

Board of Water Commissioners Meeting Minutes
Acton Water District
693 Massachusetts Avenue, Acton MA
Thursday, August 6, 2020

AGENDA

1. Solar Update
2. PFAS Update
3. Arsenic Public Notice
4. Outdoor Water Use Update

Present at Today's Meeting:

Commissioners: Erika Amir-Lin (Chair), Barry Rosen, Stephen Stuntz
District Treasurer: Mary Jo Bates
Environmental Manager: Matthew Mostoller
Finance Committee: Bill Guthlein and Dave Butler
District Moderator: Dick O'Brien
Commissioners Secretary: Lynn Protasowicki

Citizens:

Kim Kastens
Karen Pierce
Gabrielle Garneau
Jim Snyder-Grant
Lucy Kirshner
David Martin
Richard Keleher
Drew Wilkinson

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 a video conference using Zoom. The meeting was called to order at 7:03 PM on Thursday, August 6, 2020 by Ms. Erika Amir-Lin.

1. Solar Update:

Ms. Amir-Lin gave the update. For the past few years, the District has been working towards installing solar. We were waiting for Article 97 legislation to pass and it has been passed by the House and Senate. . The new bill number is H4923 and is with Governor Baker to sign. We will now be able to move forward with our solar installation. At the next meeting on August 17th there will be a more substantial update about the project.

2. PFAS Update:

Mr. Mostoller gave the update. July 7-14th we collected samples at our four operating treatment facilities. NAWTP is offline due to PFAS and ongoing maintenance and have not been able to sample yet. Samples were submitted to lab and were due July 28th, but the lab was not able to make that deadline as they had a cyber-attack. We are working with them to make sure our samples were analyzed and that we are getting priority to get data back. We had reached out to two other contract labs but they are very overloaded right now. We hope to have the data back by the August 17th open meeting. If sooner, we will post onto the website. Piloting for the NAWTP filters is to begin around September 8th. We sent off 30 gallons of water to do some bench scale testing for a potential new technology. About a week and half ago the District met with Mass DEP to discuss reactivating Assabet 2 well which will provide us with lower concentration PFAS water and will also help build some capacity for the overall system.

To get PFAS updates via email contact wq@actonwater.com and providing your name, home address, and email address and you will add to the list.

Citizen Question: Will the Assabet 2 well be tested for 1,-4 Dioxane? Mr. Mostoller responded that we did sample this well back at the end of April and the dioxane levels were similar to the dioxane levels in the Assabet 2A well which is approximately 50 feet away from it. We will pump the well for 48 hours or more and we will sample for every regulated contaminate that is required of us by Mass DEP and will submit data to Mass DEP and they will give us conditional approval and ongoing monitoring.

3. Arsenic Public Notice:

Ms. Amir-Lin gave the update. This notice went out this week related to the Clapp Whitcomb facility. Mr. Mostoller gave a quick summary. We sample for over 120 different compounds throughout system, throughout the year, at different frequencies and different locations. We routinely monitor for arsenic at the Clapp Whitcomb and NAWTP because they are known to have naturally occurring arsenic in their raw groundwater sources. We filter out all the arsenic at NAWTP and at the CW source we get it down by approximately 50%. Earlier this year (end of June), we took our routine quarterly sample at these sites and the samples came back just above the MCL (maximum contaminate level is 10 ppb) at 11 ppb (parts per billion) which means that the filter was allowing some of that arsenic to come through. We notified MassDEP because that is considered a treatment technique violation. Because we are actively removing it, we need to monitor for it, and we need to make sure our systems are working properly. We did some follow up sampling and made some adjustments to the operation of that facility. By the end of July, we had two consecutive samples for arsenic that were in line with the normal operation of that facility which was 5 and 6 ppb.

The arsenic public notice went out via email and by USPS. And it went out to managers of condos and apartment buildings where occupants wouldn't receive a water bill.

Mr. Mostoller asked the public to please provide the District with your email address because it's the fastest way to get any notices and information out to our customers.

Citizen Karen Pierce: she never received notification; went onto website and could not find where to sign up for notifications; and are you notifying the Acton Board of Health for them to

get information out to citizens. Are they involved with the District to notify residents? Mr. Mostoller stated that they have been notified and are aware of the issue. The BOH Director reached out to District Manager to understand what the public notice meant. The BOH discussed it at their BOH meeting last night but he is unaware of the outcome.

To sign up for emails on the District website - under Water Quality, then PFAS, and then How Can I Stay Informed.

Citizen Drew Wilkinson: PFAS are forever chemicals. The recent Arsenic levels have been likely elevated by the sudden increase in demand since more people have been home from quarantine. With the future development increases that are likely, how can we be sure that the water will be safe in the future? Neither of these issues are short term will continuously risk health and increase costs. Why are you not considering safer water sources such as Nagog Pond or the Quabbin Reservoir which will not have these issues? Both have sufficient capacity to provide our needs.

Mr. Mostoller responded. Arsenic is naturally occurring. We are aware of it and are treating for it. It isn't our belief that increased demand had anything to do with it. It was the operation and water chemistry we were experiencing at that time caused breakthrough of the filter. We continue to monitor as we do with all our other sources. We sample for over 120 compounds throughout the year in the distribution system and treatment plants. We are constantly evaluating safety of the water and sampling informs us if there are issues need to be dealt with.

Continuing to make sure water is safe in the future. Continual investment is necessary to make sure what quality is safe. There will be increased cost especially as expectations and regulations become more stringent and the bar is raised in terms of what the customer expects. It will cost the consumer more.

Relative to safer water sources. He wouldn't say that Nagog Pond or Quabbin Reservoir are safer they are just different and can bring different safety concerns. We have considered looking at alternative sources. In 2014 the District evaluated the Quabbin Reservoir, but it remains outside the Acton's reach geographically (we don't abut an MWRA community). If we were to tap into that source, we would need significant investment in a transmission main to reach that source.

Follow up comment: Sampling is required as the water is increased risk dating from the Chemical processed from WR Grace. These are unnecessary risks. Mr. Mostoller responded that yes, we have increased sampling because of WR Grace. We have successfully treating that water since early 1980s and because of that we do more sampling then what is required of a public water system. Relative to Chlorinated solvents most water systems will sample those maybe once a year or every 3 years whereas the District is sampling quarterly or more frequently. Relative to those risks back in the 1990s the District actually adopted a more stringent VOC standard for us to ensure our customers that we were dealing with the Grace contaminate and all our sources to ensure your drinking water was safe.

Citizen Drew Wilkinson: Thanks for the response but I have very serious concerns. Water has appeared been brown/greasy for months now. I have a young child. Mr. Mostoller asked that he call the District office and he will be more than happy to discuss concerns further.

Citizen Drew Wilkinson: In March when we called you told us the water was safe for my wife who was pregnant. We then were notified it was not safe and that pregnant women were not supposed to drink the water. Mr. Mostoller responded that when information became available things change. Discoloration is not related to PFAS. The period between March and June as information became available, we had different messages to send to customers. The NAWTP was taken offline when we had additional data. Please call office to discuss his specific concerns.

Mr. Mostoller stated wanted to remind the public that PFAS and arsenic the health concerns are over the longer term. As state and federal government set standards, they are looking over a broad time period and the impact of any given contaminant in concert with other exposures of that same contaminant. If you have no other exposure of arsenic from food or occupational hazards, then theoretically the concentration in drinking water you could consumewould be higher then what it is.

Citizen Drew Wilkinson: I am buying bottled water; I need to install a RO system to remove these chemicals. My water bills are already very high. Why am I paying so much for something that can make me sick? No response needed. Mr. Mostoller responded that the District Manager has been talking to folks that are concern of PFAS in water and that they can't use the water. He would suggest reaching out to the District Manager.

4. Outdoor Water Use Update:

Ms. Ami-Lin gave the update. She wanted to remind people that we do have an outdoor water use restriction right now. And that looks to continue.

Mr. Mostoller stated that the state of Massachusetts's Drought Management Task Force has been meeting regularly since beginning of June because entire state is in a drought. They are meeting next week, and he does not anticipate any major changes to their drought designations. He reminded the public that there is no lawn irrigation and being enforced and a fine offense if you are observed watering your lawn. This is driven by hot dry weather pattern we are in and not being able to fully utilize all our sources of supply relative to PFAS and other maintenance issues.

The next open meeting to be held on Monday, August 17th at 7:00 PM.

Mr. Rosen moved to adjourn the open meeting at 7:35 PM. Mr. Stuntz seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved by a roll call vote.

Roll call:

Ms. Amir-Lin

Mr. Stuntz

Mr. Rosen