



## WATER DIVISION

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John M. Driscoll, *General Manager*

### **Water Commissioners' Meeting September 18, 2018**

Members present were: Chairman Dana Blais  
Clerk/Secretary Chris Stewart  
Member Gregg Edwards

Employees present were: General Manager John Driscoll  
Water Superintendent Ron Davan  
Business Manager Jennifer Belliveau

The meeting was called to order at 7:24 p.m. by Dana.

The agenda was approved on a motion by Chris seconded by Dana, 3-0 in favor.

The minutes of August 7, 2018 were approved on a motion by Chris, seconded by Dana, 3-0 in favor.

#### **Old Business:**

The General Manager (GM) discussed the Sawyer Street WTP Chlorine Pump System upgrade. The Water Superintendent (WS) informed the Board that the engineering & design by Tighe and Bond was complete and reports were sent to the Mass DEP. Ron is waiting to hear back from Margo Webber at Mass DEP for approval. We have not bought any project materials yet and won't until we hear back from her.

#### **New Business:**

The GM handed out a Q1 FY2019 preliminary water sales summary with gallons and dollars. The usage was up by about 5M gallons and the sales were up by \$67K compared to Q1 FY2018. Dana asked if these new water meters were possibly helping; the WS said that the old meters could have been under-registering water customer gallons used by about 12-14%. He also said for low water flow situations any water flow would not register on the older water meters, whereas the new ones would. The WS added that several of the tests performed on older water meters we had removed showed that many registered NOTHING at flows less than 2 GPM! The WS stated that he was glad we had a sensible board who would vote to raise rates when necessary, like when changing ALL of your old water meters eventually on a budget basis. Some of the water customers felt as though the meters we were removing were still "new", even though they install dates went back to 1986. The WS said that even today Neptune is only giving their new water meters 20-year life expectancies. The GM did inform the board that the Templeton Developmental Center's fire flow water tank had over-filled/over-flowed in June 2018 by nearly 1M gallons, and then again in September 2018. Their September and December water bills will be significantly higher than normal due to this tank's incidents.



The GM discussed the Patriots Rd Water Main Break from August 23. Chris commented about it being 3 hours before the Water Plant personnel even found the water leak; he had stopped by twice. Mass DOT had a catch basin over the water main which was interfering with their normal excavation process since they were being cautious to not break it. On Chris's second stop by they had finally found the water leak. The catch basin ended up being damaged by the water main break anyway, so the WS had to make a trip to NH to get a new one to install in its place, per Mass DOT's specifications. He had said this new one was about \$250. Mass DOT only accepts certain catch basins from certain vendors and this one just happened to be out of state.

The GM talked about the Maple Street Water Main Break from August 29. The patch for this water main break would be abnormally large at about 30' L by 14' W. Dana said it was nice to have the DPW assisting our personnel with the repair work. This area was paved on September 17. The GM spoke about the Maple Street Water Main engineering & design proposal provided by Tighe and Bond. Dana thought it would make a lot of sense to replace this 1,400' stretch of water main since ALL of Baldwinville and Otter River were fed water by it. The GM said this E&D process would cost us about \$75K, and after this we were likely looking at approaching \$1M in project costs; this was quite higher than the original \$400K that was thought to have been needed. Dana asked if we would have sufficient funds to pay Tighe and Bond to at least perform the E&D part of this project; he responded that YES, especially after the water sales quarter we had just experienced. Tighe and Bond bills on a time-and-materials basis so we would not need to produce 25-50% down for them to start. The GM added that getting the funding necessary to actually do the work afterward was another matter. This was two-fold, first, the Town still did not appear to have a firm bond rating yet and second, the GM thought that the Water Plant could only "hit" water customers so many times with rate increases before it became unreasonable. The Board was in agreement with this since water rate increases over the past 8 years had only come with clear justification by both the GM and the WS that they were needed and there were no other means. He did not, if at all possible, want to have to go through another USDA funding process, but he also thought that the Town's next bond rating would likely yield bond interest rates well over the 2.25% that we had received through the USDA for the water tank reconstruction. Further, he thought it fiscally responsible to wait at least till the \$3.8M bond was paid off fully in FY2023, freeing up about \$230K per fiscal year.

The GM talked about #223 Baldwinville Rd water service connection. The individual allegedly in charge of developing the land over there said they wanted to use an existing 1" service line that was likely installed in the 1960s. Both the GM and the WS had told him NO; he added that his "client" would be required to pay the one-time water connection fee of \$4,500 for a new water service line, otherwise the water would never be turned on at this location. This individual had already threatened to dig a well at this location, and the GM and WS had wished him well in his efforts with the Board of Health granting him a permit to do so. This was a highly unlikely instance given there was perfectly clean water readily available already going right by this site. Further, the annual water revenues that the GM anticipated seeing from the Town's 5th or 6th junk yard would have a tough time reaching \$500.

The WS distributed a proposal for the Board to review in the hopes that they would award him a salary increase due to his past efforts going back to FY2002. He had a detailed notebook listing various projects and problems over the years that he had put in much time and effort to work on and solve for the Water Plant. The WS said that he wanted this opportunity to advocate on his own behalf, even in Open Session, since the GM often discusses his salary increases with the Board in Closed Session. Dana did say that Ron has definitely been a great water employee here, no doubt, and maybe some things about his compensation may have been overlooked in the past. The WS said that once he retires the Water Plant would need to hire another professional in his place, and it was good to go through this process now with the existing employee rather than improvising with the new one. The WS mentioned a few of his past accomplishments. In 2003 the Templeton Zoning Board of Appeals tried to wave ALL of the water connection fees for the Day Mill Condominiums. At the time Ron still lived in Templeton and offered to be on the ZBA to put a stop to this. Once he got on he was able to work with Day Mill Condominiums to extract at least partial water connection fees for each of the roughly 225 units over there. At this time, such a water connection fee was about \$3,800 each but we were only able to collect \$2,000 each when this process was over. Ron felt that he had done a service to the Water Plant, and even when he had moved to Winchendon many residents and town officials still wanted him to be on the



ZBA. A few years ago, members of the Board of Selectmen were alleging that the Water Plant was holding up the Templeton Senior Community Center from being opened to residents. The WS approached the Selectmen on his own to explain to them that a lot of basic construction guidelines had been ignored during the construction due to the influx of materials acquired improperly and volunteers acting as clerks-of-the-works on the job. He emphasized that regardless of whatever guidelines were being ignored to build this senior center, there would be no ignoring of the Water Plant's very basic, Mass DEP-approved guidelines for installing a water service line to ANY structure, municipal or not. The WS had maintained his cool throughout this entire time, even when town officials were actively pointing their (figurative) finger at the Water Plant and Commission. [The WS said that he was often in a state of disbelief over this, that even after the Water Plant had donated \$11K of materials to this project, that still wasn't good enough for them; they needed a scapegoat for their own missteps.] The WS said that at the beginning of his career here, when he was brought into the Otter River Well Site facility, it was in such a state of disorder and filth; all the men who had anything to do with this mess should have been fired already. There was a years-old hole in the roof over the electrical panel and a tarp had been placed over the panel to keep the entire well site from tripping offline during rain and snow events. He concluded with going back to FY2010, when for whatever reason, he received 0% for a salary increase for three fiscal years in a row. The WS commented that now, being only 4-5 years away from retirement forever, he was being given just 1% salary increases in FY2018 and FY2019 followed by 3% salary increases in FY2020 and FY2021. Ron felt as though the 3 years of 0% with the 2 years of 1% did not adequately compensate him for his efforts here as the WS; while he still felt that this was a great place to work and had a good commission. Ron was about 1 year away from giving up standby duties forever, which would cost him roughly \$7K per year. He worried that the absence of standby pay from his last 2 years of service would affect his retirement income forever, which he would not be able to adjust after retirement.

The WS was requesting an 8% salary increase to be awarded to him; this would be in addition to the current salary increase schedule that he was on for FY2018 thru FY2021 at 1%-1%-3%-3%. He suggested that the Water Plant could split up the raise into sections to be increased over a 2-year period rather than all at once if this was more palatable.

Gregg stated that the WS has formed a great bridge with the other town departments over the course of his time here and had made some good points to the Board. Dana and Chris both thanked the WS for the information he provided in this proposal. Dana told him that they would be meeting later on in Closed Session to formulate a response to his request.

There being no other Open Session business to discuss, on a motion by Chris seconded by Gregg, 3-0 favor the Water Commissioners' Meeting to go into Executive Session (20:04).

Respectfully Submitted,



John M. Driscoll  
General Manager