



DEDHAM-WESTWOOD WATER DISTRICT General Business Meeting

Hybrid Meeting

In-person attendance: 50 Elm Street, Dedham, MA 02026

Monday, November 27, 2023 | 6:30 PM

Announcement of the Audio and/or Video Recording

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

Robert Lexander, Chair

Gary Yessaillian, Vice-Chair

Eric Merithew, Clerk

Mark Phillips, Member (remote)

Louis Kustwan, Member

Blake Lukis, Executive Director

Bob Marsh, Business Manager

Pauline Donoghue, Treasurer (remote)

Steve Locke, Operations Manager

Absence

John Healy, Member

Roll-Call Attendance

Messrs. Lexander, Yessaillian, Merithew, and Kustwan Present.

Mr. Lexander confirmed a quorum present.

Public Participation

Mr. Lexander confirmed no public attendees present.

Review and Action on 2024 Operating Budget

- Review 2024 Operating budget as reviewed and modified by the Operating Budget Subcommittee in their public meetings held on November 13, 2023 and November 27, 2023 and recommended to be brought forward to full Board of Water Commissioners for action.

The 2025 Operating Budget was displayed. Mr. Lukis stated that the total budget including the Capital Budget is being met with a proposed 6.6% Operating Budget increase. Budget approval is being sought tonight and rate increases would be voted in January.

Mr. Marsh highlighted that the Budget is balanced, and that \$5 million is held in the District's bank account. Mr. Yessaillian offered that the \$5 million is for a safety perspective for unforeseen expenses. Mr. Lukis explained that of the \$5 million, \$1.8 million is locked up in a Capital Reserve Fund, which requires a vote to be withdrawn and used, and \$3.2 million is readily accessible funds. This is helpful as the first three months of the year typically run budget-deficient. Mr. Lukis confirmed for Mr. Merithew that no new items are entered into the Budget, adding that some line items are level-funded; line items were reviewed.

Mr. Merithew asked about the Norfolk County pension, and a discussion was held regarding timing.

Mr. Phillips joined the meeting remotely and asked about the personnel labor increase of 8%. Mr. Marsh answered that the Union is at 3% at the end of a three-year contract, with the same headcount; and a place hold was used for office staff. Mr. Lukis added that there was no increase to TE, with management given a 3% market adjustment, using a merit-increase matrix and budgeted bonuses. He offered that not all funds budgeted will be used; last year was under-projected. Mr. Merithew commented that the Union gross increased and asked what drives a line to go over budget; Mr. Marsh offered that overtime is a separate line item. Mr. Lukis confirmed that the five-week salary and vacation payout to the retiree affected the budget, acknowledging that new-hires come in at a lower rate. Mr. Merithew asked about overtime; Mr. Lukis answered that many hours can be attributed to the aggressive meter replacement schedule which often adds work the Distribution department to repair broken burb boxes. In addition, the Towns paving schedules impact the operation having to locate and adjust all valve and curb stop boxes. This combined with vacation time coverage has lead to increased overtime expenditures. Mr. Merithew asked about paying overtime versus hiring additional personnel; Mr. Lukis answered that the comparison has not been made but could be if desired. It was also mentioned that hiring a new employee would come with benefits and pension costs.

Review and Action on 2024 Capital Budget

- Review 2024 Capital budget as reviewed and modified by Capital Budget Subcommittee in their public meetings held on October 30, 2023 and November 06, 2023 and recommended to be brought forward to full Board of Water Commissioners for action.

Mr. Marsh explained that the 2023 Capital Budget year-end was carried forward since the total was less than the appropriated budget. The PFAS design expenditures were highlighted, along with the long-term contracted valve mixes and vents design amortized with no future appropriation and other ongoing projects.

Mr. Lukis explained that this year's Capital Budget has three driving factors:

- 1) Water main, fire hydrants, and valve replacements - Water main replacement projects funding
The majority is the East Street water main project which is being performed ahead of the Towns paving work to be completed. This will save the District by not having to perform a complete overlay and having the Town doing overlay and sidewalk work after the water main is replaced. It was also mentioned that Dedham DPW requested that if the District was to place the new main in a new corridor, than the old main will have to be removed, as they need to save room underground for future utility work that may be required. Weston & Sampson will evaluate the project with this in mind and determine the most cost effective path forward. Mr. Yessaillian asked why DWWD water mains cannot cross MWRA mains; Mr. Lukis answered that they can but at a 90-degree angle for a short cross. Mr. Lukis stated keeping the same corridor and changing as-needed increases costs. Messrs. Lukis and Locke suggested keeping the Budget as-is until further into the design, when additional funding could be requested if needed. Mr. Merithew asked if pipes will be upsized; Mr. Lukis answered that 8-inch pipes would be replaced by 12-inch pipes.

2) Burgess Avenue booster station construction

This project is in the design phase; the current station has no fire pump which poses a risk to the pressure zone in the event of a fire. It was added that Aquarion Water Company of Dover is looking at possibly connecting, which would reduce the cost of this project through cost sharing.

3) Capital item 50 Elm Street four-bay garage

Plans include the parking lot being redone with a rerouted path to allow for more parking.

Summarizing, the three projects total the majority of the Capital Budget. Discussion was held regarding timing, savings, Aquarion Dover, the booster station, online projects, the facility, carryover projects, etc.

Mr. Kustwan asked if Eversource gas mains could be piggybacked on; Mr. Lukis answered that they could not since work is planned with the Towns, and Mr. Merithew reiterated that Town paving schedules dictate the District's schedule.

Mr. Lukis stated the five-year Capital outlay and potential savings forecast can change. Discussion then included treatment plant maintenance, tank painting, timing, support staff schedule, the part-time engineer, and the Communications Coordinator.

In response to Mr. Phillips' question regarding the booster station construction timing, Mr. Lukis stated design may take three to four months.

Mr. Lexander requested motions regarding the Budgets.

Mr. Merithew moves that the Dedham-Westwood Water Commissioners vote to approve the proposed Fiscal Year 2024 Operating, Maintenance, and Debt Services Budget as reviewed and recommended by the Operating Budget Subcommittee in their publicly held meetings of November 13, 2023 and November 27, 2023, in the amount of \$12,292,480.

Mr. Phillips seconded the motion. A roll-call vote was taken.

Roll-Call: Messrs. Lexander, Yessaillian, Merithew, Phillips, and Kustwan voted Aye.

Motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Merithew moves that the Dedham-Westwood Water Commissioners vote to approve the proposed Fiscal Year 2024 Capital Budget as reviewed and recommended by the Capital Budget Subcommittee in their publicly held meetings of October 30, 2023 and November 06, 2023, in the amount of \$11,898,610.

Mr. Kustwan seconded the motion. A roll-call vote was taken.

Roll-Call: Messrs. Lexander, Yessaillian, Merithew, Phillips, and Kustwan voted Aye.

Motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Merithew moved that the Dedham-Westwood Water Commissioners vote to provide the Executive Director with the authority to sign contracts, task orders and Change Orders that have already been approved through the Fiscal Year 2024 Budget process. The signature authority shall only be for contracts and/or Task Orders that are within the approved budget amount and

that are of a total amount of \$100,000 or less, up to \$1,000,000 in aggregate. The signature authority shall only be for change orders that do not exceed 5% of the original contract's amount. Any change order greater than 5%, or contract greater than \$100,000, above the approved budgeted amount, or a new unbudgeted item shall require approval of the Board for execution.

Mr. Kustwan seconded the motion. A roll-call vote was taken.

Roll-Call: Messrs. Lexander, Yessaillian, Merithew, Phillips, and Kustwan voted Aye.

Motion passed unanimously.

Financials and Warrant

Treasurer's Report

Ms. Donoghue presented Warrants 78-81, for November 6th-20th activity, adding that Warrant 80 included a bond payment and interest as well as Weston & Sampson payment for various projects. For Ms. Donoghue, Mr. Lukis confirmed that all Commissioners approved the warrants on Basecamp.

Ms. Donoghue highlighted:

- Unreconciled cash balance at October 31st, decreased from September.
- Reconciled cash balance as of September 30th.
- Monthly summary of reconciled cash and disbursements through September 30, 2023.
- Monthly summary of reconciled cash and disbursements through December 31, 2022.

Ms. Donoghue explained that the cash balance is above-target because some Capital Budget expenses have not yet been processed.

Business Manager Report

Mr. Marsh did not have additional information to present tonight in addition to the Budget review.

Operations Manager Report

Mr. Locke reported:

Pumping and Operational Report

- Pumpage – 3.837 million gallons per day, lower than previous 4.073
Usage had been higher because the tank had to be refilled
MWRA average usage is approximately 300,000 gallons per day
- Main & Service Lines
 - 36 Pleasant Street, Dedham – Contractor repaired a service line leak
 - 139 Sanderson Avenue, Dedham - water main break
1968 8-inch cast iron circular break while filling tank
 - Ten Gainesville Road, Dedham - November 15th water main break
1962 6-inch cast iron 'blowout'

Update on New & Existing Projects

- Sandy Valley Road
 - Grained and refilled tank after 2 million gallons drained
 - No flooding
 - No customer calls
 - USG – blistering & corrosion found – report forthcoming
 - Long-range plan may be to address when to paint the interior of the tank
 - November 21st - tank online, one day ahead of schedule
 - Teamwork attributed – aspects listed
 - A ‘lessons learned’ report will be created from this first-ever project type

Mr. Merithew asked how long the tank refill took; Mr. Locke answered that it took four days. Mr. Kustwan asked about the location of the tank; Mr. Lukis answered that it is across from the Dedham Country Day School. Mr. Phillips asked the tank’s age; Mr. Alexander answered that it was placed in 2003. Mr. Kustwan asked of the work that was needed; discussion was held regarding the work accomplished and the tank’s blistering.

- Customer Service - Now at full staff with two new technicians
 - Mr. Locke commends Bobby Fish for training the new hires while he was the only backflow technician.
- Brookfield/Beacon/Washington Street Water Main Replacement
 - The last water service line tie-over will be done tomorrow
 - Thursday night, the new water main will be connected on Washington Street

Mr. Kustwan asked of employee appreciative measures, which were discussed; Mr. Alexander suggested looking into, including possible Union concerns.

Executive Director Report

Contracts Signed by Executive Director

Mr. Lukis informed that one change order was signed, for RFS Corporation for the Brookfield/Beacon/Washington Street water main replacement project for additional work because an unmarked telephone duct. Mr. Lukis added that RFS has done a fantastic job; a December meeting will confirm the total contract value. Discussion ensued regarding project details.

Mr. Merithew asked where the Distribution Department employee search stands; Mr. Lukis answered that he and Mr. Locke interviewed, and narrowed to two candidates. Because of experience, the external candidate is the first choice; negotiations will be initiated.

Mr. Lukis thanked the Commissioners for remotely signing the White Lodge filters media replacement contract. The kickoff meeting will be held in December for project start in January, once material is received.

Old/New Business*

No additional business was brought before the Board.

Next Meeting

Mr. Lukis will schedule the next Board meeting via email.

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. Lexander requested a motion to move to Executive Session and stated Open Session will not resume after. A motion was made by Mr. Yessaillian to adjourn to Executive Session; the motion was seconded by Mr. Merithew. A roll-call vote was taken.

Roll-Call: Messrs. Lexander, Yessaillian, Merithew, Phillips, and Kustwan voted Aye.
Motion passed unanimously.

The Open Session moved to Executive Session at 7:24p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kathy Travers Reynolds
Recording Secretary