

LITCHFIELD WATER POLLUTION CONTROL AUTHORITY
REGULAR MEETING
Remote Meeting by Live Internet Video Stream and by Telephone
January 14, 2021 ~ 7:30 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER: Chairman David R. Wilson called the remote meeting to order at 7:35 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Present: William Buckley, Christian Bratina, Thomas Waterhouse, James Koser, David R. Wilson, David Geiger, and Sky Post. Also present were Ted Donoghue, Plant Superintendent, Ann Combs, Recording Secretary, Raz Alexe, Public Works Director and First Selectman Denise Raap, who hosted the Zoom meeting.

SEATING ALTERNATES: All regular members were present.

MINUTES

a) 12/10/20 Regular Meeting: Motion: C. Bratina moved to approve the minutes with his redlined suggested changes. W. Buckley seconded, all voted aye with D. Wilson and J. Koser abstaining; motion carried.

BUSINESS

1. Update of Torrington Inter-Municipal Agreement: D. Wilson announced that he and Bill Buckley had a virtual meeting with Ray Drew and Corporate Counsel from Torrington, our attorneys and Harwinton. They went through our redlined copy of the draft proposal and got through the language issues, but there is more to do regarding setting rates. The two areas in which they are not in agreement now are sampling and how we pay our user fee. For sampling, they want composite sampling monthly with a broad range of metals. Ted is arranging to get the sampler in at least on Torrington Road. We did reduce our reserve capacity from 150,000 down to 50,000 gal/day. Torrington is recalculating our bill for this current FY year.

2. Public Request and or Comment: Attorney Perley Grimes, representing the Concerned Citizens of Litchfield, commented on the USDA's statement that our user rates are too low, given the median income. He contended that the USDA's opinion of incomes is irrelevant for setting user rates, as CT Statutes do not allow income as a criteria for user rates. Secondly, he said it is problematic that the RFQ does not ask for a level of detail to understand what is needed for the standalone upgrade. He said the plant has been out of compliance for phosphorus, BOD and solids, which must be a priority for the standalone project. He referenced the EPA Echo web site for this information. Next, he said we should know the cost of the standalone upgrades according to aging infrastructure, operational problems, the processes that do not meet the 0.8 MGD rating, and whether you will give the engineer the raw design flow and loads to let them do their own analysis. He suggested these could be reasons the plant is failing to meet compliance. Further, he asked if they should automatically require that every change meets TR-16 as set forth in the RFQ, considering grandfathered portions of the plant do not have to be up to TR-16 standards. This would only drive up the cost of the standalone project, and it needs to have credibility. Ted Donoghue told Mr. Grimes his comment was inaccurate about their BOD and phosphorus removal being out of compliance. They are under no consent orders from the State DEEP. D. Wilson added that the RFP process is a two-part process with every step taken to insure compliance to be possibly eligible for Clean Water Funds. The first step is to evaluate the firms and reduce the number down for interviews. After interviews they will chose one finalist and meet with them to determine and negotiate the scope of work. The costs is separate from a firm's capability of doing the work. As the Selectmen requested, this independent evaluation will identify required changes to carry the plant for the next 20 years.

3. RFQ Engineering Submittals: D. Wilson said they have received nine submittals and commissioners have received copies. Raz Alexe had sent out a nice summary of all the firms. They decided to narrow the field down to 5 firms during the meeting to save time. Each commissioner was ready to choose 5 firms and rank them in order of preference. After discussion on choices and rankings, the top five firms were Tighe & Bond, Woodward & Curran, CDM Smith, Kleinfelder, and Wright-Pierce. All five firms will be interviewed and ranked again, using all the same questions to be compiled. W. Buckley said he preferred a remote meeting rather than in person. T. Donoghue felt the firms are prepared for and expect Zoom interviews.

4. Sewer Rate Study: D. Wilson said, regarding the collection policy, that it's been their policy to continue billing on accounts in arrears, but it does keep reducing receivables. We do not take action to remove people from their houses. An advantage is that the user fees are treated just like taxes and become liens. In the event of a bankruptcy, in general, user fees are not discharged. We've not had a negative experience relative to that, but we do have to wait a long time for our money. Sandy works with the delinquents and with the banks for the delinquents if they have mortgages. We have many approaches for collection. In general we are successful, and when someone goes to sell or refinance, everything is cleaned up. This has been our collection process.

Regarding setting a user rate, D. Wilson said it should be based on what we need, not what we can afford. Part of it is building up our Capital Expense fund. Once we sign the IMA, we will get Torrington's upgrade charges in three individual pieces: one the beginning of this year, one the beginning of next year, and one the beginning of the year after that. We could use those to determine what it takes to pay that upgrade cost, keeping in mind the funds we need for other areas. Twelve dollars (\$12) in user fees gets us about \$15,000 to \$20,000 in revenue. That would be one way to cushion the blow of looking at a rate change based on that. And to raise the rate on the basis of not being the highest rate charger hurts people and is not good. It's also not the process outlined in the rate setting structure of the general statutes. In the evaluation for WLSD, they didn't compare the median income of Woodridge Lake, but rather to the whole town of Goshen. That's what made them look under the USDA measurement as an accepted rate.

Ted Donoghue reminded the group that he shared with them a Powerpoint presentation done by Tighe & Bond at the CT Assn. of WPCAs. He also sent out a large packet called "Developing a New Framework of Affordability for Water and Sewer Rates." He hoped everyone had a chance to look at it, as it speaks to communities that are anticipating upgrade work. There are two methodologies for rate structure feasibility study. One is called the residential indicator, an EPA-endorsed program, but there is a lot of criticism of that one. There is also a new one called the household burden indicator, which people feel is a much more thorough method to look at the rate structure and make the right decisions for the right reasons. W. Buckley said it is time to take a serious look at establishing a rate structure based on our water usage, as it is much fairer. He felt the residents are carrying the burden, and that burden should be shifted a bit toward the businesses and commercial properties. The starting point would be to look at our customer base. How many the Aquarion customers are there? That would tell us how many already have a meter. D. Wilson said we'll get the numbers from Aquarion and have it ready for the next meeting.

5. 2021 Flow Monitoring Study: T. Donoghue said they have begun another flow monitoring study, focusing specifically on Bantam because of the data that was collected at the end of 2019 with DPC. There were some higher flows that came from between Route 209 and the north gate. Christian did a great analysis of that data, and Ted asked him to speak about it. C Bratina explained that DPC installed 4 flow meters, with the flow going through them sequentially 1 – 4. On meters 1, 2 and 3, the flows were fairly the same on a daily average basis. But Meter #4 had extremely high peak flows compared to the other three, and the daily average flow was significantly higher. It seemed like a lot of I&I coming through there, and Ted found a big source. We don't know, however, what proportion of what DPC found he was able to move. It seems that is one of the primary spots for us to investigate, and he recommended additional flow meters be installed. It also should be cameraed. Ted noted that DPC installed 5 flow meters today, and he described each of the Bantam locations that are collecting data for a three-month study.

6. FY 2022 Operational Budget: T. Donghue reviewed the draft budget. He put in 2% raise for salaries, subject to the negotiations. The Torrington IMA assessment of \$24,000 has not been altered. He expects nearly \$22,000 set aside for usage. He increased the electricity KWH by \$1,000 based on a six month trend of FY 21. He added 9 connections at Gagarin Place, for \$36,000 in revenue. He lowered the septage receiving amount by \$5,000. We are about balanced at this point, leaving \$77,000 for Capital Nonrecurring. They discussed the Torrington IMA payments and that the first would be heavier because of interest. D. Wilson said that when the agreement is signed, they will be able to pinpoint the payments. *[R. Alexe left the meeting here.]*

7. Transfer \$4,800 Northfield Work from Operating Budget to Fund 66: D. Wilson explained that this was the rebuild of the pumps at the Northfield station. Ted explained that two electric motors were done last year, and this work is for the other two. He added that in his discussion with D. Wilson, this is an example of an expense that should be put into the depreciation account, as it will last more than five years. With the Board's authority we can put it through Fund 66. **Motion:** W. Buckley moved to transfer \$4,800 from the operating budget into Fund 66. C. Bratina seconded. More detail was discussed about the building of the pump station and how it was funded. Upon voting all voted aye and the motion carried.

8. Collection System Work: T. Donoghue reported very little work done in December, but he sent out an email about a new app that New England Geosystems is having us use. There are some kinks, and although they have the manhole inspection sheet up and running, they can't generate reports that are needed. Hopefully by the next meeting this will be working.

9. Plant Equipment Updates

a) UV System: T. Donoghue reported that C. Bratina has finished the spec for the new UV system. We will not have it ready for the next disinfection season, so Suez will be coming to give a list of things to be addressed; i.e., power supplies on two of the modules and whatever else needs to be done to get the system up and running for the next season.

b) Mechanical Bar Screen: C. Bratina has started working on this spec, but Ted said the RFQ comes first.

c) Sludge Mixers/Sludge Recirculation Pump: T. Donoghue said these are up and running.

10. Safety: Ted said there were no incidents and no training to report.

11. Commissioner's Requests: D. Wilson announced the newest hire at the plant passed his Class 1 license exam, and the other Class 2 Operator passed his Class 3 on Monday. W. Buckley congratulated them on their success.

12. Public Works / Treatment Plant Report: T. Donoghue said they had a high flow month, with average flow of 724,000 gallons. Permit compliance has been maintained since the last report, with the exception of an effluent non-compliance report for exceeding the daily maximum for both BOD and TSS on 12/25/20, and an equipment failure for loss of sampling ability on 12/18/20. Routine operations and maintenance work continues. The average daily flow for the month of December was 0.724 MGD and the total flow was 22.440 MG. We removed 78,000 gallons of sludge for final disposal during the month of December.

- We processed a total of 80,450 gallons of septage during the month of December, a 9% increase over last December. YTD we are down 24%.

- For December effluent BOD removal percent was 98% and TSS removal percent was 97%. The minimal removal rates per our NPDES permit is 85%.
- The daily average of Total Nitrogen lbs. /day discharged into the Bantam River was 2.9 mg/ or 16 lbs. /day. Our daily limit is 24 lbs. /day.
- The daily average for Total Phosphorous lbs. /day discharged in the Bantam River was 1.6 mg/l. The monthly seasonal average, between May to October, cannot exceed 3.7 mg/l or 9.97 lbs. /day.
- On 12/3/20 Ted, Jim, and Joe virtually attended the annual Manger's Forum.
- On 12/4/20 Berkshire Alarm called to notify us that the alarm system was not sending out a signal since 11/28/20 they replaced the radio with a SLR-LTEV unit.
- On 12/8/20 M & H installed new exhaust hood on the plant generator.
- On 12/16/20 we finished CCTV'ing at Indian Knolls to locate the renaming building stubs for the final as-built drawings.
- On 12/18/20 Ted reported an equipment failure for loss of sampling ability on effluent sampler due to ice in the sample tube.
- On 12/25/20 Ted reported an effluent non-compliance event for exceeding daily maximum for both BOD and TSS due to extremely high flows of 2.414 MG for the day.

a) Easements: No report

b) Operations: discussed above

13. Financial Report: T. Donoghue said they are six months into the budget. He explained he put in \$216,000 of debt service, showing why purchases were higher than last year. We have to be watchful of the revenue line. At this point last year we were significantly higher. We're at about 54% of the budget, which is right where we need to be. Wintertime expenses typically slow down. He said he would work on getting an independent auditing firm. He also needs to work on the renewal for the NPDES permit for DEEP.

14. Old Business

a) Second Vehicle: No report

b) FY 19 Audit/Selecting Potential Firms: C. Bratina said we should have the audit done before approving a budget, but Ted said that might take until April. C. Bratina asked him to get prices by next month so they can get a firm on board. D. Wilson noted the Clermont auditors this year did not talk to anyone with the WPCA, so apparently we did everything right. The Board discussed a couple items in the audit. C. Bratina said he had an hour's worth of questions on this. C. Bratina asked about the Worker's Comp claim and when the employee can return to work. They decided it best to go into executive session at the next meeting, but C. Bratina made a motion. **Motion:** C. Bratina moved to go into executive session to discuss the Worker's Comp program. Hearing no second, the motion failed. D. Wilson said he would place this on the next agenda as "Review of Workman's Comp Program."

15. Adjournment: Motion: W. Buckley moved to adjourn at 9:25 p.m. and T. Waterhouse seconded. All voted aye and the motion carried.

Ann Combs, Recording Secretary