



TOWN OF LINCOLN

WATER DEPARTMENT

MIDDLESEX COUNTY

MASSACHUSETTS

TOWN OF LINCOLN
WATER DEPARTMENT
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Water Commissioners Meeting

January 10, 2019

4:00 p.m.

Town Hall Donaldson Room, 16 Lincoln Road

Attendees: Packy Lawler, Chairman
Ruth Ann Hendrickson, Water Commissioner

MaryBeth Wiser, Superintendent
Karen Finelli, Administrative Assistant
Bob Antia, Water Commissioner, absent
Colleen Wilkins, Town Accountant
Thomas Sander, Finance Committee

Chairman Lawler called the meeting to order at 4:05 pm.

Approve Minutes of the January 2, 2019 Meeting- vote expected. The Commission reviewed and approved the minutes as amended for the January 2, 2019 meeting. Motion made by Commissioner Hendrickson, Second by Chairman Lawler. All in favor.

Update on the Chemical Handling and Ventilation Upgrades at the WTP:

Superintendent Wiser informed the Board that Methuen Construction was scheduled to install the temporary ventilation system on January 7, 2019. Some of the required equipment hasn't arrived yet therefore, she is waiting for a new install date. Also, the water department will solicit bids in April for installation of a permanent ventilation system and will issue the notice of award in mid-May, followed by the notice to begin on May 28, 2019 as well as completion of the construction by September 30, 2019.

Two potential hazardous release incidents occurred; in both cases the Fire Department hazardous material officer found no action required. Also, Ms. Wiser has been in contact with the Fire Department to inquire if there are any additional instructions; there were none.

Superintendent Wiser continued the discussion with the Board regarding the Tata & Howard proposal for engineering services at Flint Pond Water Treatment Plant, air quality evaluation dated January 7, 2019. She added that the cartridges used in the respirators don't have expiration dates and life expectancy depends partly as to how the operator is utilizing them. Chairman Lawler inquired as to why gases may be leaking at this time since they haven't done so in the previous 16 years. He also asked if respirators will be necessary once the new ventilation system is installed. Superintendent Wiser responded that employees will still need to use respirators in certain areas due to the wide variety of hazardous chemicals routinely used. She recommended that the Board approve adopting all appropriate safety measures immediately to help put the employees at ease.

Motion made by Commissioner Hendrickson, Second by Chairman Lawler to approve the Tata & Howard proposal for engineering services at Flint Pond Water Treatment Plant, air quality evaluation dated January 7, 2019. All in favor.

Discuss the FY20 Capital Request:

Superintendent Wisner stated she updated the FY20 Capital spreadsheet for the Board's review. Chairman Lawler inquired if the Sanitary Survey compliance line item on the spreadsheet for \$281,000 may be evaluated further to develop a better cost estimate. Superintendent Wisner urged the Board to keep the estimate of \$281,000 pending for this line item.

Mr. Sander from the Finance Committee attended the meeting and commented that any services or products which are to be funded by bonds should be expected to expire well after the terms of the bond to fund these services and products have expired. He added the Board may want to review the capital items listed to ensure that each of the line items is appropriately included in the FY20 Capital request spreadsheet.

Chairman Lawler inquired about the line item to support checking and exercising every gate valve each year. Superintendent Wisner responded annual exercise of gate valves is required according to Mass Drinking Water Regulations. Also, given the water departments small staff it would be impossible for only two water operators to check all valves.

Discuss Water Rates:

Commissioner Hendrickson commented that the FY17 water usage during the drought was higher than the FY18 water usage in that very wet year and that it is hard to predict year to year the amount of water people will use. Superintendent Wisner discussed the quarterly registry report generated in MUNIS and how the reporting is compiled. Commissioner Hendrickson asked if the town currently tracks flow testing, flushing, street sweeping and water leaks. Superintendent Wisner said yes. The Commissioners instructed Ms. Wisner that it was not necessary to look for leaks continuously as that had been doing recently; the annual professional audit should be sufficient. Ms. Wisner noted that the leak at Beaver Pond Rd. has been fixed and should significantly reduce unaccounted for water (UAW). Ms. Hendrickson noted that the FY2018 date presented appeared to show a drop in UAW to 17% compared to previous measurements of about 25%.

Chairman Lawler commented the water department has hired a consultant who is reviewing open and unaccounted bills in order to update the accounts. Mrs. Wilkins commented she will need to provide water usage per tier as well as the projected increased revenue to the DOR (Department of Revenue). Also, the Board may be required to address how they will fix the budget gap as well as the current deficit. In addition, the Board will need to consider a plan for a budget deficit for FY21, consideration of raising rates in FY21 and a plan to replenish retained earnings usage. All of this is also needed to ensure a low interest rate for the proposed borrowing.

Public Hearing opened at 5:03PM:

A Public Hearing was held on Thursday January 10, 2019 at 5:00 p.m. at the Lincoln Town Offices, Donaldson Room, 16 Lincoln Road, Lincoln, Ma 01773. The Lincoln Board of Water Commissioners is considering a water rate and or fee increase for water services.

The Board of Water Commissioners are committed to providing safe, reliable, high quality water service for our customers. To meet this commitment, the Board has developed a long-term financial and capital improvement program designed to ensure there are adequate funds available to make the necessary infrastructure investments to maintain safe and reliable water service. The last water rate increase was in 2014. Therefore, if approved, the new rates will become effective for all rates and charges of water bills with usage after January 1, 2019.

Chairman Lawler stated he compared the Town of Lincoln's water rate to the Town of Wayland and determined a water bill in Wayland of 20,000 gallons usage would be \$212.00 as compared to a water bill for 20,000 gallons usage in Lincoln would be \$110.00. The Board continued discussion regarding setting and

implementing new water rates and fees, determining the final water department budgets given the expected increase revenue from rates increases, and budget risk given the town's existing aging pipe infrastructure which may require repairs of unknown magnitude at any time. No members of the public attended the hearing. Motion made by Commissioner Hendrickson, Second by Chairman Lawler to close the public hearing at 6:00pm. All in favor.

Discuss and Set New Water Rate and or Fees for Water Services:

Mrs. Wilkins stated the Board will be required to provide a finalized operating budget soon; however, the Board has additional time to review and finalize the capital budget. Mr. Sander suggested that, when presenting the new rates at town meeting, the Commissioners provide a summary of historical rates. Also, provide information on the Department's ongoing development of improved processes for collection of accounts as well as repairs of water leaks. Toward the end of the meeting the Board considered raising each of the water rate tiers by 25% as well as establishing a new annual base charge of \$140.00. The Board will meet on January 16, 2019 to vote and implement new water rates as well as to vote to finalize the FY20 operating and capital budgets.

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 6:15pm. Motion made by Commissioner Hendrickson, Second by Chairman Lawler, all in favor.

The next meeting of the Water Commissioners is scheduled for January 16, 2019 at 4:00pm at Town Hall in the Donaldson Room, 16 Lincoln Road.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Finelli
Administrative Assistant