



*Town of Walpole
Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Board of Sewer and Water Commissioners*

*John Hasenjaeger, Chair
Pradeep Mishra, Clerk
William Abbott, Member
Patrick Fasanello, Member
Jeffrey Fisher, Member*

MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, March 6, 2024

4:00 P.M.

Walpole Town Hall

Finance Committee Meeting Room

A meeting of the Board of Sewer & Water Commissioners was held on Wednesday, March 6, 2024 at the Walpole Town Hall in the Finance Committee Meeting Room at 135 School Street. The meeting is called to order by Board Chair, John Hasenjaeger at 4:03 p.m. Board Chair, John Hasenjaeger states that there are four Commissioners in attendance and there is a posted agenda.

Discussion about whether to voice or video record the meeting.

The meeting is being voice recorded and will be available on Walpole Media's You Tube channel.

Present at the Meeting

Sewer and Water Commissioners:

John Hasenjaeger, Patrick Fasanello, William Abbott, Pradeep Mishra, Jeffrey Fisher-Not Present

Other Participants:

Jim Johnson, Town Administrator, Rick Mattson, Director of Public Works, Scott Gustafson, Sewer and Water Superintendent, Stephen Nunnery, Asst. Sewer and Water Superintendent, Jodi Cuneo, Finance Director/Town Accountant, Lisa Sinkus, Treasurer/Collector, Terri DiGiovanni, Board Secretary

Water and Sewer Budget Discussion

Mr. Hasenjaeger states that the first item, we would like to hear from Jim Johnson the Town Administrator about the FY 25 budget review.

Mr. Johnson states that what I provided there is a modest increase to the budget, which is projected water rates to be an increase of anywhere from 1% to 2.65%, depending on what tier you are in. On the sewer side, a general overall increase of 1.05%. Mr. Johnson continues that my commentary is there is no significant increases on the water and sewer requests.

Mr. Hasenjaeger asks is this the version of the budget from February 28, 2024. Mr. Johnson comments yes, this is the version that I had given you and nothing has changed here. Mr. Johnson continues that the only thing that has changed from the February 28th version is the capital information. Mr. Johnson comments the budget has stayed the same since January otherwise.

Mr. Fasanello comments that it is my suggestion that maybe we could look at the large water users, I mean, very large water ones and raise their rates up in a progressive manner. Mr. Johnson asks if

they would like to explore adding another tier - tier 5. Mr. Fasanello comments that he would like to explore that. Mr. Hasenjaeger comments that he thinks it should be a separate class of water. Mr. Johnson states that it would be a separate industrial charge code just for that one particular user. Mr. Fasanello comments that they would like to see different ways that you want to do that and the Commissioners can look at it and see what the policy will be. Mr. Johnson comments that they will provide a couple of different scenarios on the water side as requested. Mr. Mishra adds that he thinks that we should have industrial codes on the sewer side too. Ms. Sinkus comments that the water and sewer department would have to identify every account that you consider industrial. Ms. Sinkus continues that then we would create a charge code or code that would be associated with the account.

Mr. Mattson comments that the budget is a needs based budget and there are no wants in there. Mr. Mattson continues if you look at this budget, 75% of it covers the pumping and treating of water.

Mr. Fasanello asks what are the indirect costs on the budget. Mr. Johnson comments that the indirect cost total on the water side is \$1,393,755 and the sewer side is \$547,628. Mr. Johnson continues the increase from last year on the water side is about \$60,000 and the sewer side is about \$70,000.

Motion made by Mr. Abbott and **Seconded** by Mr. Mishra to accept the budget presented to us for both water and sewer, document dated February 28th.

Vote 4-0-0 (YES VOTE)

Roll call John Hasenjaeger-Yes, Patrick Fasanello-Yes, William Abbott-Yes, Pradeep Mishra Yes, Jeffrey Fisher-Not Present

Mr. Johnson notes that the other item on the list is the Capital Improvement Plan. Mr. Johnson continues that I was interested in what the costs were and what the impact would be if we went forward with the \$7 million in work that would need to be done for the water connection.

Mr. Johnson notes that this Capital Improvement Plan is based on staff recommendations, consistent on what appeared in the booklet for the water and sewer side. Mr. Abbott asks do we have a similar breakdown for the PFAS Treatment System like we have for the MWRA. Mr. Mattson notes that right now it is currently in the study by the consultant. Mr. Mattson continues that the \$7 million is based on the research that Mr. Nunnery did. Mr. Mattson continues that we are looking at similar treatment facilities. Mr. Nunnery comments that he got the \$7 Million figure from researching similar projects with the State through the clean water trust program providing zero percent interest loans for PFAS projects.

Mr. Mattson comments that again, these are needs as opposed to wants and I would caution against postponing anything that has to do with for example, the storage tanks, you don't want to let them fall into a total state of disrepair. Mr. Mattson continues that if you let them go beyond the recommended time this creates more problems. Mr. Mattson notes that along with problems come additional costs. Mr. Mattson continues that he would suggest that you look at these and if you have questions on a particular item, please let us know.

Discussion about finding out what is available for grants and federal funding for our water distribution system.

Mr. Hasenjaeger asks about the Misc. Heavy Equipment. Mr. Mattson comments that this is the larger equipment anything that is within the fleet. Mr. Mattson continues that we are good shape with the backhoe that was purchased this year. Mr. Johnson notes that he exempted the DPW department from electric vehicles. Mr. Fasanello asks when we use the equipment for snowplowing, for instance; should the time be subtracted from our indirect costs. Mr. Johnson comments that it is subtracted from Snow and Ice. Mr. Mattson notes that any maintenance related work that needs to be done on those vehicles during, before or after the storm as a result of the storm is charged to Snow and Ice.

Mr. Hasenjaeger comments on the PFAS THM Treatment System category, is there a way to classify in a more general way for example Water System Improvement project. Mr. Johnson says we can call it whatever you folks choose. Mr. Hasenjaeger comments that PFAS is such a universal problem that someone needs to come out with some sort of financial rescue for towns like us. Mr. Hasenjaeger notes that the MWRA connection could take the relief off any short-term problems with PFAS. Mr. Mattson comments PFAS – yes, THM – no. Mr. Mattson continues the category can be called Water Quality Enhancements Projects. Mr. Hasenjaeger states that we would like to re-classify so we have a little more flexibility. Mr. Mattson comments that on the PFAS thing, we joined a class action lawsuit a couple of years ago and we are still waiting on the outcome.

Mr. Fasanello notes on THM, that he does not see anything about ultra-violet. Mr. Gustafson states that it is very expensive, very high maintenance and dangerous to work with. Mr. Fasanello asks does it work getting rid of THM. Mr. Gustafson states that it can, but it is not the best option. Mr. Fasanello asks if they could please investigate using light to get rid of THM. Mr. Gustafson comments that the assessment that is being done right now for both PFAS and THM, we are not telling them what technology is installed. They are going to tell us their recommendation. Mr. Fasanello asks that he call MWRA since they use ultra-violet.

Mr. Abbott states that he has determined what our priorities are on the capital. budget. Mr. Abbott continues that he worked on a spreadsheet that looks at all expenses and broke it down. The total expenses and the revenue sources that we use are defining rate as well as determining how much the rates would have to be by the tiers. Mr. Abbott notes that this spreadsheet will then tell us what the rates will be.

Mr. Johnson notes that he made the change to Water Quality System Enhancement. Mr. Johnson asks are there items on this list and the sewer list that you would like to change. Mr. Abbott notes that he thinks that it would be useful to see the impact of the water usage and rates. Mr. Abbott continues that he can provide something that would show what the costs are per dollar. Mr. Johnson notes that this booklet is going for publishing at the end of March and I want to be sure that the Commissioners are comfortable with how it stands now. Mr. Hasenjaeger comments to take out the \$2 million sewer system expansion. Mr. Johnson comments that he will add in that the Commissioners are fine with it and that Mr. Mishra suggests monthly billing which we will talk about this upcoming fall.

Mr. Hasenjaeger would like to discuss the MWRA. Mr. Hasenjaeger asks Mr. Johnson if he would like to keep the \$7 million for PFAS or if he wants to have that be TBD. Mr. Johnson notes that he can change to TBD – Water Quality System Enhancement.

Motion made by Mr. Abbott and **Seconded** by Mr. Mishra that we agree with the list of priorities with the changes that have been discussed here adding the monthly and the TBDs.

Vote 3-0-1 (YES VOTE)

Roll call John Hasenjaeger-Yes, Patrick Fasanello-Abstain, William Abbott-Yes, Pradeep Mishra Yes, Jeffrey Fisher-Not Present

Mr. Johnson comments what he handed out is from Stantec who is the engineering firm that Norwood hired. Mr. Johnson continues that on page 5 specifically, they are saying that their 6-inch water main is over 100 years old. Mr. Johnson notes that it jumps out to me that they are looking to balance their infrastructure on our backs. Mr. Fasanello comments let's say that we do not end up getting MWRA water because Norwood is being unreasonable. Mr. Fasanello continues under the state law, we have the right to a thing called Water Seizure. Mr. Fasanello notes that we have always had in the back of our minds using Willett Pond as a reservoir. He continues that if we never get MWRA water, one of the things that we would have to do is probably seriously consider taking the water from Willett Pond and putting it in our system after we treated it appropriately. Mr. Hasenjaeger comments that there is no way that we should be paying anybody \$5 million, \$4 million, \$6 million up front not knowing what will happen over 20 years. Mr. Hasenjaeger continues that it has to be so much a year over a period of time so we know that we are getting our value for what we are paying for. Mr. Johnson comments that he would not be looking to borrow all \$8 million and that he agrees with Mr. Hasenjaeger. Mr. Johnson continues that he would look to spread out the cost as long as possible. Discussion continues on MWRA project, pricing, water main and pipe locations and connections.

Mr. Abbott leaves the meeting.

Motion made by Mr. Hasenjaeger **Seconded** by Mr. Mishra to adjourn at 5:30p.m.

Vote 3-0-0

Roll call John Hasenjaeger-Yes, Patrick Fasanello-Yes, William Abbott -Not Present, Pradeep Mishra-Yes, Jeffrey Fisher-Not Present

DATE MINUTES ACCEPTED: April 8, 2024