL c.30A Sec. 21(a) Exemption 3 and open meeting will not resume afterward, and Mr. Kara seconded it. A roll-call vote was taken.

Roll-Call: Messrs. Fox, Lexander, Kara, Merithew, Yessaillian, and Healy all voted Aye. Motion passes unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:38p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kathy Travers Reynolds
Recording Secretary