

**Water Commissioners' Meeting  
May 29, 2024**

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

Employees present were:    General Manager [GM] John Driscoll  
   Water Superintendent [WS] Scott Schwinger  
   Business Manager Jennifer Belliveau

The meeting was called to order at 9:05 a.m. by Dana.

The agenda was approved on a motion by Chris seconded by Dana, 2-0 in favor.

The minutes April 24, 2024, were approved, on a motion by Chris seconded by Dana, 2-0 in favor.

**Old Business:**

The GM discussed with the Board the debt exclusion for the Main St Bridge Reconstruction Project. The warrant article passed at the Annual Town Meeting but the vote did not pass a few days later at the town polls. The GM felt that it was difficult for people to vote on this project funding without any dollar amount listed, although Tighe and Bond said debt exclusion votes usually are not presented with dollar amounts. The Town is going to have to get with the state and re-visit the possibility of their getting the \$3M in grant funds to pay for this project. The Water Plant got approved at town meeting to spend \$500K on the water work for this project, and the GM still thought it would not cost this much since he and the Superintendent had shortened the length of DI pipe to be installed.

The WS informed the Board about the vandalism that was occurring at hour newly rebuilt culvert on the road to the Maple St Well #2. He has filed a police report and has a pretty good idea who is doing it, although we have no proof yet. Large rocks are being taken from one

area near the culvert and being deliberately thrown into another area in the culvert where they shouldn't be, and it's affecting adversely the water levels in the new culvert. The Water Plant has already had to use our backhoe down there to pick out as many rocks as we can in order to get the culvert working properly again. The Board advised us to get some outdoor/trail cameras down there ASAP that activate on motion. Dana asked if this would require our placing signage down there warning potential vandals that they'll be on camera; we would find that out.

The WS reviewed with the Board the status of the Maple/School/Vernon St Water Mains Project. He that this project begins in July 2024. This construction bid was one by Caracas Construction out of Ludlow, MA. The Water Plant did get the extra \$400K approved at the town meeting but now Tighe & Bond thinks it may not be needed since the Caracas bid was much lower than they thought it would come in at. The GM recommended that we do not get these funds in hand until the time came when we were absolutely sure that we needed it, because we would have to pay brokerage fees again to the lender to draw up the documents. Dan asked if we'd need any temporary water mains installed and the WS said no, that we'd instead be going from hydrant to hydrant. Caracas told Tighe & Bond that they will start the project with the water lines first, which are to be located under sidewalks requiring minimal re-paving on Maple St.

The WS said to the Board that the Asset Management Program (AMP) was almost complete. At present we are in possession of a draft report but are still awaiting a final version.

The Lead Service Line Inventory (LSLI) project is, incredibly, still on going. The WS has given Tighe & Bond all of the information that they requested.

The GM and WS discussed with the Board our plan to move forward on the PFAs matter and laid out some steps:

1. Conference Call with Tighe & Bond
2. Review of Sample Results from DEP and EPA Tests
3. Start the Pilot PFAs Plan with Tighe & Bond

The WS decided to take samples at our water storage tanks rather than just sampling where the water comes out of the ground at source well sites. The samples came back from the lab as non-detectible, so we're hoping this counts in our favor with PFAs going forward.

The Board was given copies of our most recent pricing on a new excavator to replace our existing backhoe. Our current backhoe is a 2007 unit with 6,000 hours on it and maintenance repairs have started to cost a lot over the last several years. The price quote was for a 25K pound excavator by JCB for \$195K. Dana still didn't agree with our purchasing an excavator machine rather than just purchasing another backhoe. The WS respectfully disagreed with him and went on to list reasons why right now, the excavator is a better choice for us. The

excavator is considerably faster driving on roads than the backhoe is. It is also able to load materials into the dumptruck on the side of the road while parked behind it, rather than beside it like the backhoe, eliminating the need to partially block oncoming traffic. When an operator sits in the cab to operate the excavator and looks out the windshield, the view is not obstructed by the center-mounted bucket arm like it is on the backhoe. The excavator has the bucket arm right-mounted allowing the operator a full view of the outside when the machine moves. There were other advantages with the excavator over the backhoe but the main drivers were these. Chris asked what the other choice was and the WS said it would be a Caterpillar backhoe unit for \$153K. The Water Plant paid \$68K for its existing backhoe unit back in 2007 and it didn't make sense to spend double that cost now for a machine that gives us no new functionality. The WS expressed interest in including a mower attachment with this unit that will let us trim back the brush on the access road to the Maple St Wells without needing the DPW's assistance; it's an aftermarket part that costs \$22K. Dana asked how much would each department would pay for the new excavator; the GM responded that the cost would be split 50/50 as it was in 2007; each department would pay \$109K.

*On a motion by Dana, seconded by Chris, 2-0 in favor the Board voted to purchase the JCB Excavator, not to exceed \$218K (\$109K each from Light & Water)"*

*Dana – Aye*

*Chris – Aye*

There was a discussion on the old backhoe, Dana suggested using MunicBid to take it off of our hands. But the WS would like to keep it down at Sawyer St for water main breaks when they need to unload fill. Dana is concerned about the repair costs of keeping it there in service even if just for water main breaks. They will discuss this in a year and possibly look into purchasing a loader to take the place of the backhoe.

### **New Business:**

The GM presented a report to the Board on the FY2024 water revenues for Q1-Q3. He said that Q1-Q3 brought in \$139K for miscellaneous revenue, with another \$70K to be added to that in April 2024. We received multiple reimbursements from the state grants for both the AMP project and the LSLI. The GM estimates our total income for this fiscal year to be about \$2.3M.

The GM and WS told the Board about an incident occurring at #21 Bridge St. This homeowner had taken to take down a tree at the unoccupied property (#19 Bridge St) adjacent to his, and when the roots pulled out of the ground the water service shutoff to this adjacent property was destroyed. Water began to flow into the basement of the property and the Water Plant had to send two employees there for several hours to replace the shutoff valve and get the water to stop flowing. Chris asked how we knew this had happened and the WS told him that a potential buyer had stopped by to see the property, saw the basement was flooded and called us at the office. To our knowledge the water had been flowing into the basement for a few

days. The GM and WS said that an invoice has been sent to the owner of #21 Bridge St to pay for our employees' time and expenses to make the necessary repairs.

**Other Business:**

Dana had heard that the state is going to be paving Route 2A from the East Templeton Roundabout to the Brow, and he has concerns about the water main's condition along most of that way. The WS said he has checked on this with MA DOT and there is no definitive plan as of yet. The GM and WS have both submitted letters of interest for two different state grant programs, one for up to \$500K and another up to \$5M. The GM submitted one for Baker Lane's 600' that should be upgraded to 8" DI pipe from 6" AC pipe. The WS submitted one for Patriots Rd's 1,600' of 6" AC pipe that should be replaced with 8" DI pipe. This stretch of 1,600' is where nearly all of our Patriots Rd water main breaks occur. The GM said that if there is to be a road reconstruction on Patriots Rd this massive it would have to be a forced account project where utilities are notified in advance in case they need to be moved, reimbursable by the project. This means we would do whatever it took to get funding for our share of the project and all of our costs are reimbursed along the way.

The WS explained that the Sanitary Survey for the Water Plant that is done every three years by the Mass DEP, and we have been issued a Notice of Non-Compliance (NON). The reason is due to an issue brought to our attention during the previous sanitary survey where we did not have completed operation manuals for our well sites. The WS says he will work with New England Water Works Association (NEWWA) who has some good guidelines for developing such manuals.

There being no other Open Session business to discuss, on a motion by Chris, seconded by Dana, 2-0 in favor, the Water Board Meeting adjourned at 9:52 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

John M. Driscoll  
General Manager