

## WLMAC MEETING NOTES OF FEBRUARY 13, 2012

**Present:** Greta Eckhardt, Paul Malchodi, Chuck Olmstead, Barry Rosen

**Note Taker(s):** Barry Rosen

**Chairperson:** Barry Rosen

**Called To Order:** The chairperson called the meeting to order on February 13, 2012 at 8:35 PM ET.

**New Business:**

1. Approval of Minutes: Ms. Eckhardt moved and Mr. Olmstead seconded a motion to accept the minutes of November 29, 2011. The motion was approved unanimously.
2. Commissioner's Meeting of December 5, 2011: Mr. Rosen provided a brief overview of the salient items of the AWD Commissioner's meetings held on 12/5/2011, 1/9/2012 and 1/29/2012 which are summarized below:
  - 2.1. The proposed budget for FY13 was presented and discussed. It included some preliminary numbers for a new water treatment plant that would service the Assabet and School Street wells. Using liquid oxygen or ozone is being considered to reduce costs. Andover is using liquid oxygen in its new plant to reduce the energy expense of generating ozone. A drawback to this approach is liquid O<sub>2</sub> is a dangerous material.
  - 2.2. The pending litigation against Assabet Sand and Gravel encroaching on District land was discussed. A preliminary injunction request is pending. The sense is that the defendant seems to be engaging in obfuscation or perhaps is not telling the truth in their filed papers.
  - 2.3. The job description and qualifications for a new WLMAC member was presented to the Board of Water Commissioners for discussion and approval. This description would be utilized to find a qualified candidate for the current committee opening. The Board did not seem to think that they needed to approve the document but it will be utilized and posted to the AWD web site.
3. Commissioner's Meeting of January 9, 2012:
  - 3.1. There was a review and discussion of the draft budget and warrant for FY13. Included in the budget was \$150K for piloting a combined Assabet and School Street treatment facility. The well sites are about one mile apart so if this was done, there would be a substantial piping necessary. The District also feels that it has to raise the user fees earlier than it had indicated by increasing the meter fee from \$15/quarter to \$25/quarter with no water allowance included in that fee.
  - 3.2. The majority of the meeting was spent with a homeowner who has a \$22,000 water bill. [*This discussion will be an on-going one for the AWD as this circumstance has never arisen before in the memory of the present commissioners.*]

The user is one of a number of homeowners that share a common pit with each home's pit meter within it. The District was not able to read this particular homeowner's pit meter for a number of quarters and therefore provided an estimated bill to the homeowner. The invoice asked the homeowner to contact the district for an appointment to replace the meter since water would have to be shut-off during this procedure. When the meter was finally replaced, it indicated that a great deal of water had been used. The replacement meter indicated a huge number of gallons of water had passed through it within the first couple of weeks of usage. The bottom line was that the homeowner had a large leak between the meter and his residence (about a 200 foot run). At considerable expense, the homeowner had to have a company trench and replace the piping to his home as it was discovered to be poor pipeline material and not set into the ground following current standards. He is asking the AWD for a rebate on his large water bill. The AWD would like him to get together with his neighbors who they feel have the same problem looming ahead of them just waiting for a break to happen and replace the multiple lines with a single 4 inch line. New meters would be placed into each of their homes eliminating the pit meters. Preliminary estimates by the homeowner indicate that this would be an expensive proposition even when one considers splitting the bill between four families. The first estimate was \$52K. The AWD is still going to discuss this but did not feel it would rebate the large bill at this time unless the four families decide to install new pipes and new meters onto their properties.

4. Commissioner's Meeting of January 23, 2012:

- 4.1. There was a continuation of the multiple pit meters discussion since the couple attended the meeting once again. There was some question from the homeowner as to the accuracy of the meter. They asked if it could have overstated the amount of water that actually passed through it. Chris responded that in the District's experience, when meters lose their accuracy, they tend to slow down and therefore read less than the actual amount of water that passed through the meter. However, it was pointed out that the District cannot test the old meter because it was destroyed after it was removed. It was stated that this is normally not the case as the District keeps meters that have been removed for some time in case there is a request to have it tested. The AWD will have a third party laboratory test and report the meter's accuracy if requested by a water taker at the taker's expense. It was stated that when the new meter was installed, it registered that over 3,000 ft.<sup>3</sup> of water passed through it over just a few days. This indicated to the District that there was a large water leak on the homeowner's property. After being informed, the homeowner did have leak repaired. The AWD feels that if the homeowner would have contacted the District when they began receiving estimated bills, the severity of the problem would have been much less. As the AWD has never dealt with such an issue before, the commissioners decided to table further discussion of the topic and take it up once again at a future meeting to see if they can arrive at a decision that will be used to set policy.
- 4.2. The AWD Commissioners approved the final budget and warrant that will be presented to the ratepayers at the AWD Annual Meeting in March.

- 4.3. Chris reported that since the AWD made it clear that it was not going to accept the settlement offer made by Assabet Sand and Gravel, the company has moved additional equipment onto AWD land. He specifically mentioned that a rock crushing machine that is powered by either a diesel or conventional engine was noticed. In addition, he stated that detectable levels of MTBE have been found in the water although the amount is below the reportable level. He thinks that this could be a result of some buried stuff including discarded tanks. MTBE has not been used in motor fuel for some time which makes him suspect that it is possible that there is buried material within the site. Chris noted that this is conjecture only pending actual investigation.
- 4.4. The AWD voted to continue the efficient washing machine and efficient toilet replacement program throughout the year rather than just making it during certain time periods.
5. Future WLMAC Meeting Dates/Times: After some discussion among the membership, it was decided that the current meeting schedule should be continued without any change unless a significant conflict arises. Therefore, the next regularly scheduled meeting will be held at the AWD HQ on March 13, 2012 beginning at 8:00 PM. The AWD Annual Meeting will be held on March 21, 2012. The WLMAC members each stated that they will try to attend the District Meeting.
6. Possible WLMAC Candidate Discussion:
  - 6.1. There appear to be two interested candidates. One has expressed interest to Chris Allen, District Manager. The other expressed possible interest to Barry Rosen who met the individual through the Town's DRB (Design Review Board).
  - 6.2. The members discussed if and how we should proceed with those individuals. After substantial conversation, the sense of the committee is that it should not interview any candidates at its meeting. The consensus is that the commissioners should invite any currently interested parties to one of their meetings which the WLMAC should also attend. During the meeting, the candidate(s) could be questioned and their vitae reviewed by those present.
  - 6.3. It was clearly felt that the decision to appoint any candidate was solely at the discretion of the AWD Commissioners. The WLMAC membership provided a suggested recruitment job description and would certainly assist in any questioning and/or feedback during the process.
  - 6.4. Mr. Rosen was asked to contact the AWD Commissioners and notify them of our discussion's outcome.

**Old Business:**

7. Discussion and/or Revision of the AWD Capacity Study:

- 7.1. Prior to the meeting, Mr. Rosen sent a “straw man” memo to the WLMAC membership. A copy is attached to the minutes. The memo was for discussion purposes only. It was *not* a proposal.
- 7.2. There was considerable discussion among the membership on each person’s opinion.
- 7.3. Mr. Malchodi suggested to the group that it seemed like we were gravitating more towards a needs assessment and possible tactics to meet that need. He felt that there seemed to be less of an emphasis on “educating” the public in this study.
- 7.4. Ms. Eckhardt mentioned that defining “capacity” may have a number of components that we will need to consider. She reminded us that time can play a role when one considers the capacity of the AWD.
- 7.5. The committee agreed that it should make changes to the outline of the AWD Capacity Study. It will take this up as the major topic during the next meeting of the WLMAC.
- 7.6. Both the original outline (which most believed had some valuable ideas) as well as the needs/tactics approach (suggested by the pre-meeting memo) will be utilized as the initial basis for generating a streamlined outline.
- 7.7. While there was some discussion, no consensus was reached on whether or not to involve the AWD Finance Committee. Some members felt that we might be able to do the “numbers work” ourselves. We will wait on this discussion item until we have produced a revised outline.

**Adjournment:**

On a motion made by Mr. Olmstead and seconded by Ms. Eckhardt, the meeting was adjourned at 9:40 PM ET on February 13, 2012.

# *Memo*

To: WLMAC Members

From: Barry

CC:

Date: 14 March 2012

Subject: Components of AWD Capacity Study

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As you probably know or have guessed, I am re-thinking the outline of our proposed AWD water supply capacity study. I know that we are trying to do the very best job that we can do as a committee of the AWD but I am beginning to believe that we are approaching the task in more detail than is necessary. This is not because we are "short" one person on the WLMAC and the work may appear to be too much for us but rather because in attending and listening to the discussions that occur at the AWD Commissioner's meetings, the commissioners and the District staff seem to be moved by the bottom line—the need to do something and the cost to do it.

We typically try to do the cerebral thing by researching and reporting on the background. Things such as where water comes from, how the water is stored, surface and sub-surface water flow are included in our reporting. While this is a good thing and may help many of the uninitiated understand more about our water supply, I am not so sure that it is worth the time of the committee. We can certainly discuss this in more detail at our meeting. At this time, I believe that the most significant parts of our study would need to address:

- 1) Some historical water usage in Acton which should include some data about the sudden increase in water use that has occurred during particularly hot times (peak demands).
- 2) The effect(s) that very high water usage does have or could have on Acton with respect to water pressure and safety.
- 3) What do we think is a likely growth or decrease in Acton's water usage?
- 4) The quality issues with Acton's water.
- 5) Water treatment in Acton. How and where water is currently treated.
- 6) What are the current and/or future water "deficits" in Acton? [If any.]
  - a. Ability or difficulty in meeting current peak demand?
  - b. Ability or difficulty in meeting future predicted peak demand?
  - c. Ability or difficulty in meeting/maintaining current water quality expectations (legal or otherwise)?
  - d. Ability or difficulty in meeting/maintaining future water quality expectations (legal or otherwise)?
- 7) What are the possible solutions for:
  - a. Quantity? (some possible examples)
    - i. Raise pumping limits on existing infrastructure?

- ii. Increase number of wells?
  - iii. Obtain water from outside sources such as neighboring towns or MWRA?
  - iv. Increase the amount of water storage?
  - b. Quality? (some possible examples)
    - i. Update existing treatment plants?
    - ii. Build new treatment plants?
    - iii. Combine/redesign new or existing treatment plants?
    - iv. Obtain water from outside sources that already meets or exceeds quality needs and/or expectations such as from MWRA or a neighboring town?
- 8) Can we place some "guidance" numbers around any of the solutions? It might be a good idea to meet with the AWD Finance Committee to see if they would be willing to work with us on some aspects of this part of the project. We have already seen an example of where they put together some preliminary "guesstimates" of connecting to the MWRA for the purchase of some quantity of water.

Please note that this thinking is for discussion at our next meeting. I am sending it to you ahead of the meeting to reduce or eliminate the amount of time that I would spend explaining it to you as part of the effort to keep the total meeting time of 2/13 to the stated goal of one hour beginning at 8:30 PM when all of us can be present. I know that this thinking may be a little late in the game but I believe that it will lead us into the interesting group discussion and writing mode that all of us enjoy. I also hope that it will make our submission more impactful to the Acton Water District. Please note that this memo is my opinion only for the agenda item. It is *not* a mandate for a new project outline.

In keeping with the MA OML, we should not discuss this agenda item until the WLMAC meeting of February 13, 2012.