



# DEDHAM-WESTWOOD WATER DISTRICT

## General Business Meeting

### Hybrid Meeting

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

**Wednesday, February 21, 2024 | 6:30 PM**

#### **Announcement of the Audio and/or Video Recording**

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

Mark Phillips, Chair

Eric Merithew, Vice-Chair

Louis Kustwan, Clerk (remote)

John Healy, Member

Robert Lexander, Member

Blake Lukis, Executive Director & Assistant Treasurer

Bob Marsh, Business Manager

Pauline Donoghue, Treasurer

Steve Locke, Operations Manager

#### **Absence**

Gary Yessaillian, Member

#### **Roll-Call Attendance**

Messrs. Phillips, Merithew, Kustwan, Healy, Lexander Present

Mr. Phillips confirmed a quorum present.

#### **Public Participation**

No public participants were present.

#### **Approval of Minutes of January 16, 2024**

Mr. Phillips called for a motion to approve the meeting minutes of January 16, 2024. Though absent for the January 16<sup>th</sup> meeting, Mr. Healy stated he reviewed the meeting minutes, especially relative to rate changes, and confirmed he is in complete agreement with his colleagues. A motion was made by Mr. Lexander to approve the minutes as reviewed for January 16, 2024; Mr. Merithew seconded the motion. With no additional discussion necessary, a roll-call vote was taken.

Roll-Call: Messrs. Phillips, Merithew, Kustwan, and Lexander voted Aye; Mr. Healy abstained. Motion passed.

#### **Financials and Warrant**

##### Treasurer's Report

Ms. Donoghue presented Warrants 5-13, for January 16<sup>th</sup> to February 15<sup>th</sup> activity, noting the second page of the forwarded information broke down large Warrants 6 & 13 by vendors and projects. No follow-up questions were posed by the Commissioners.

Ms. Donoghue highlighted cash receipts for December 2023 and January 2024:

- Unreconciled cash balance at January 31, 2024, decreased from December 31, 2023;
- Reconciled cash balance at December 31, 2023;
- Monthly summary of reconciled cash and disbursements through December 31, 2023;
- Monthly summary of reconciled cash and disbursements for prior year 2022.

Ms. Donoghue confirmed the cash balance has been reduced due to Capital projects.

Mr. Lukis added that a meeting will take place next Tuesday to discuss the financial policy, to then bring to the Board, important for the bond anticipation note for this year.

The Board discussed bond rating.

### **Business Manager Report**

#### Business Operating Reports

Mr. Marsh reported:

- The year-end audit will be completed within the next five days, for draft submission to the Board;
- The insurance agent is preparing all policy renewals;
- Employee annual reviews are taking place;
- The cash-flow plan is being developed.

### **Operations Manager Report**

Mr. Locke reported:

#### Pumping and Operational Report

- Pumpage – The past five weeks have been steady, ranging from the 3.7's to 3.683 million gallons per day this week.

MWRA average daily usage decreased to .73 million gallons – Attempting to keep the level there, by blending.

In response to a question, Mr. Lukis informed that the next TTHM sample will be taken in April. Mr. Locke informed that an informational sample will be taken March 8.

Discussion was held regarding sampling benefits, MWRA usage/blending, TTHM location concerns, usage history/current, and water quality.

- Main & Service Lines  
During the past five weeks, four main leaks were found, two in each town, one 1950s and three 1960s cast-iron pipes.

Two service-line breaks were found in Dedham last week.

## Update on New & Existing Projects

- Customer Service
  - 103 meters were installed in January;
  - 19 backflow devices were tested during January - This is typical and must be done every six months.

In response to Mr. Lexander's question, Mr. Locke detailed personnel responsibilities.

- Line Inventory Project
  - Vendor letters regarding Raybern Consulting going into homes in eight sections, four each town;
  - 6,069 service lines verified, 91% by the DWWD intern;
  - 18 lead services found, with different material on the customer side.

Discussion was held regarding project details.

- The 1986 forklift was sold on Municibid.

Discussion took place regarding this transaction.

Regarding the two plants' pilots and balancing, Mr. Merithew asked if less could be pumped from the Bridge Street plant. With Mr. Lukis answering that the plant does not do well pumping less than one million gallons, discussion took place regarding some suggested changes. Mr. Lukis recommended the March Board meeting be used to discuss the Bridge Street pilot results and big-picture plans. Options' costs, management, testing, and steps taken were discussed.

- 2024 Spring Comprehensive Leak Detection Survey
  - Awarded to the same firm as last year, New England Water Distribution Services LLC, at less than last year's cost.
- Capital Budget
  - Hydrant monitoring leak detecting sensors quotes invited.
    - Due February 27;
    - To reduce non-revenue water, sensors will be deployed to areas where multiple leaks.
- Distribution Supervisor
  - Doing well three weeks into the 90-day probationary period.

Regarding the hydrants, Mr. Phillips asked if either town would connect to hydrants. Mr. Locke answered that areas will be assigned, with truck loads logged; and further discussion was held.

- Burgess Avenue Sighting
  - Weston & Sampson proposed 1446 High Street in Westwood.
    - Mr. Lukis & Mr. Locke met with the property owner.

Discussion regarding the location, neighbor interaction, purchase vs. easement, onsite stream, generator, appraisers, and permitting challenges was held.

- Dedham Country Polo
  - 300 linear feet of water main extension installed.
    - Testing this week;
    - Closer to connection for redundant line to lessen stagnant water for reducing TTHMs.

Discussion included pricing of the additional 700 feet, neighbor contact, location, and paving.

- PFAS Resin
  - At 30% design point;
  - Reviewed last week;
  - Discussing tomorrow with Weston & Sampson.
- East Street 2024 Water Main Replacement Project
  - At 30% design point
- Air Towers Media Replacement
  - Meeting regarding
- Filter Media Replacement
  - Tentatively scheduled for last week of March, based on when parts received;
  - Installation last week of April.

Discussion took place regarding the project history, aeration, pressure, life cycle, and manganese.

Mr. Phillips asked about the timing of the Raybern service line inventory. Mr. Locke answered that Dedham's inventory of 7,500 residences would run through the summer. Mr. Lukis described the process as including three mailings, a press release, email, and police contact to prevent scammers, all to stay in-compliance.

Mr. Merithew asked about the resident survey; Mr. Lukis answered that 6K services are documented to-date. Discussion included cost to-date, anticipated cost, and a grant.

Mr. Phillips asked a question regarding Weston & Sampson's PFAS studies. Messrs. Locke and Lukis described the outcome, and discussion was held regarding carbon and ion-exchange systems.

## **Executive Director Report**

### Contracts Signed by ED

Mr. Lukis informed that no contracts have been signed since the last Board meeting.

### Discussion on Service Line Inventory Fees

Mr. Lukis proposes assessing a \$250 fine to residents who have not complied with the service line inventory survey after two notices. This fine is justified by a vacuum excavation cost of \$2,500 per day for ten services. Assistance by the office staff in completing the survey is offered to the residents. Mr. Kustwan asked if the pictures supplied by residents could be trusted; Mr. Lukis confirmed the pictures would be accepted, but additional pictures or an onsite visit might be required if the pictures are not clear.

Discussion included fine amount and justification, additional fees, fines history, courses of action, authority, number of residences, resident concerns, staff appointments, at-curbstop, EPA considers unknown services lead, COA and Assessor office potential avenues of assistance.

### Update on 2025 Power Pricing

Mr. Lukis reminded that the Board authorized his entering into a power contract – For all contracts, the locked-in four-year rate for 2025 to 2029 is 11 cents per kilowatt hour, 2 cents less than the current rate. The distribution charges fluctuate. Discussion took place regarding billing, solar, and grant programs.

### Action on 2023 Bonus Allocation

Mr. Lukis reiterated that the bonus process was changed to percent-based last year. The 2023 bonus amount is under-budget and less than last year's. Mr. Lukis answered Mr. Kustwan's question, stating the percentages are the same, with merit increases fluctuating with justifications discussed.

Mr. Phillips requested a motion regarding the 2023 Bonus Allocation. Mr. Lexander motioned to accept the bonus increases brought forward to the Board; Mr. Hurley seconded the motion, and a roll-call vote was taken.

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

Mr. Phillips asked about Aquarion Water Company; Mr. Lukis informed that Weston & Sampson is working with Aquarion on a hydraulic analysis to determine what other

improvements besides a pump station, and most likely an 8” water main, may be required. Mr. Phillips asked if Aquarion has options besides a relationship with DWWD. Mr. Lukis responded that the Commission had asked this question of Aquarion; Mr. Merithew reminded that Aquarion answered that alternative solutions may be considered if an agreement with the District is not reached.

#### Update on January PFAS and TTHM Sampling

Mr. Lukis explained the displayed PFAS and TTHM results, kept up-to-date on the DWWD website. With MWRA usage, a location of high TTHM readings showed in-compliance with the January sampling.

Mr. Lukis requested two meeting dates in March to discuss the Bridge Street PFAS readings and the pilot results at White Lodge. He forwarded the ‘Dedham Times’ article about Dedham using a water advisory committee to report to the Select Board.

The aquifer water source, pond access, development evaluation, no/low salt-use areas, MA DOT report, and State funding were discussed.

#### **Old/New Business\***

##### Rate Study Group

Mr. Lukis suggested the creation of an administrative rate-study group to review the 2025 rate structure, with many Capital infrastructure improvements planned. With the State required to enter into mandatory water-use requirements in May 2025, mandatory water restrictions would be implemented.

Mr. Phillips posed a question regarding water losses; Mr. Lukis answered that the reduced-10% guideline was not achieved.

Mr. Lukis suggested he, Mr. Locke, Mr. Marsh, and two Commissioners comprise the Rate Study Committee. This group will not be a Board sub-committee, rather an administrative committee which will bring information to the Board.

Mr. Phillips confirmed that rate studies are no longer published. Conversation included rates, measurements to calculate, town vs. DWWD billing, and usage.

Mr. Lexander asked about the Dedham contract towers for more revenue, with two possible locations. Mr. Lukis stated the overall maintenance would be detracted from. Discussion was held regarding welding, cell carrier stipulations, footings, land, RFPs, and tiles. Mr. Lukis confirmed he will review.

#### **Next Meeting**

The next District Board hybrid meetings are tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, March 12, and Wednesday, March 27, at 7pm.

In response to Mr. Lexander’s question about Weston & Sampson, Mr. Lukis outlined their contracts.

Mr. Phillips requested a motion to close the open meeting and move to Executive Session. A motion was made by Mr. Healy to close the open meeting and move to Executive Session pursuant to MGL c.30A Sec. 21(a)(2) to discuss strategy for negotiations with non-union personnel, Executive Director. Mr. Lexander seconded the motion, and a roll-call vote was taken.

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

The regular meeting will reopen after Executive Session.

Returning from Executive Session, Mr. Phillips reopened the meeting and requested a motion regarding the Executive Director's salary. Mr. Lexander motioned to increase Mr. Lukis' salary by 11.4%; Mr. Healy seconded the motion with grateful appreciation of Mr. Lukis' work for the District, and a roll-call vote was taken.

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

Mr. Lukis voiced appreciation for this increase, pleased with the work accomplished and looking forward to continuing to work with the Team. Mr. Lukis was thanked for reporting honest information.

Mr. Phillips requested a motion to adjourn the meeting. A motion was made by Mr. Lexander to adjourn the meeting; the motion was seconded by Mr. Merithew, and a roll-call vote was taken.  
Roll-Call: Messrs. Phillips, Merithew, Kustwan, Healy, and Lexander voted Aye.  
Motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:07p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Kathy Travers Reynolds  
Recording Secretary