

Board of Water Commissioners and Finance Committee
Meeting Minutes
Acton Water District
693 Massachusetts Avenue, Acton, MA
Monday, April 26, 2021

AGENDA

- A. Comments from Citizens
- B. Approve minutes from meeting of 4/12/2021
- C. Appoint one Commissioner to approve warrants while conducting meetings virtually

D. NEW BUSINESS:

- 1. Updated Proposed Costs Associated with the Commissioning of the Assabet #3 Well.
- 2. Preparation for Annual District Meeting on Wednesday, May 5, 2021.
 - Order of Motions for Warrant Articles by Commissioners and Selection of Sponsoring Finance Committee Member.

E. OLD BUSINESS:

- 1. Update on Per- and Poly-Fluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS).
- 2. Update on Pump Test for Potential Bedrock Source.

Present at Tonight's Meeting:

Commissioners: Barry Rosen (Chair), Erika Amir-Lin, 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 Representatives: Bill Guthlein and Chuck Bradley

Citizens:
Kim Kastens

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 7:01 PM on Monday, April 26, 2021 by Mr. Barry Rosen.

A. Comments from Citizens

No comments

B. Approve Minutes from Meeting of 4/12

Ms. Amir-Lin motioned to approve the minutes of April 12, 2021. Mr. Stuntz seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved by a roll call vote: Mr. Rosen, Mr. Stuntz, and Ms. Amir-Lin.

C. Appoint one Commissioner to Approve Warrants While Conducting Meetings Virtually

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

D. NEW BUSINESS:

1. Updated Proposed Costs Associated with the Commissioning of the Assabet #3 Well.

Mr. Allen provided an update for the Commissioners and Finance Committee regarding the proposed costs associated with the commissioning of the Assabet #3 well. He stated that when they were drafting the warrant articles, they put in a placeholder for \$250,000. The considerable rise in the proposed cost is due to the arbitrary nature of the \$250k as a “Place holder”. There are a couple options including the one difference in the length of pipe to connect Assabet 3 to the treatment plant. Additional cost of infrastructure related to piping, etc. The one decision that needs to be made is to move forward with the project which he recommends as part of our PFAS strategy involving this well has been well demonstrated with concentrations in the 3part per trillion (ppt) range. It would give a lot of flexibility in keeping the SAWTP, our highest yielding source below the 20 ppt Maximum Containment Level (MCL). Two of the wells that feed the plant are in the mid-30s – Christofferson and Assabet 1A.

Mr. Stuntz – what is the advantage as it is twice as far from 2A to plant. Mr. Allen stated that it’s a matter of the pipe size at Assabet 2/2A can sustain the additional flow from Assabet 3. Assabet 3 is a 350 gallon per minute (gpm), and it remains to be seen if it can pump into the same 8” pipe that 2 and 2A are pumping into. Will that 8” pipe handle the additional flow from Assabet 3. Connected closer to the treatment plant is a 12” pipe. Once it is engineered, we would make a more solid decision as to where to connect.

Mr. Allen’s recommendation is to round the appropriation to one million dollars. Whatever is not spent, if anything, could be turned back to the Grace Stabilization Fund at a future meeting.

Ms. Amir-Lin – what is the timeline on getting this work done? Would it happen in next couple months? Mr. Allen stated that yes, and the appropriation would take place on May 5th at the Annual District meeting. The money would be available if voted. Then move forward with engineering. Go to bid. Start construction hopefully in the late fall/early winter.

Ms. Amir-Lin – Can we assume that the durable goods pricing shouldn’t fluctuate at the start of construction? Mr. Allen stated that he doesn’t want to make any assumptions but yes, the prices should be pretty solid but there is a significant amount of contingency in the estimate (20%). She felt like the contingency pricing was high. Mr. Stuntz stated that he would rather see higher pricing than go back to ask for more money.

Mr. Rosen – asked if we would have to then change our placeholder in the warrant. Mr. Allen stated yes. Mr. Rosen asked if we can still do that even though the warrant has been posted? Mr. Allen stated that the warrant would need to be amended at the meeting on the 5th.

Mr. Rosen – two possibilities: direct to the 12” pipe and the daisy chain which is fewer linear feet but potentially less capacity because of the narrower pipe. Is somebody going to mathematically model this to tell us what the best situation will be? Mr. Allen stated that yes, pre engineer prior to bid specifications. Mr. Rosen stated that he does not want to do this twice so he would opt to go for the million and return the surplus back to general fund or stabilization fund. Mr. Stuntz is all for asking for the million dollars.

Mr. Guthlein – what is our confidence level that if we build this and we start drawing in lots of water from Assabet 3 that we don’t draw in PFAS from surrounding areas. We are 820 ft from 2A which. Mr. Allen: 2A is actually at an acceptable level it is in the mid-teens – 2 and 2A are very similar they are 50 ft from each other – they are both running at the 15-17 ppt range for PFAS. Assabet 1A is in the mid- 30s but that is further down the line, closer to the treatment plant. Mr. Guthlein, do we have a feeling as to where the PFAS is located and what the hydrology is? It would be very embarrassing to spend the million

dollars and we didn't fix the problem. Mr. Allen, we did stress it some, we pumped it for 8 hours at 200 gpm, and then tried to stress the source a bit to see how it was under pumping conditions. With sustained pumping we can't say it will stay at similar concentrations. Mr. Mostoller stated that based on data and extensive groundwater modeling in the area that whatever the PFAS source is it appears to be more in a southwesterly direction so Assabet 1A is our most southwesterly well and then the Assabet 2 wells are moving to the northeast and Assabet 3 is furthest at the northeast and the sampling that has been done beyond the Assabet 3 well has indicated low concentrations of PFAS. When we did the pumping test work on the well itself, we were in the single digits at 3 ppt. The sampling that WR Grace has done further north and east has also been lower concentrations areas. We have asked Grace to do some additional PFAS monitoring to further understand that but right now whatever that source is in South Acton it does seem to be coming from more southerly reaches of those wells.

Mr. Bradley shares the concern that there is some substantial risk that it won't really accomplish anything, but he doesn't see an alternative and we just have to wait and see. Mr. Mostoller stated that the alternative would-be full-scale treatment there and treating more of the water than needs to be treated at a more substantial cost than what is being proposed.

Mr. Bradley motioned to recommend supporting the amended Article 14 for \$1,000,000. Mr. Guthlein seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by a roll call vote: Mr. Bradley and Mr. Guthlein.

Mr. Stuntz motioned to accept the Finance Committee recommendation and that our placeholder be moved from \$250,000 to \$1,000,000 on Article 14. Ms. Amir-Lin seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by a roll call vote: Mr. Stuntz, Ms. Amir-Lin, Mr. Rosen

Kim Kastens: she didn't understand where the pre-engineering costs are coming from. Mr. Allen stated that the pre-engineering costs will be coming from the same source. We put in a grant for engineering for this project at the second round PFAS grants and that was a projected \$100,000. We trimmed that down because we are not taking on construction administration from the engineer. We will be filling in some of those gaps ourselves. A lot of it depends on how complex the filing with Conservation Commission and the local permitting is. Not sure of the complexity. Ms. Kastens just recommends that when it comes time to presenting this to the public it would be clearer if you could label contingency as contingency and engineering as engineering. Mr. Allen yes it will be.

2. Preparation for Annual District Meeting on Wednesday, May 5, 2021.

- Order of Motions for Warrant Articles by Commissioners and Selection of Sponsoring Finance Committee Member.

Counselor Bassett sent the Commissioners the motions for the 14 Articles. Mr. Butler will not be present at the Annual District Meeting so Mr. Bradley and Mr. Guthlein will have to double up on the Finance Committee recommendations. So that is how Counsel has written these motions.

Mr. Allen stated that last year we did a Consent agenda where we had all the common appropriations from Surplus Revenue compiled into a single motion. Would Commissioners like to do that again and would impact Articles 7-13. It would expedite the evening. Mr. Rosen agrees to consolidate as he thinks Article 14 might have more discussion and questions.

Counselor Bassett stated that the Moderator will announce at the meeting that he will take Articles 7-13 as a consent agenda. She suggests that the motions should be changed to reflect that he will want to take these articles at a consent agenda.

We don't have certified free cash yet so you will notice that articles are written with pending free cash certification by Department of Revenue. Mr. Stuntz, are we likely to get the certification by the time the meeting rolls around? Counselor Bassett says that most likely not per Mary Jo's conversation with DOR.

Kim Kastens: would suggest not adding Article 13 to the consent agenda because it is such a large number (\$500,000). It might be worthy of more explanation. And as she understands that this is related to Kelly's Corner. Commissioners say that is good advice. Mr. Allen confirmed then that Articles 7-12 will be the consent agenda.

Counselor Bassett stated that she will revise and put together a script for Bill Mullin, District Moderator.

Mr. Bradley is suggesting that the early motions are always non-controversial and could easily be put onto the consent agenda. Things that we have done every year are generally not controversial and is a chance to speed up the meeting. Mr. Allen stated that the recommendation is essentially from the same source and they are perennial appropriations and do them every year and around the same amount.

E. OLD BUSINESS:

1. Update on Per- and Poly-Fluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS).

Mr. Mostoller stated that there is not much to update. We did receive our March sample from the Conant 1 source and came in at 15.6 ppt so we are happy with that number although within five-day s of submitting it to DEP they rejected it based on lab quality control issues.

Mr. Rosen asked if that is a lab that we continue to utilize. Mr. Mostoller stated that yes that is correct. It was from Europhins. The DEP has not 100% rejected it and the lab does have a chance to clean things up.

Mr. Mostoller stated that some of our February data was in question and rejected – two samples from South Acton, a sample from North Acton, and a sample from Conant I. We did lose those. One of those labs we will not be working with anymore. On Friday, we got a call from Alpha Analytical Labs admitting that they are having a problem analyzing some of our samples due to particulate matter, due to color, due to other things that are interfering with the sample matrix. He will be calling MassDEP tomorrow to figure out what are we supposed to do here.

Mr. Mostoller stated that the only other updates on PFAS is the possibility of exceeding the MCL in NAWTP. There has been no further movement on that. DEP is still reviewing on what ground they could calculate a MCL violation.

Mr. Mostoller stated that recently in Boxborough a well tested positive for PFAS at 78 ppt. This is a well that we could have looked at for another water source under our enabling legislation that gives us rights in Boxborough. More recently one of the public water systems in Acton that runs independently from the District is at Strawberry Hill Apartments who tested positive above 20 ppt for PFAS.

2. Update on Pump Test for Potential Bedrock Source.

Mr. Allen stated that we did complete the combined pump test. Mr. Mostoller stated that the test ended on April 14th. The well contractor finished up last week. Our hydrogeologist subcontractor is out there this week disassembling our monitoring points. We have a survey crew going out to do some elevation and location work. Data that is coming back is being plotted out. We are still waiting on water quality from the well D test and the combined test. Wednesday morning the temporary treatment system will be removed from the site. Relative to moving the permit forward, we would like to submit in June if possible. We don't have enough of the water quality data back to understand what went on during the

longer duration pumping test. We may have more information by the next District open meeting on May 10th. As part of our discharge permit, we were monitoring for chloride in the water we saw an increase in trends in chloride when we first started in March to when we shut down in April. That is one parameter that we are looking at. It could indicate a few things: surface influences or that we just happen to catch spring melt when de-icing chemicals cycle through. We will look at that in more detail when we get the samples back.

Ms. Amir-Lin motioned to adjourn the open meeting at 8:10 PM. Mr. Stuntz seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved by a roll call vote: Mr. Stuntz, Ms. Amir-Lin, Mr. Rosen.