



## Water/Wastewater Commission

### Meeting Minutes

May 18<sup>th</sup>, 2022

Legislative Building, City Hall Campus  
700 Main St, Fitchburg MA 01420

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A meeting for the City of Fitchburg Water/Wastewater Commission was held on Wednesday May 18<sup>th</sup>, 2022 at the Legislative Building, City Hall Campus, 700 Main St. Fitchburg, MA 01420

#### **The meeting commenced at 5:05 PM**

Members present: Nicholas Erickson, Commissioner of Public Works & City Engineer  
George Seiner, Commission Member  
Stephen Bodurtha, Commission Member  
Colby O'Brien, Commission Member  
Michael McLaughlin, Commission Member

Others present: John Deline, Deputy Commissioner of Water  
Mark McNamara, Interim Deputy Commissioner Wastewater Division  
Jennifer Lambert, Head Clerk Water Division

Absent: Mark Piermarini, Commission Member  
Rick Healey, Chairman Water/Wastewater Commission

#### **Item #1**

**Approval of meeting minutes:** Motion to approve minutes from April 20, 2022 meeting was granted by unanimous vote.

#### **Item #2**

**Public Forum:** None

#### **Item #3**

##### **Water Division:**

- Indirect Costs to City – Increase in costs for the water department to the city for operating costs to different city departments. This would include the Treasurers Dept. for data processing, HR, Auditing, Purchasing and several other departments that the water department uses for services. The amount for department costs didn't go up that much. The bigger increase in costs

was for fringe benefits and other costs, like general insurance, retirement, workers comp, health insurance for active employees as well as retirees and life insurance for active employees along with retirees. Overall, the increase went from \$920,000 FY22 to \$1,110,000 for FY23.

- FY23 Water Budget – No significant cuts. Budget this year will be running a deficit because of higher costs and the increase in direct costs. We do have retained earnings that we can take from to cover that. This may not be the case, as we will be looking at other things in which we can save money on. Unfortunately we are not seeing an increase in water usage which in turn means that we are not seeing an increase in revenue. There are salary increases, contractual agreements that will be going through City Council so these have been included in the budget for this coming year. Expenses run pretty much close to what's budgeted each year, so no significant changes in any of these. Motion made by Colby Obrien to accept FY23 Water budget and send to City Council for approval. Motion seconded by Nicholas Erickson and passes unanimously.
- Oak Hill Water Storage Tank (Loan Order Increase) – We have received bids on this project and of course the bids came in higher than projected. We are looking to increase the loan order from 2.75 million to 3.3 million. We had two bids come in, one being around 4 million and the low bid came in at 3.15 million. We do have some resident engineering that will need to be covered within the loan order as well. This project does need to be completed by the end of this calendar year per Mass DEP's mandate. This tank has been leaking. Motion made by Colby Obrien and seconded by George Seiner to approve the increase in the loan order from 2.75 million to 3.3 million and send to City Council for final approval. Motion passes unanimously.
- Falulah Transmission Main – Project is complete. We are tied in from the plant all the way down to the storage tanks. We upgraded 2100 feet of the 16" transmission main up to a 24" main. This will improve the Falulah plant to be able to provide water to the city if anything happens at Regional. All was pressure tested this week and passed. We are hoping to get the plant back up and running by next week.
- SCADA System upgrades – This project is about a year behind schedule. This is mostly due to chip shortages along with cost increases in materials.
- Water Meter Replacement Project – This will be my last update on this project. We have 244 meters left to replace out of approx.... 11,340. The meters that are left are stragglers/non-responsive, and service line issues. We are hoping by the end of this year we will be down to under 50 meters left. I would like to point out that our personnel worked real hard and did a lot of the meter changes ourselves. This ended up giving us a \$430,000 in cost savings.

#### **Item #4**

##### **Wastewater Division**

- Staffing update – We had two retirees in the 1<sup>st</sup> Qtr. of this year. We have since filled both those positions and are back up to full staff on the operations side. We still have a few vacancies but these positions are not greatly affecting our day to day operations. We will reach out to HR to try and have these positions filled as well.
- FY23 Wastewater Budget – Some reductions in our expense line items. With the SSU project wrapped up our chemical expenses have lowered due less water coming into the plant, so overall the plant is running more efficiently. This may even out as the cost of everything is going up. Our OT line item increased due to contractual agreements and the new wages set. Motion made by Colby Obrien to accept FY23 WW budget to send to City Council for approval. Motion seconded by George Seiner and passes unanimously.
- NPDES Permit Renewal – This is a discharge permit and is part of the Clean Water Act. This sets limitations on what we have to maintain in order to run the plant correctly. Last permit expired

in 2015 and we have been without one for approx... 7 yrs. We have been working off the old permit since that time. We have since been notified that they will be issuing us a new permit. USDPA along with MA DEP came out on Tuesday May 17<sup>th</sup> to go through the review process. We discussed ongoing projects and projects that have wrapped. We are hoping they do not change our permit allowances and maybe just add more monitoring. We tried to explain to them that if limitations are lowered it causes us to do more capital improvements. Once permit is issued we will have a 30 day comment period. Looking at other permits throughout the state that have been issued, things have mostly stayed the same. The City of Fitchburg however is in a different category because of our Consent Decree.

- Rain Barrel Program – This is the 5<sup>th</sup> year in a row we, along with DPW and the Conservation Commission have partnered with the Great American Rain Barrel to offer discounted rain barrels to the City of Fitchburg and its customers. Rain barrels are available for purchase by residents at the discounted price of \$79.00. The City of Fitchburg is offering an additional discount of \$40 to Fitchburg residents only to the first 130 barrels sold.

#### **Item #5**

##### **Other Business:**

- The Water/Wastewater Commission will next meet at 5:00 pm. on June 15, 2022 at the Legislative Building, City Hall Campus 700 Main St. Fitchburg MA, 01420.

**Meeting adjourned at 6:09 pm**