

Board of Water Commissioners  
Meeting Minutes  
Acton Water District  
693 Massachusetts Avenue, Acton, MA  
Monday, January 10, 2022

**AGENDA**

- A. Comments from the Public
- B. Approve minutes from the meeting of 12/20/21
- C. Appoint one Commissioner to approve warrants while conducting meetings virtually

**D. OLD BUSINESS:**

- 1. Per- and Poly-Fluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS)
  - Current sample data, if available
  - Discussion of development of a PFAS Action Plan
- 2. Review of Draft Budget and Warrant for Fiscal Year 2023 (FY '23)
- 3. Follow-up discussion of scheduling the Annual District Meeting
- 4. Request from Friends of Gardner Field for a Drinking Fountain/Bottle filling station

**E. NEW BUSINESS:**

- 1. Review and approve the Notice of Award to N. Granese & Sons for the Assabet #3 well project
- 2. Commissioners Annual Report for 2021
- 3. Selection of new Auditor

EXECUTIVE SESSION: -- To consider the purchase, exchange, lease of real property as an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating

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Due to the Covid-19 stay-at-home order by Governor Charles Baker, the Board of Water Commissioners meeting was not held at the Acton Water District Office, instead the meeting was held via Zoom Webinar. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM on Monday, January 10, 2022 by Mr. Barry Rosen.

**Present at Tonight's Meeting:**

Commissioners: Erika Amir-Lin, Barry Rosen (Chair), Stephen Stuntz  
District Manager: Chris Allen  
District Treasurer: Mary Jo Bates  
District Counsel: Mary Bassett  
Environmental Manager: Matthew Mostoller  
Commissioners Secretary: Lynn Protasowicki  
Finance Committee: Ron Parenti, Bill Guthlein

**Public Attendees:**

Kim Kastens

**A. Comments from the Public**

No comments this evening.

**B. Approve Minutes from the Meeting of 12/20/21**

Mr. Rosen motioned to approve the minutes of December 20, 2021. Mr. Stuntz seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved by a roll call vote: Ms. Amir-Lin, Mr. Stuntz, and Mr. Rosen.

### **C. Appoint One Commissioner to Approve Warrants While Conducting Meetings Virtually**

Mr. Rosen motioned to appoint Mr. Stuntz as the Commissioner to approve warrants while conducting meetings virtually until the next meeting of the Commissioners. Ms. Amir-Lin seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved by a roll call vote: Ms. Amir-Lin, Mr. Stuntz, and Mr. Rosen.

### **D. OLD BUSINESS:**

#### 1. Per- and Poly-Fluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS)

- Current sample data, if available
- Discussion of development of a PFAS Action Plan

Mr. Allen provided an update. He stated that the last samples from the NAWTP were 17.2 PPT and 16.4 PPT for SAWTP. Only two plants are currently available to serve water. SAWTP is the only treatment plant supplying water to all customers at this time.

Mr. Mostoller stated that the North Acton for 4<sup>th</sup> quarter, our average was 16.5 PPT and we are down significantly from beginning of the year. Sending out a notice to the public talking about 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter violation and will include the information about 4<sup>th</sup> quarter samples meeting the standard at the North Acton site.

Barry Rosen: do we know when and which wells/plants will be sampled in January? Matt: not at this time. We sampled SA this morning for our January round. We anticipate sampling North Acton this week or next week when it returns to service. It is unclear if Clapp/Whitcomb will be back in service once the carbon media is changed and preconditioning is complete. Both Conant wells are currently offline pending final approval from the state for the Central Acton Water Treatment Plant, which is close to 100% complete.

PFAS Acton Plan – Mr. Rosen stated that in our last discussion Matt stated that customers are looking for actions so based upon those discussions at our last open meeting we would continue our discussions on an action plan.

Mr. Stuntz put together a spreadsheet (included in the packets) showing all our issues which he shared. We should ask Finance Committee to look at rent vs purchasing at new treatment plant. He asked Mary Jo the following: what is added to the capital fee for every million dollars of capital improvement? It's about \$113 per year per user. And he also asked her if the capital costs were added to water rates what would the water rates do...they are surprisingly similar.

Mr. Stuntz suggests getting two pilot tests done; put the rentals in; then move to build plants.

Erika Amir-Lin asked Steve about the South Acton treatment plant. What are those numbers? Steve responded we had the projected numbers for the treatment plant at North Acton. Mr. Allen stated that was the number we were approved for a loan through the MA State Revolving Fund, \$6.7 million for permanent installation of both Granular Activated Carbon (GAC) and Ion Exchange (IX). Ms. Amir-Lin asked where do the Clapp Whitcomb wells in W. Acton fit into the plan? Steve said since it has been non-detect he didn't fit that into this spreadsheet. Erika stated that her concern is that it was not designed to remove PFAS that is a side benefit we are getting from the current carbon system. There is a possibility that this plant will come under scrutiny to be specifically designed to treat PFAS along with what is being currently treated there. She thinks we should price out refitting or adding on to West Acton. Based upon some discussion, Mr. Mostoller stated it could be around \$10 million.

Barry Rosen stated that he is uncomfortable doing any permanent installations now because (1) the regulations for PFAS could change and we don't know if other contaminants will be regulated and (2) the District really needs to consider at least one additional source and is thinking that MWRA might be a viable source. Before we make any decisions we should find out more about connecting to MWRA. We should have WLMAC look into this for us. He is uncomfortable picking a solution tonight.

Mr. Stuntz stated that the MWRA solution is 5-10 years out to get water from them. So, what do we do in the short-term. That would push us to do the rental. But we need to find out if MWRA is willing to sell us water. He agrees that WLMAC should go out and do the research on connecting to MWRA.

Mr. Rosen stated that we should move ahead with a solution as quickly as we can with installing the rental treatment trailer and retrofitting the North Acton plant. Ms. Amir-Lin: she agrees with that, but we should still pilot PFAS removal technology for the Acton Center and South Acton plants. And we should appropriate money for those two pilots. Mr. Stuntz: agrees with pilot tests and looking at it carefully to rent or do a permanent plant.

Ron Parenti: wants to understand the chart that is being shown – just confirming that for North Acton the cost is \$6.7 million for permanent installation and the \$500-700k is for rental. Mr. Stuntz confirmed that is correct. Ron shares Barry's concerns with change in future with regards to emerging contaminants and the possibility that Acton will need to add more treatment and the impact that will have on future expenses. He believes that it is useful to look at MWRA as a viable option. And the table/spreadsheet should be sent to FinCom.

Proposal for Action:

Ms. Amir-Lin: would like to see a warrant article drafted for pilot test costs and a discussion for temporary PFAS treatment in North Acton.

Mr. Allen: would suggest that the warrant article be more general in terms of a "pool of money to mitigate PFAS within the District well sites as needed".

Steve Stuntz: how long does it take for the rentals to be installed and online versus building a permanent plant? Mr. Allen stated that the permanent infrastructure would have to be installed and the availability of the system would be contingent upon that which he does not know as he has not spoken to Suez representative in a few months. Mr. Stuntz that would be part of the decision process is the length of time it would take for a rental versus a permanent. Do we know how long it would take to build the \$6.7 million plant. Mr. Allen stated that the town allocated \$450K of American Rescue Plan (ARPA) Act funds which was for the design of the permanent North Acton system and then go to bid and construction would be based upon availability of materials. Mr. Stuntz suggests having Chris get timelines for permanent and the rental so that we have the information to help with decisions.

Mr. Allen: when he spoke with Hudson they had an easier path to connect to MWRA but they decided to not connect with them because of the expense. Acton doesn't have that proximity connection to MWRA like Bedford and Lexington has. Mr. Rosen was wondering if there are any cost sharers like Maynard, Stow or Boxborough who want to get water from MWRA.

Kim Kastens: she wasn't clear on the \$450K of ARPA funds allocated by the Town for the design of the North Acton plant that as it sounded like the money was for a permanent build but can it be reallocated for a temporary plant? Mr. Allen responded that he is not sure of what the limitations are on that. He knows that the Town stated it was for PFAS at the NAWTP. In the discussions they stated design of a full scale plant. And, Ms. Kastens suggests that there should be a lot more detail on these warrant articles so that voters know what the money is going to be used for. Mary Bassett stated that we put the warrant

article for the amount of money we are asking for and then the Commissioner who is presenting it would go into detail explaining the goal of how the money will be used.

Final proposal would be to have two separate warrant articles (one for two pilots and one for treatment).

## 2. Review of Draft Budget and Warrant for Fiscal Year 2023 (FY '23)

Mr. Allen stated that enclosed in the Commissioners packets is the draft budget which contains the six month actual expenses. We can continue to discuss and work up to approval for presentation at the annual meeting. Otherwise, there've been no changes since last discussion.

### Discussion of Warrant Articles

Barry Rosen: the \$35K that we allocated for the rate study he is not sure he feels good about having it done now. With what we are going to have to allocate (making significant capital investments), he suggests holding off on that right now. Mary Bassett: we don't have a good handle on the long term debt so it probably is not a good time to do a rate study. Mr. Stuntz agrees with Barry.

Mr. Rosen: Do we have to do the master plan study? Chris Allen: no it is done by practice. We create a 10 year plan and update it every 5 years. Mr. Rosen stated that we are looking to do the rate study and master plan update with all this fluidity around us. Mr. Allen stated that the master plan is going to have an in-depth examination of PFAS, MWRA, and climate change.

Erika Amir-Lin: good time to do a master plan update but could see pushing off the rate study for another year. We might get master plan update that guides us into a rate study that might be more robust then we would have undertaken otherwise. Steve and Barry: agree with Erika and hold off on the rate study.

Kim Kastens: stated her comments are on the master plan update – she is pleased to hear that climate change is in there. She is advocating for having a public input process for the master plan. That has become the norm with the town.

Bill Guthlein: stated that the rate study is more necessary than ever. There are two issues we are trying to resolve with the rate study: (1) debate between volume rates based on water use and the current system which treats debt cost as a fixed expense.(2) how we best set summer high seasonal use rates vs average use rates and the issue being that we may not charging enough for wells, treatment to deal with those peak volumes. As things get progressively more concerning with the capital expenses he sees the rate study as bime more urgent not less. He respectively disagrees with the deferring of the rate study.

Ron Parenti: regarding the rate study he has begun doing that analysis and developed a model that fits the usage distribution pretty well and has asked Mary Jo Bates to give him some more data so that he can look at summer versus winter distributions. He has the mathematical tools to pursue the study that you are talking about. Once the models have been developed for usage we can try different billings schemes and how they play against one another.

Kim Kastens: her question is towards the rate study plan – Barry made the important point that any new rate allocation would have a cut off between the old debt and the new debt. Would the \$1M of borrowing for Kelley's Corner plus the \$1.2M of borrowing PFAS, be new debt or old debt? Would it fall under of the existing rate scheme or be eligible for a new rate scheme that would come out of thinking of rates. Steve: it comes under new. Kim: but we don't have a new plan yet. Steve: he is encouraged that Ron is working on it and it will show us all sorts of things.

## 3. Follow-up Discussion of Scheduling the Annual District Meeting

Mr. Stuntz stated that he wants to move forward with the March date. Mr. Rosen stated that he is not comfortable with a March meeting based upon where we are at with the pandemic.

Mr. Allen stated that we need to make a decision at the February open meeting. The Commissioners are comfortable with waiting until February to make the final decision.

4. Request from Friends of Gardner Field for a Drinking Fountain/Bottle filling station

Mr. Allen stated that we were unable to meet with the contact so we will continue that item to a future meeting.

**E. NEW BUSINESS:**

1. Review and Approve the Notice of Award to N. Granese & Sons for the Assabet #3 Well Project

Enclosed is the recommendation of award from Wright-Pierce.

Mr. Stuntz moved to approve the Notice to Award to N. Granese & Sons for \$787,560 for the Assabet #3 Well project. Ms. Amir-Lin seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by a roll call vote: Ms. Amir-Lin, Mr. Stuntz, and Mr. Rosen.

2. Commissioners Annual Report for 2021

Barry Rosen is working on it and will send his draft to Chris who will then gather comments from the other Commissioners. The Board usually approves the report at the second meeting in January.

3. Selection of New Auditor

Mary Jo Bates stated that as of June 20, 2021 Maureen Mara was ending her time as our District auditor. In order to facilitate a new auditor, we solicited five firms by Request for Proposal (RFP), and two firms submitted proposals. After interviewing them last week, I recommend we hire Powers & Sullivan for a three-year term at \$16,000/year. They are the auditors for the Town of Acton and the Acton-Boxborough School District.

Mr. Rosen moved to accept Mary Jo Bates recommendation to hire Powers & Sullivan as the Acton Water District auditor for a three year term at \$16,000/year. Mr. Stuntz seconded and was unanimously approved by a roll call vote: Ms. Amir-Lin, Mr. Stuntz, and Mr. Rosen.

*Mr. Rosen motioned to adjourn the open meeting at 8:48 PM. Ms. Amir-Lin seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously by a roll call vote: Mr. Stuntz, Ms. Amir-Lin, and Mr. Rosen. Mr. Rosen moved to enter into Executive Session at 8:49 PM to discuss the purchase, exchange, lease of real property as an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the District.*