

Board of Water Commissioners

Meeting Agenda

October 21, 2024

- Comments from the public
- Approve minutes from the meetings of 10/7
- Appoint one Commissioner to sign warrants while conducting meetings virtually

OLD BUSINESS:

- Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS)
- Current sample data, if available
- Discussion of Additional PFAS Upgrades
- Kelley's Corner Project
- US EPA Lead & Copper Rule Improvements
- Request for service outside of District boundary

NEW BUSINESS:

- 10/13 water main break on Prospect Street
- Great Hill Cell Tower Lease Extension
- Discussion of Q3 Water Consumption

Present at Tonight's Meeting:

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

Finance Committee: Ron Parenti,

District Manager: Matt Mostoller

Environmental Manager: Katy Orciuch

Members of the Public: John Petersen, Allison Jones, Kim Kastens

START OF MINUTES

Mr. Rosen opened the meeting at 7:00.

Comments from the public

None at this time.

Approve minutes from the meetings of 10/7

Mr. Rosen and Mr. Mostoller noted a correction to the 10-7 minutes. Under New Business where it says “the company is just over the town line” has been corrected to “the property is just over the town line”.

Ms. Amir Lin motioned to approve the minutes of 10-7-24 as corrected. Mr. Rosen seconded, and it was approved via a roll call vote; Ms. Amir Lin, Mr. Rosen. Mr. Stuntz abstained.

Appoint one Commissioner to sign warrants while conducting meetings virtually

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

Introduction of New Environmental Manager

Mr. Mostoller introduced Katy Orciuch as the new Environmental Manager. She is joining the District from her current position at the Cambridge Water Department and is a resident of Stow. The team is very pleased to have her on board.

Ms. Orciuch introduced herself to the board. She is looking forward to starting this week. Ms. Orciuch explained her background working for Cambridge for over 10 years, most recently as a Water Quality Supervisor, and before that as a Treatment Plant Operator. She’s excited to learn about the water system, and the projects the District has going on.

Mr. John Petersen commented that the finance committee is very excited that Ms. Orciuch has joined the team and looks forward to filling other staff vacancies.

OLD BUSINESS:

Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS)

Current sample data, if available

Mr. Mostoller shared the October sampling results for South and North Acton, both were sampled on October 9th. South Acton sampled at 15.5 ppt, and North remains at non-

detect. Both are currently in operation. Staff plan to keep Center Acton offline for the rest of October as they have enough capacity and flushing has been completed. Mr. Mostoller added that by keeping Center Acton offline they will not need another October sample, and it avoids the 1.5-2-day process of turning the plant back on.

Discussion of Additional PFAS Upgrades

Mr. Mostoller updated the board on progress at the South Acton plant. Concrete work will be finished by the end of the month. Unfortunately, the structure will not be delivered in November as originally planned. The vessels and structure will be delivered at the end of January or beginning of February. The building manufacturer has agreed to store the structure at their yard to prevent any damage.

The Center Acton project is going well. With better temperatures this week they hope to pour concrete. They are in the midst of color selection and will have to break with the current color scheme so the building can blend into the trees better. The Center Acton project has two outstanding pay requests. The District does not have the finalized loans from the Clean Water Trust so they are sitting on these two requests and hoping the interim loan will be finalized this week. Ms. McCarthy has been in contact with bond counsel and paperwork for both projects is in progress. The South Acton project has also received its first pay request this week, they need to finalize this interim loan after the Center Acton Loan is finalized.

Mr. Mostoller noted that he and Ms. McCarthy have some concerns about the pre-purchases of items for these projects and their impact on Free Cash. Mr. Mostoller reported they did not meet the September deadline to have the District reimbursed so the expenses will be deducted from our available Free Cash. This means there will be less available Free Cash for the coming year, but there will be carry over when they are reimbursed. This is mostly an accounting issue where the cost will appear on the books, but the reimbursement will not, they do not know if this will appear as a negative amount in Free Cash. Mr. Stuntz asked about the amount which Mr. Mostoller responded is just over 1 million. Mr. Rosen asked if the vessels for both projects will be late, which Mr. Mostoller affirmed, but noted Center Acton might be delivered early depending on the pace of work on the foundation.

Kelley's Corner Project

Work on Kelley's Corner has paused as they wait for progress on the Sewer project so they can complete the Northern Section.

US EPA Lead & Copper Rule Improvements

Mr. Mostoller reported that on this past Wednesday evening, October 16, at 9:00 PM the District submitted its initial Service Line Inventory. The Inventory is not in perfect condition, but they met the majority of DEP's requirements. There are several service lines they could not validate; those will likely be noted in the deficiency letter and the District will have two weeks to correct those deficiencies. They will now begin working on how to improve the Inventory and move on to the next steps. The next phase will work on getting those lines that do need replacement based on the presence of a lead gooseneck or galvanized line, and looking into other unknowns in the inventory.

Mr. Rosen asked if the unknown service lines cluster in an older neighborhood. Mr. Mostoller responded they are scattered across the District. Mr. Mostoller added that in combing through historical documents they found some specifications from post-lead-ban decades, but there remain prominent gaps from the 1950's, 60's, and 70's, corresponding to a large period of building in Acton.

The District has between now and November 16th to notify residents about unknown service line materials or leaded lines that need replacement. The majority of these notices will be for unknown service lines, so the District will be providing additional informational language. Mr. Mostoller warned the board that this notice will garner community interest and inquiries, they have already had several people reach out with questions. Ms. Amir Lin asked about the nature of these inquiries. Mr. Mostoller replied that many are asking if they have lead pipes and what action they should take. Mr. Mostoller has been directing these inquiries to the self-identification resources to assist the District in collecting important information. To date they have not identified a single true Leaded Line in Acton, and Mr. Mostoller finds it unlikely that they would find one. For the private line identification, Mr. Mostoller reported that staff are assisting people with the process and in some cases going into basements to identify the pipes themselves. Mr. Mostoller has continued looking into software providers that can assist with this process.

Request for service outside of District boundary

Mr. Mostoller returned this item to the board to continue their discussion with Mr. Stuntz in attendance. Mr. Rosen reviewed the information of the request. Mr. Stuntz shared his thoughts with the board on the request, stating that he's not inclined to outright reject this kind of request, especially since Sudbury Water District is near that parcel and could assist Acton with connection, but he confirmed that does not believe the Acton Water District can supply this request entirely on their own right now. Mr. Stuntz stated that while he

thought the request was unlikely to be approved, he thought it prudent to offer an alternative path.

Mr. Rosen reiterated his concerns from the previous meeting, that this request could draw 110,000 gallons per day, and the District's consistent messaging has asked rate payers to conserve. Mr. Rosen also expressed his concern that the District has an existing charter to serve Boxborough, who could request water in the near future. If such a request came in, it would make it difficult to provide the additional water to the parcel in Maynard. Mr. Rosen continued to share his concerns presented at the previous meeting including the lack of capacity in Maynard for this request, and the previous history with the Power Mill Place project.

Mr. Stuntz and Mr. Rosen continued to discuss their thoughts on the request. Mr. Rosen asked Mr. Mostoller if the company making the request has asked Sudbury. Mr. Mostoller responded he knows the company was told to reach out to Concord and Sudbury along with Acton, but he does not know if that request has been made to Sudbury officials.

Mr. Mostoller informed the board that from his correspondence with the representatives of the request, they are likely looking for a clear yes or no if the process for providing water out of District bounds will move forward. Mr. Mostoller and the Board continued to discuss their response to the request. The board agreed to deny the request at the moment but instructed Mr. Mostoller to inform the representatives that they can come back in the next 5-10 years and make the request again.

Mr. Rosen motioned for the Board to deny the Request for Service outside the District boundary in Maynard. Mr. Stuntz seconded, and the denial was unanimously approved via a roll call vote; Ms. Amir Lin, Mr. Stuntz, Mr. Rosen.

NEW BUSINESS:

10/13 water main break on Prospect Street

Mr. Mostoller explained to the board that this water main break is on the agenda because this was a significant outage, and because there was some media coverage on Channel 7 News. Staff onsite during the break offered to answer questions or provide a statement to the reporters, but their offer was declined. Regarding the outage, Mr. Mostoller reported that some customers were out of water for almost 24 hours. There was a broken gate which required a larger area to be shut down, and there was a presence of a high-pressure sewer main that warranted cautious excavation. Over 30 homes and the Temple were out of water. Mr. Mostoller extended his thanks to the operations team for their efforts. Ms. Amir Lin asked if the new vacuum truck was useful, which Mr. Mostoller affirmed got a lot

of use during this break. Mr. Stuntz asked where excavation debris is put, and Mr. Mostoller responded that it is brought to the property by the office. Mr. Rosen asked about another water main break in the area. Mr. Mostoller explained the details of that break, that drainage work nicked a pipe, and the old valve could not be shut off. Mr. Mostoller then briefly talked about decommissioning old lines.

Great Hill Cell Tower Lease Extension

Mr. Mostoller informed the board he received an official letter from Crown Castle, requesting the final five-year extension on the existing contract for the Great Hill Cell Tower Lease. The request originally asked to extend the lease and change some terms. Upon review Mr. Mostoller informed them that the requested changes would not be allowed because of the terms of the 2008 vote authorizing the lease, so the current request is for the final five years of the lease, ending in 2030.

Mr. Mostoller is working with District Counsel to write up a warrant article for the voters to approve the next iteration of this lease. Ms. Amir Lin asked if this would be on this years warrant, which Mr. Mostoller said would be likely. Mr. Rosen asked how many years they wanted to lease the tower for. Mr. Mostoller responded they originally requested 30, but the District typically does 20 with extensions. Mr. Mostoller then briefly discussed the conversations with Crown Castle over their requested changes.

Mr. Stuntz motioned to approve the final five-year lease extension on the Crown Castle Great Hill Cell Phone Tower lease. Mr. Rosen seconded, and it was unanimously approved via a roll call vote; Mr. Stuntz, Ms. Amir Lin, Mr. Rosen.

Discussion of Q3 Water Consumption

Mr. Mostoller informed the board that they had received many inquiries from customers about an increase in their summer usage. Like in years past, the third quarter had the highest consumption of all the quarters, and this quarter had more inquiries coming in than usual. Many of the inquiries were based on costs and could be attributed to the rate increase and increased use. However, as Mr. Mostoller continued his conversations with customers and reviewed the numbers some other factors seem to be driving this increase in consumption.

Mr. Mostoller explained that July did not have the 1 day per week restriction as in years past, which contributed to the increase. Mr. Mostoller also noted they noticed an increase in the number of potential leaks identified by our metering technology or use analysis. He explained how the meters monitor leaks, and how the Water Smart program would flag

leaks based on past use. This July saw the highest number of flagged leaks in the Water Smart program since its inception.

Mr. Mostoller wanted to emphasize for customers to sign up for the Water Smart program to catch leaks more quickly rather than letting the entire quarter pass with a leak going undetected. It is the staff's opinion that this combination of factors is the source of many of the customer inquiries that first seem to concern cost.

Ms. Amir Lin commented that she was struck by the irrigation use. Mr. Mostoller replied that without the 1-day restriction, many people did increase their irrigation use.

Mr. Mostoller continued to explain the leaks, noting one exceptional leak that will be repaired tomorrow, that may seek an abatement. The September reading suggested that there may be a leak, which they informed the customer of. The leak worsened significantly in October leading to a bill of \$18,000 over the month. Staff went out and shut off the water and are working with the homeowner to quickly make repairs due to the severity of the leak.

Mr. Mostoller advocated that customers be rigorous about leaks, even if they don't appear in the home, as toilets and irrigation systems can leak tremendously without the usual indicators. He then recommended that folks take the opportunity to look for leaks whenever they shut down their irrigation systems for the season.

Ms. Amir Lin asked if the District will push for more people to join the Water Smart program next year. Mr. Mostoller affirmed they will keep advertising the program, which is free and requires no infrastructure, and gives the customers access to monthly meter readings. Mr. Mostoller then reviewed the benefits of building out the Water Smart program.

Mr. John Petersen asked if there is any part of Mass Save that covers water use. Mr. Mostoller affirmed Mass Save does have shower heads, but inspection is challenging. For irrigation there are companies that are Water Sense rated but at last check, only two are certified in Massachusetts.

Mr. Stuntz motioned to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Amir Lin seconded, and it was unanimously via a roll call vote; Ms. Amir Lin, Mr. Stuntz, Mr. Rosen.

Meeting closed at 8:04 pm