

**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' MEETING
HYBRID MEETING MINUTES
FEBRUARY 21, 2023
7:00 P.M.
CHERRY VALLEY & ROCHDALE WATER DISTRICT**

I. CALL TO ORDER - The meeting called to order by Chairman Bergin @ 7:03pm

The following were in attendance:

Kevin Bergin, Chairman
Arthur E.J. Levesque, Commissioner
Benjamin Morris, Superintendent
Robert H. Lemieux, Sr., Commissioner
Jennifer Wood, Treasurer – recorded minutes
Cheryl Balkus, Clerk – absent
Greg Buteau - Customer

II. District Member Forum –There were no question or comments from the commissioners, the listening or attending audience. Commissioner Lemieux motioned to suspend the remaining minutes of the forum. Seconded by Chairman Bergin. All in Favor. Approved.
The forum ended in one minute and thirty seconds.

III. APPROVE MINUTES

A. February 7, 2023, Meeting Minutes - Commissioner Lemieux motions to approve the February 7, 2023, meeting minutes. Seconded by Chairman Bergin. All in favor. Approved.

IV. FINANCE

A. Approve February 13, 2023, Warrants – Commissioner Levesque motions to approve the February 13, 2023, warrants. Seconded by Chairman Bergin. All in favor. Approved.

B. Approve February 20, 2023, Warrants- Commissioner Lemieux motions to approve the February 20, 2023, warrants. Seconded by Chairman Bergin. All in favor. Approved.

The warrants consisted of office expense, electricity, subcontractor, telephone, insurance, lab work, payroll, repairs & Main, Field supplies, Motor vehicle, technology, legal fees, services and accounting fees. The total for all warrants was \$29,093.89.

C. Draft budget – Per Superintendent Morris that this is just a draft budget, and we will continue to work on it as we get more updated numbers in. The City of Worcester line item will be reducing about \$25,000 last year we took a gamble and did a big reduction of the line item because we thought the well was going to be on a lot earlier than it was. We are still building data to see how much more the well can be reduced but right now we are at a \$25,000 reduction. Standpipes there is an increase due to the costs of inspections and cleanings. Electricity is the highest increase due to the grindstone well online and switching from oil to electric heat. We are still waiting to get another national grid bill in to modify this amount. We will be sharing the office cost of electricity with the sewer district. Insurance we are seeing an increase due to having the appraisal done last year and updating our policy to cover the correct dollar amounts. Lab is increasing, the labs drastically increasing their prices. Motor Vehicle remains level with the purchase of new truck less vehicle maintenance is needed. Office expense slight decrease mainly because we have been able to find ways to save costs. Payroll is increasing due to the well put online we have to compensate the operators more for weekend coverage as well as a 4% increase for employees. Prior to well coming online the guys would just come in and make sure everything looks good and monitor the SCADA system. Now with the well online they also have to take samples and do testing over the weekend along with more monitoring with the SCADA system 24/7. Increasing pipes strictly due to cost of

everything is increasing for example a gate valve we purchased for a leak in September has already increased \$300. Services are contracts we have such as; trash, R.E. Erickson, Henshaw Pond tests, the increase in this line item is mostly due to cost of trash removal increasing. Subcontractors is increasing due to contractors increasing their prices. Technology slight increase due to prices going up same thing with telephone. There is a \$57,666.79 increase for operating budget but we did pay off one of our SRF loans so the loan costs is going down about \$58,736.36 and will put the district at a decrease about \$1,069.00. Again this is just a draft budget and numbers will likely change.

Commissioner Lemieux inquired about the Worcester line item and how much we reduced the line item last year. Per the Superintendent last year's City of Worcester budget line item was reduced by \$114,415.93. So that will put us at \$139,000.00 decrease since we anticipated the well going online. Commissioner Lemieux commented, electricity I do not think you anticipated changing heating systems four years ago I understand that you did not know you would be switching over to electric heat systems but a large portion of this is to operate the well. Lemieux asked if us changing the direction of the pump early on had anything to do with increasing of electrical costs. Per the Superintendent I believe if we stayed to use some of the older pumps, we would be using more electricity they were less energy efficient and bigger we would have been using more KHW usage we are using more efficient equipment so we are actually saving. We are close to where we were KHW usage from when we were running online before, however the cost of electricity has almost tripled since we took Henshaw Pond offline and put the well online. Commissioner Lemieux did we factor in these costs when we originally put on the well? Per the Superintendent I think there was some confusion with the credits from the solar farm we were purchasing to many credits so we got rid of some of the credits but now we are in the works to try and purchase back some of those credits back and that should help us save more on electricity. As the bills come in and we get more data we will have more of an idea of where our savings will be and hopefully reduce electrical costs. Per Chairman Bergin we are factoring in an increase for the heat pumps as well and it's being offset by the heat line item which was decreased. Commissioner Lemieux asked if the salary increase was factored in to the original savings costs to the well? Per the Superintendent before they would receive a stipend for being on call, which was a flat rate because there was minimal amount of work that needed to be done after hours and on weekends. We are proposing an increase to that stipend amount because there is added work on the weekends, there is also more monitoring that must be done 7 days a week after work hours. Commissioner Lemieux asked how that stipend works. Is it a rotating basis? Per the Superintendent it is Friday at 3 p.m. to the next Friday at 3 p.m. and I do not receive compensation for anything that I do on the weekends. Commissioner Lemieux asked how the stipend is given is it a lump sum. Per the Superintendent currently it is \$300.00 a week and if it is a holiday, they get an additional \$50.00, which is how it has been since the City of Worcester went automated. We are looking to increase it to \$400.00 and per the Superintendent I am currently not receiving compensation for it nor in my contract says that I need to work weekends, which we may have to meet with the board to discuss. Everything falls back on the Superintendents licenses. It covers a 4% increase to the staff than includes 18 additional weekends that were not factored in prior. Take number of weekends divided by 3. If I stop working weekends we are going to have to factor in compensation for those weekends. We may have to go into executive session to go over Morris's salary to discuss Superintendent Contract. Comments from Subscriber Buteau, for the City of Worcester line item we will take second look at when we get more information, Electricity for the buildings than there is electricity for the pumps, water picks up the costs of the pumps, as for the building you guys came up with some percentage how did you come up with that percentage? Per Superintendent Morris we took an estimated average of our usage for what we used prior as well as what the percentage we show for the heat usage with the electricity. MOV expense and office expense 70/30 split. Per subscriber Buteau he feels with insurance we should share the costs of the workers comp insurance should be split with the sewer district. I made that statement last year and I would like you to consider fairness concept on insurances as well. Per the Superintendent we will have to go back to the service agreement before the May meeting. Per subscriber Buteau, as long as the water and sewer board come up with the amount each year it should not have to be done as long as both agree.

V. ADMINISTRATION – Nothing to report.

VI. OPERATIONS

A. Superintendent Report – Per Superintendent Morris previously we discussed the MVP grant one for the construction of the Sargent St. project and The Kettle Brook on Main St. Superintendent Morris had a zoom meeting, and we went through everything. Unfortunately, Sargent St does not fit the design of the grant program, however there is some potential for the design for the relocation of the water main on Main Street. The MVP grant look at it as they would not just want to fix our problem they would want to look at it as a whole included storm water and the dam up the road since it has more to do with climate change. We may be still put in an application for the design aspect of it but moving forward and would have to look at other funding to do the actual construction of it.

We had a company come in to fix the booster pump motor they switched it out, are going to rebuild the old one and give it back to us so we have a spare in stock.

With the well we have been increasing the times running it. We are up to 60,000 gallons a day which is an improvement from a few weeks ago where we were only pumping 35,000 gallons per day. The booster pumps are still kicking on because people in Rochdale are using more water there is a new business over there that is using a lot more water.

New Lead and copper rule that DEP put out must be completed by 2024. We must do a lead and copper service inventory that we started doing it in house then MassDEP sent out a 45-column sheet that needs to be filled out that includes pulling permits for each property to figure out their type of pipes. SRF (State Revolving Fund) has a 100% paid for grant for this project. We would have to temporary borrow first, pay Tata & Howard then submit for the 100% reimbursement from SRF. Tata & Howard estimated the cost to be around \$110,000. Superintendent Morris stated he does not see any way that the staff could get it done by 2024, we do not have all the resources Tata & Howard has such as, setting up an online portal so customers can upload pictures of their pipes, so we do not have to go into every house. Houses that we are unable to get into we will have to dig up and investigate their pipes. Even though we have to borrow the money it is not going to effect the rates once we pay the bills it gets reimbursed 100%. Treasurer Wood and I have a call with UniBank later this week to discuss with a financial advisor and bond council all those fees. This will all be factored into the cost of the project which gets fully reimbursed by SRF. There will be an article on the annual meeting to get the approval of the rate payers. Commissioner Lemieux asked why it has to be a loan. Superintendent Morris stated that is the only way they will reimburse us 100% and I asked about why we couldn't use free cash, but they need to see the temporary borrowing funds. If we front the money ourselves we will not get reimbursed. Commissioner Lemieux asked if we had any idea of how long it takes to get reimbursed. Superintendent Morris stated he asked Justine at Tata & Howard and she was going to look into it. Once this phase is completed we will have to address the ones that need to be replaced. The customer technically owns the service line, so they are technically responsible, or do we tell the customers they have x amount of days to fix their service line.

Customer Buteau asked we are pulling 60,000 per a day for Rochdale what is the demand for Rochdale? Superintendent Morris stated anywhere from 75,000 to 90,000 per a day. Customer Buteau asked what is the max we can get out of well? Superintendent Morris stated 118,000 gallons but it would have to run 24 hours a day.

VII. DATE OF NEXT MEETING – Commissioner Levesque motions to hold the next meeting March 7, 2023, hybrid at the Town hall if available. Seconded by Chairman Bergin. All in favor. Approved.

VIII.

A. ADJOURNMENT- Commissioner Levesque motions to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Chairman Bergin. All in Favor. Approved. Meeting adjourned at 8:54pm.

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