

# BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' MEETING

## VIRTUAL MEETING MINUTES

April 7, 2020

7:00 P.M.

### CHERRY VALLEY & ROCHDALE WATER DISTRICT

#### I. CALL TO ORDER –

The virtual meeting was called to order by Chairman Bergin at 7:00 P.M.

The following were in attendance:

Kevin Bergin, Chairman	2 - Subscribers
Arthur E.J. Levesque, Commissioner	
Robert H. Lemieux, Sr., Commissioner - Absent	
Benjamin Morris, Superintendent	
Jennifer Wood, Treasurer	
Cheryl Balkus, Clerk	

- II. **District Member Forum** – Subscriber Greg Buteau asked what the status of the Work Study Group in terms of drafting of an RFP and has it been submitted. Per Superintendent Morris as of now there is an RFP, there was supposed to have had a joint meeting in mid-March and was changed because of COVID. The Town Administrator sent it out to all the Districts members who are involved for comment, waiting for the final version and to try to get it posted by mid to later part of the month. There were no further questions or comment during the District Member Forum. Commissioner Levesque motioned to suspend the remaining District Member Forum for tonight's meeting. Seconded by Chairman Bergin. All in Favor. Approved. 4 minutes and 6 seconds into it.

#### III. APPROVE MINUTES

- A. **March 17, 2020** – Commissioner Levesque motioned to approve the minutes of March 17, 2020. Seconded by Chairman Bergin. All in Favor. Approved.

#### IV. FINANCE

- A. **Approve March 23, 2020 Warrants** – Commissioner Levesque motioned to approve the March 23, 2020 warrants. Seconded by Chairman Bergin. All in Favor. Approved.
- B. **Approve March 30, 2020 Warrants** - Commissioner Levesque motioned to approve the March 30, 2020 warrants. Seconded by Chairman Bergin. All in Favor. Approved.
- C. **Approve April 6, 2020 Warrants** – Commissioner Levesque motioned to approve the April 6, 2020 warrants. Seconded by Chairman Bergin. All in Favor. Approved.
- The 3 warrants consist of salary, labs, chemical, pipes, repairs, contractors, office expenses, legal expenses and so forth. Legal Expense was \$715.00. The total of the 3 Warrants was \$59,555.00.

**D. March Bank Transfer** – Commissioner Levesque motioned to transfer the sum of \$48,754.07 from the water collection account to the sewer. Seconded by Chairman Bergin. All in favor. Approved. This is money that the Water Dept collects on behalf of the Sewer Dept. Water does not keep this money.

**E. Draft Budget** – Per Treasurer Wood really did not make many changes. Insurance has been finalized. For health there is an increase of 17%, other insurances such as liability, workman's comp, motor vehicles increase is 15%.

For Auditors we have a quote from the one that we use and another that was higher than the current auditors we use. The T&G ad that was run closed last Friday, 4/3/20. The other auditing company came in \$15,000.00 plus to run the 1099's. The auditor that we have previously used was \$11,400 plus the cost to run the 1099's. It is up to the Commissioners to decide which one to go with and she will adjust the accounting line. Chairman Bergin & Commissioner Levesque agree to stay with the lower one.

Subscriber Buteau did not see in the ad a due date. Per Treasurer Wood we did not put one. The ad was run in the T&G and we used what they offered and wanted to save on costs. Mr. Buteau commented that he wished that Commissioner Lemieux was available of this meeting being that he is a Commissioner for the Sewer & Water District. Per Mr. Buteau to Superintendent Morris & Treasurer Wood referring to the Sewer District that they were doing an unacceptable practice in using betterment money to fund the operations when it should have been kept separate and since the current auditors did not pick up on that problems with sewer betterment not being kept separate and should we be staying with the same auditors? Per Treasurer Wood does not think that it's the auditors to report the practice that they look to ensure money is coming in and going to the proper places. Per Buteau he has talked to other and based upon it is not an acceptable practice and will reach out to other professionals and we should as well. Per Commissioner Levesque that practice is of the Sewer District and is their responsibility and the Sewer District should handle that. Per Mr. Buteau, it is the same auditors that are used for both the water & the Sewer District and feels that the auditors should have known this and addressed it. RCAP came out and clearly stated that you can't use betterment money to operate the Sewer District. Per Chairman Bergin when the audit is done for the Water District, we have received feedback and implemented what the auditors recommended. When we switched to these folks, they had more credentialing than our previous auditor had, and we needed to go up in the credentialing and the current auditor fit the bill. With the current auditor we have always taken their recommendations and implemented them. The current audit firm Spinelli has been being used by the District the last 2 or 3 years.

Mr. Buteau agrees that the Water District has done with them from their recommendations and with the sewer side was a major impact. Per Treasurer Wood as for sewer the current auditors did not recognize when 1<sup>st</sup> year was done that all of the money was pooled. Treasurer Wood agrees that the auditors used back in the 2000's should have caught that the Betterment money was being collected and being used for the sewer district operations when should

have been kept separate. Per Subscriber Buteau thinks that this is a fault of prior auditors and that the current auditors should have addressed. Subscriber Buteau, regarding the Risk and Resilience of \$23,500 being dictated by EPA that must be repeated every 5 years. He feels that this is inappropriate to have it as part of the Annual Budget and should be a separate article. (Due to technical issues confirmed by Subscriber Shocik, a part of Mr. Buteau's conversation during the virtual meeting became distorted) Chairman Bergin asked if Mr. Shocik had any questions regarding the draft budget and he did not. Per Superintendent Morris the reason we included it in the budget is next year when we finish will then have 6 months of monitoring period that will end May 2021 we'll have 6 months to address or update Emergency Response Plan to address any of the risk that are determined in the assessment. We do not know what the cost will be because we do not know what the assessment will find. There will be a little cost to it for the following item. We are seeing a reduction in our costs and knowing what we are allocating did not find it necessary to take \$25,000.00 away from the Grindstone or Clear Well project and we will have to budget for emergency response plan next year. It's a one-time cost & thought it would be the most beneficial way to get it one and done. To Superintendent Morris to go back in time approximately 5 years ago when it came to the media of the Grindstone well that the former Superintendent had made a specific case to have it moved from the Operating Budget and feels that it should be kept separate for consistency. If it is not part of the Operating Budget and have it as an outside article. He knows he is only 1 vote but going in a circle of what is in and not in an operation budget. Per Superintendent Morris this is a draft and changes can be made with the draft. He was looking at getting the best bang for the buck to cover everything but if the Board wants it to be moved to an outside article so be it. Chairman Bergin's concern we are already coming down to low numbers to available free cash. It is a bigger concern and very fearful of bleeding out the free cash because he knows how quickly a \$100,000 can disappear and if it all goes well, we would only have \$100,000 in free cash that is dangerously low. we take another \$23,000 out it becomes too low. Commissioner Levesque to clarify does not want to sacrifice the well getting on-line. Per Superintendent Morris has two other possibilities. Take it out of the top line item of the Operating Budget and put it in the debt service or zero fund it until we need deal with it again. Per Subscriber Buteau he would like to see it as a separate line item. 2<sup>nd</sup> is holdoff on the Grindstone till the fall, do the Clear Well only because it will need to be done first and this as the 2 special articles and when the free cash is recertified in the Fall sure there will be a little more of the rem of the \$200,000 \$225,00 and to do the well and do a special district meeting to save money and see where we are at from there. Chairman Bergin is comfortable with as it is in the Draft Budget this year now whether if it's in the top or the bottom. Holding off the Grindstone Well till the Fall we can look at and we must get the results from the MADEP and how long will we have to do this. But we are still going to have to spend the money. Superintendent Morris looked at all different perspectives and thought that this will be a little bit of a buffer in the free cash evaluations and the plan is to finalize at the next meeting.

## **V. ADMINISTRATION**

- A.** Grant Update - Mr. Reilley was not on the call. Per Chairman Bergin Mr. Reilley sent a summary for the month of March that he indicated that the Grant office was slow and submitted was Consumer Product Safety for pools and spas, Department of Agriculture regarding revolving funding for wastewater and a Household well water program. In his summary the pool & spas is for communities that have pools and Chairman Bergin did not know why Mr. Reilley felt it would be applicable to the CVRWD. The SRF fund we know that there are funds the District if there is a project that qualifies. The was also an item for reducing lead in drinking water. Per Chairman Bergin reading eligibility is for private, non-profit organizations, individually owned ground water, no delinquent debt for individuals' households with well water. Chairman Bergin is confused as to how these items are to benefit the District. In his opinion there are not enough details to be applicable and need to reach out to Mr. Reilley to get more feedback as to why we would be eligible. He gets that things are slow and wants why the grants he is specifying relates to us. Subscriber Buteau also agrees with Chairman Bergin. Superintendent Morris to reach out to Mr. Reilley to get more specificity.

## **VI. Operations**

- A. Superintendent's Report** – Per Superintendent Morris they were out on water main break on Carleton Rd. He was told everything was off and noticed water was still losing with the booster system in operation. He checked and continued to the see levels drop to determine there was a second leak going on. Prowler was called in to do more in depth detection with their equipment. It took till the next day at 2:30 in the afternoon a caller reported water coming out of a vacant property on Comins Rd coming out of the basement. We were able to cut it off and there was in an increase in the tanks. The demand and the feeding from Worcester were not enough and to meet the pressure issues so the decision was made to temporarily tap in and purchase water from Leicester. We bought 45,000-55,000 gallons of water from Leicester to avoid pressure issues. Between the leak & the purchase of water there was an estimated 550,000 gallons of loss. Superintendent Morris was on a prior phone call with Commissioner Lemieux and he asked if we had any leaks and if we could charge the customer for that water that went out thru his basement. We have not been able to get into the basement to determine if the leak was before or after the meter, unknown if we have a meter in this property. The property has been emptied since 2011 and under the assumptions that it was shut off 10 years ago. Gauged the duration of the leak from the time the tanks dropping till the time it was fixed. The estimated cost is \$14,399.00 to charge the property. It is a vacant property that we have not have to have dealt with in 10 years. The Superintendent asks the Board if we want to get involved with legal issues that would be involved charging the owner. We are not sure if the leak was before or after the meter, the building is not safe to enter, there is still an electrical meter on the building, unknow if there is power still going to it. We have not in past practice charged customers for leak of their service lines. We shut it off and the customer pays to have their service fixed. Per Subscriber Buteau you must have solid information for a case of what happened to this property 11 years ago to justify trying and collect a \$14,000 bill and it's not a clear case. A note from 2011 was to attempt to replace the shut off valve in the building. The one in the street

was not found, that it appeared that when the mill was shut off that this property was shut off. Superintendent Morris to follow up with legal.

Commissioner Levesque suggests that we table this item for another meeting. Hydrant Flushing to begin end of April 7, 2020. A flow test was conducted for a property in Cherry Valley and stirred up some water quality issues that are being taken care of.

Waiting for one more quote for the Auburn St repair. All the other pricing is lined up the estimated cost to do the repairs will be \$45,000-\$50,000.00

Lastly need to think of a Plan B for the Annual Meeting. Need to wait what the deadlines will be with the upcoming Covid-19 Dates.

## **VII. COMMUNICATIONS**

**A. 3-20-2020 Customer Request: L Provo E-mail –** Hi Kevin. Good morning. I hope you and yours are safe and getting through the restrictions in place uneventfully. Writing to you as a subscriber of the CVRWD I request that the Board of Commissioners suspend the resumption of terminations until the end of March when I ask the commissioners to re-evaluate the current health crisis in our country and extend the suspension or resume terminations.

Thank you very much for considering this request I understand it's not always easy on the district to do things such as this however in my opinion it's necessary in the short term.

Per Commissioner Levesque to pass over because it was discussed at the previous past March 17 meeting that terminations were suspended temporarily. Seconded by Chairman Bergin. All in favor. Approved

**B. 4-1-2020 Customer Request: 221 Auburn St. Customers E-Mail:**

If U haven't noticed times & circumstances have changed! its all of our jobs to try and keep up. Sediment in the system ?? what sediment ?? we now get our water from Worcester, and their state of the art purification, filtration system In that regard we are buying water so U can dump it down the gutter. Twice a year. U need to explain the logic of this situation so even I might understand; There's probably no open meetings so I do expect a response to my concerns. Or feel free to stop by, at a 6" distance. Joe petkiewicz 221 auburn st.

Per Superintendent Morris we flush to maintain water quality and the sediment that builds up in the Mains. It is to maintain and improve water quality Also, it is a MA DEP recommended within their guideline 310 CMR Ch 22 that we have to have and annual program and needs to be done within the system. We have no choice recommended through a law that we do it and if we don't we will have much more issues as previously discussed. Flushing the system avoids the complaints.

**VIII. PERSONNEL –** Nothing to report

## **IX. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

**A. Approval of Next Meeting –** Commissioner Levesque motioned to hold the next meeting Tuesday, April 21, 2020 @ 7:00 PM. via Virtual Meeting. Seconded by Chairman Bergin. All in favor. Approved.

**ADJOURNMENT-** Commissioner Levesque motions to adjourn the virtual meeting. Seconded by Chairman Bergin. All in Favor. Approved. Virtual Meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm.

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