

Board of Water Commissioners and Finance Committee

Meeting Agenda

Monday, February 24, 2025 @ 7:00 PM

AGENDA

- Comments from the public
- Appoint one Commissioner to sign warrants while conducting meetings virtually

OLD BUSINESS:

- Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS)
- Discussion of Additional PFAS Upgrades
- MWRA MetroWest Expansion

NEW BUSINESS:

- Annual District Meeting Presentation
- Warrant Article Assignments
- RFP for Nagog Hill Tank Cell Tower Lease
- WaterSense Program Letter of Support

Present at Tonight's Meeting:

Commissioners: Barry Rosen (Chair), Erika Amir Lin, Stephen Stuntz

Finance Committee: Ron Parenti, John Petersen

District Manager: Matthew Mostoller

District Treasurer/Collector: Christine McCarthy

Public: Allison Jones

START OF MINUTES

Mr. Rosen opened the meeting of The Acton Water District Board of Commissioners at 7:01 pm.

Mr. Petersen opened the meeting of The Acton Water District Finance Committee with members Ron Parenti and John Petersen present at 7:03 pm.

Comments from the public

None at this time.

Appoint one Commissioner to sign warrants while conducting meetings virtually

Mr. Rosen motioned to appoint Mr. Stuntz to sign warrants until the next regularly scheduled meeting. Ms. Amir Lin seconded, and it was unanimously approved via a roll call vote, Ms. Amir Lin, Mr. Stuntz, Mr. Rosen.

OLD BUSINESS:

Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS)

Mr. Mostoller had no data to share with the board at this time. The Center Acton Plant will remain off for the rest of February and return to service in March.

Discussion of Additional PFAS Upgrades

Mr. Mostoller informed the board that the filter vessel delivery will be delayed again. Delivery was originally set for November 2024 and January 2025, it has now been pushed back to mid-April 2025 for both projects. Mr. Mostoller will be meeting with the project engineers to discuss further action plans and available options.

Mr. Rosen asked to confirm if the vessels are needed in place before the rest of construction can finish, which Mr. Mostoller affirmed. Ms. Amir Lin asked for the reason for the delay. Mr. Mostoller reported that the original delay from November to January was for both the District and the Supplier, however delays after that were supposedly due to a retooling project at the factory which has created a backlog of vessel projects. Mr. Mostoller was also told that there was an issue with the cap for one of the vessels showing up damaged.

Mr. Petersen asked if there are any financial implications of these delays, Mr. Mostoller reported no anticipated cost impacts at this time.

MWRA MetroWest Expansion

Mr. Mostoller updated the board that the internal group working to coordinate this study set last Friday as a check-in date for participation. There was some hesitation from some communities, so the project has been slightly delayed. Maynard is intended to be the contracting agent, however, due to internal delays, the District has offered to assist in preparing the request for quotes. Ms. McCarthy will be drafting this document for Maynard to review.

Mr. Rosen asked who will issue the RFQ, to which Mr. Mostoller confirmed it will be Maynard. Mr. Rosen also asked which communities are participating in the shared services study. Mr. Mostoller responded that Acton, Maynard, Concord, Lincoln, Bedford, Ayer, Westford, and Littleton are on board. Sudbury declined as they had already done similar work.

Mr. Petersen asked about hiring for open positions in the district, but Mr. Mostoller replied that that item is not on tonight's agenda.

NEW BUSINESS:

Annual District Meeting Presentation

Mr. Rosen asked the Finance Committee to share and review the presentation they had prepared for the Annual District meeting. Mr. Petersen shared his screen and began to go through the presentation. The Commissioners and Mr. Mostoller provided feedback throughout the presentation, which Mr. Petersen noted. Mr. Stuntz and Ms. McCarthy provided feedback on the presentation of the free cash amount to be certified as of June 30, 2024 which was largely effected by the timing of the reimbursement from the Clean Water Trust. The other factor is the substantial reduction in "Other" revenue for FY 24. Mr. Mostoller provided context for how this drove the decisions surrounding the rate increase for FY 25. The board and finance committee then had a discussion about the district's financial position and the presentation of Free Cash.

The Commissioners provided insights into the usage of the term "fees" to improve ease of comprehension. The board and finance committee discussed the presentation of fixed fees versus usage fees. They also had an in-depth discussion about the charts and graphs in the presentation, how to pair several figures together, how they may be misinterpreted, and what is essential information to share.

The Commissioners provided insights into the information about the presentation of debt and operation costs. They then discussed how the presentation might be re-ordered by topic to best accommodate the board's input, how long the presentation will be at the

Annual Meeting, and how the Moderator will manage questions. Lastly, they discussed the presentation of O&M costs.

Mr. Petersen thanked everyone for their feedback and added that the presentation will be available for final review at the next meeting on the 10th.

Warrant Article Assignments

Mr. Mostoller shared the warrant article assignments on the screen and reviewed which members of the Board of Commissioners and Finance Committee were assigned to which articles. Mr. Mostoller indicated several areas, like the articles authorizing certain funds, that he tried to pair together for ease of understanding.

The Commissioners and the Finance Committee had no issues with the assignments. Mr. Mostoller informed them that the next step will be putting together the language of the motion, which will be finalized for the next meeting on the 10th.

Mr. Rosen asked if the warrant had been locked in; Mr. Mostoller said that the District Clerk would be coming in the next day to finalize the process. The warrant will be sent to voters via email or post card for those without an email listed; the graphic designer is aiming to send it out by next week.

RFP for Nagog Hill Tank Cell Tower Lease

Mr. Mostoller informed the board that they had received two responses to the Nagog Hill Tank Cell Tower lease RFP. Currently both responses meet their expected criteria, however one response needs input from Mr. Holland because the initial language of the lease period notes it cannot be greater than 20 years, and this reply asked for a 5-year initial lease with four 5-year renewals on top of that. Mr. Mostoller asked the board for direction on how to proceed with the proposals. From Mr. Mostoller's perspective, one proposal seemed to be in the district's best interest. The second proposal has a smaller financial impact over time but provides more money up front, which in his opinion, Mr. Mostoller thinks is leaving money on the table.

Mr. Stuntz agreed with Mr. Mostoller's assessment and asked if there was any reason they limited leases to the 20-year limit. Mr. Mostoller replied that he believes that is a holdover from previous legal precedent due to specific public procurement processes that he and Ms. Bassett reviewed during the Baldco proposal. Mr. Stuntz and Ms. Amir Lin confirmed they wanted Mr. Mostoller to proceed with the proposal that he believed best met the District's needs. Mr. Rosen asked how many providers may be put up on the tower, which Mr. Mostoller answered depends on the tower design. Mr. Rosen then asked if the District is in a position to negotiate on these towers depending on the revenue they may generate.

Mr. Mostoller acknowledged their current escalator is low, but based on the experience with the existing lease at the Great Hill Tank Tower, there may not be much room for negotiation. Ms. Amir Lin agreed with this and hypothesized that they may not get a better offer if they try to negotiate. Mr. Mostoller also noted that the tower has not been permitted yet. Mr. Rosen and Mr. Mostoller continued to briefly discuss some details of the tower, and Mr. Rosen directed Mr. Mostoller to go forward with the proposal from Tower Co.

Mr. Rosen motioned to authorize the District Manager to open negotiations with Tower Co. regarding the proposed cell tower lease at the Nagog Hill Tank location. Mr. Stuntz seconded, and it was unanimously approved via a roll call vote, Mr. Stuntz, Ms. Amir Lin, Mr. Rosen.

WaterSense Program Letter of Support

Mr. Mostoller previously brought this to the board's attention to see if the District wanted to be included in this letter. The district has belonged to the Alliance for Water Efficiency for over 20 years. This program brings plumbing manufacturers, developers, utilities, and regulators together to have products that work for customers and improve water efficiency. The current concern is with cuts being made at the federal level, if WaterSense goes away, the District will no longer have a vetted list of products or standards to point customers towards to improve water efficiency. To further complicate the matter, the Massachusetts Plumbing Code adopted the WaterSense standards as its own. The Alliance felt it was important to advocate for this program and asked for members to sign this letter.

The Commissioners affirmed their support to sign on. Mr. Mostoller informed the board that another letter may be brought before them again as it appears the Energy Star Program is also in danger of being cut. Mr. Mostoller explained that the Energy Star Program covers dishwashers and washing machines, which are two of the biggest ways consumers use water.

Mr. Parenti motioned to adjourn the meeting of the Finance Committee. Mr. Petersen seconded, and it was approved via a roll call vote, Mr. Parenti, Mr. Petersen.

Mr. Stuntz motioned to adjourn the meeting of The Acton Water District Board of Commissioners. Mr. Rosen seconded, and it was unanimously approved via a roll call vote, Ms. Amir Lin, Mr. Stuntz, Mr. Rosen.

Meeting closed at 8:35 pm