



WATER DIVISION

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John M. Driscoll, *General Manager*

**Water Commissioners' Meeting
October 6, 2015**

Members present were: Dana Blais, Gregg Edwards, Chris Stewart

Employees present were: John Driscoll, Ron Davan

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Dana.

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

The September 29, 2015 minutes were approved on a motion by Gregg, seconded by Chris, 3-0 in favor.

Old Business:

The Manager and the Superintendent gave the Board updates on the status of the USDA Loan Application process ongoing with Tighe and Bond (T&B). The prospect of a special town meeting in February or March 2016 was going to mean a 6-month delay in the process, reversing the times of year for the bidding portion and the construction portion. Since it was least desirable, if not impossible, to construct the new water tank in the winter, T&B had suggested to the Manager that the Water Plant start paying them (T&B) for the engineering and design portion of the \$1,239,000 project. The Manager stated that this would be around \$80,000 to be invoiced to the Water Plant from mid-January 2016 to mid-April 2016.

The Manager suggested that the Water Plant do this as not to potentially waste any time and effort put into this USDA process to date. If water revenues were to be an issue then he felt that T&B could extend the Water Plant's billing status from a net 30-45 days to a net 60-75 days in the interest of keeping the project moving forward. (The Manager did think that there would need to be another water rate increase for a few reasons that would be discussed in New Business). The Board agreed that it would be a shame to make all of this process for not especially given the slim chance that the USDA may force the Water Plant to essentially start the process over. The Manager would notify T&B and have them begin their billable engineering and design work in a manner consistent with a spring/summer construction schedule.

The Board was given updates on the status of several items: the SCADA System Upgrade, Hydrant Flushing and Dudley Road PRV Hut Repairs. Respectively, the SCADA System Upgrade and the Hydrant Flushing for the fall were nearly completed and the Dudley Road PRV Hut Repairs were completed.

The Manager informed the Board that he had thus far only received 8 applications for the new Water Utility Laborer position that the Water Plant had advertised for. The cutoff date was to be October 21, 2015 so he was hopeful to receive many more before that date. The Manager and Superintendent would then narrow the candidates down to just 3 and set up in-office interviews with them in an effort to hire someone before the winter weather hits hard.

New Business:

The Manager had placed an order with Ti Sales for 100 or so new 5/8" residential water meters as the start to a whole-system meter replacement program. He had taken the water sales summaries from September 2015 and sorted the water customers from high to low based on gallons used, so the top 100 water users were picked in this fashion. The Manager stated that for just under \$25,000 he had been able to order enough new water meters to replace about 5% of the water system's customers who use about 22% of the total water sold. Most of the existing water meters had a lifespan of 10-12 years so the Manager had systematically chosen the top 100 users but then cross-referenced those users with meters 13 years old and older. Even the newer water meters had a margin of error close to 3% right out of the box so the Manager felt that this was an important first step in replacing eventually all 2,200 water meters at a reasonable cost.

The Superintendent had purchased a new URD pipe locator for around \$3,000 that would allow the Water Plant to perform the necessary dig-safe markings and other tasks requiring the locating of URD water facilities. The existing locating apparatus came from the older light and water office on School Street so an upgrade was long overdue.

The Manager did a comparison of the first quarter gallons sold from FY 2015 to FY 2016. The gallons sold to customers were down by 902,000 or by 2.7%. The water revenues were up by \$9,000 or by 2.5%. In both FY 2015 and FY 2016 water customers paid on average \$11.13 per 1,000 gallons sold.

The Manager gave the Board a preview of what was to come for the November meeting in the way of discussion on the Water Plant's current usage rates. The Manager that in order for the Water Plant to pay T&B for the work that they were about to start AND pay a new full-time water employee with benefits that another roughly \$70,000 in water revenue was needed. The Manager reminded the Board that there had been no FY 2015 water rate increase per the Manager's recommendations at the beginning of the fiscal year, when neither the T&B work NOR the new employee was on the horizon.

The Manager then distributed copies to the Board of some past fiscal years' water sales summaries; FY 2015, FY 2014 and FY 2013. These summaries showed a water rate increase in FY 2014 of 23% but no increases in FY 2013 (before rate study) or in FY 2015 (Manager's recommendation). Essentially the Water Plant was now 25% through FY 2016 still on FY 2014 water rates with more expenses coming soon, namely the debt service on the water tank reconstruction on Johnson Avenue. The Manager and the Board would hold off on this rate discussion till November.

There being no other Open Session business to discuss, on a motion by Chris, seconded by Gregg, 3-0 in favor the Water Commissioners' Meeting adjourned at 6:45 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

John M. Driscoll



General Manager