

# BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' MEETING

## VIRTUAL MEETING MINUTES

January 19, 2021

7:00 P.M.

### CHERRY VALLEY & ROCHDALE WATER DISTRICT

- I. CALL TO ORDER - The meeting was called to order by Chairman Bergin @ 7:01 P.M.

The following were in attendance:

Kevin Bergin, Chairman

3 – Subscribers

Arthur Paquette - LCAC

Arthur E.J. Levesque, Commissioner

Benjamin Morris, Superintendent

Robert H. Lemieux, Sr., Commissioner

Jennifer Wood, Treasurer

Cheryl Balkus, Clerk

- II. **District Member Forum** – Commissioner Levesque asked if we are required to record by law. Per Chairman Bergin we are recording and not required by law. There were no further questions or comments during the District Member Forum. Commissioner Lemieux motions to end the District Member Forum. Seconded by Chairman Bergin. All in Favor. Approved. The District Member Forum ended 3 minutes and 23 seconds.

III. **APPROVE MINUTES**

A. **December 1, 2020 Joint Meeting Minutes** - Commissioner Lemieux motioned to approve the Joint Meeting Minutes December 1, 2020. Seconded by Chairman Bergin. All in Favor. Approved.

B. **January 5, 2021 Meeting Minutes** – Commissioner Levesque motioned to approve the minutes as corrected January 5, 2021 Meeting Minutes. Seconded by Chairman Bergin. All in Favor. Approved.

*Per Chairman Bergin need to correct under the Superintendent Report the average gallons per day from 110,000 to 210,000 gallons per day. Confirmed with Superintendent Morris.*

IV. **FINANCE**

A. **Approve January 11, 2021 Warrants** – Commissioner Levesque motions to approve the January 11, 2021 warrants. Seconded by Commissioner Bergin. All in Favor. Approved.

B. **Approve January 18, 2021 Warrants**- Commissioner Lemieux motions to approve the January 18, 2021 warrants. Seconded by Chairman Bergin. All in Favor. Approved.

Subscriber Buteau asked if there are any bills in either warrant from Tata & Howard and if there is a total to date.

Per Chairman Bergin there is an amount in 1 of the warrants for the Grindstone Well in the amount of \$14,744.00 and did not have the running total to date available.

The warrants consisted of repairs & maintenance, pipes, electricity, payroll, office expense, legal \$459. Small tolls & equipment, overpayment reimbursement, The City of Worcester \$25,152.00, technology, Grindstone Well \$14,744.00, motor vehicle expense, service agreement and telephone. The total for both warrants is \$56,418.69.

C. Free Cash - Per Treasurer Wood free cash approval as of July 1, 2020 is \$298,613.00. No comments

## V. ADMINISTRATION

### A. One Bill One Vote Update –

Superintendent Morris spoke with Representative David Leboeuf for an update. He was informed that the proposed update did not make it out for legislative legal review. If we want to attempt will need to start over and rewrite what house council has. To do this we have to have it rewritten by our attorney, voters to reapprove at a special district meeting and would all need to be done by February 19th to be timely filed.

Subscriber Buteau not against the one bill one vote update but it is the additional costs and special town meeting. It is a logistical challenge for the district to have in such a short time frame. Suggest resubmitting to the voters and say this is what the costs will be and present this to the rate payers at the Annual in May.

Per Chairman Bergin agrees it needs to go back to the ratepayers with what we thought was ok that it has been returned to reword and there is no guarantee if resubmitted that it will come back and need to be reworded again. It will then run into more costs and no guarantee. However, we need to bring it to the rate payers to final decide. The call is not the Commissioners call it is the voter's call. Commissioner Levesque agrees that the timeline of February 19 is too soon and to bring it up at the Annual Meeting.

Per Commissioner Lemieux suggests that we put this aside. He was the driver of this and thought it was a good idea at the time and does not think it is a good idea to play cat and mouse with the legislation. It is unfortunate and frustrating how the state is going to waste our time and money. We put forth a valiant and well thought executed plan to make it happen and we are never going to covered from a liability standpoint and not be able to satisfy all the subscribers on the other side and it is not a good idea to spend more money on this. We did what we had to do, a lot of time into this, paid legal expenses, and Ben was good on asking legal guidance. To go as far as it did sees it as a rabbit hole and the benefit does not justify the costs and not to put any more time or money into this.

Per Chairman Bergin does not feel doing a special meeting quick enough or to wait and explain it to the subscribers at the Annual Meeting with the hopes we will be in person again and more people to weigh in on it. He also agrees that this is going into or gone into a rabbit hole. We worked very hard on this and thought we presented the straight

language. How much time are we going to go round and round and ultimately it does not get passed and how much money is to be spent. We will not please everybody but believes waiting till the Annual Meeting would be best to get back from the subscribers what they want to do. We also do not know what it going to happen with the May Annual meeting because of COVID.

Per Commissioner Lemieux the District and LCAC make the meetings available. It is very easy to sign in whether it be at the time of the meeting or after the meeting they can watch it later. It is the same handful of people who were angry and disappointed. They have disappeared and if there is some big catastrophic thing that happens, they will be back again. Shame on them if they have a problem and has no problem saying this. We have done everything we can to allow them to have a voice be educated, nothing is hidden and to be on social media and complain about us and not being part of the meetings is not right. He hopes that these complainers get on the phone or keyboard to direct your frustrations to the State to make our voices heard. He wants to table this for now, do not work on it anymore and do not pay any further fees into it or if any of those in the listening audience wants to pay themselves to pursue, they can do this.

Subscriber Nancy Hesselton agrees to table it till the Annual Meeting. Give the report that has been given tonight to the subscribers and no special meeting.

There was no one else in the listening audience who had questions or comments.

## **VI. Operations**

### **A. Superintendent's Report –**

Per Superintendent Morris water flows continue to average 200,000 to 210,000 gallons per day.

There will be scheduled a system wide leak survey detection that is required by DEP. It is planned in the budget and to be done Feb / March, so the report is ready for when DEP does their inspection of the district.

A developer working on a property in Rochdale there is some complexity to it and given plans to Tata & Howard to review. The Developer will reimburse us for those expenses.

The Grindstone Well - the 100% drawings should be received by end of the month. He met with the engineer and making possible changes of piping from the filter galley and in the pump station itself. It is a tentative change, does not think there will be additional costs. It will make the use on our end much easier with control modules.

Waiting scheduling of the test of the well with the well company. The company to be used is out of Worcester.

Chairman Bergin, with the potential of snow coming will this effect doing the leak detections? Per the Superintendent it should not. A device will be set in the gate valve boxes on street we will go out open and clean out to sit on the valve it will send signal

to the transmitters to identify if there is a leak. More in depth compared to what we do in house.

Commissioner Levesque wanted to know when the Grindstone well was put in. Per the Superintendent he did not know as this was before his time but believes it would have been 2000 or 2001. Commissioner Levesque mentioned that there was a well put in Leicester for the use of the Town of Spencer and if there is any potential for utilizing that well or can it be. He does not know what well.

Per the Superintendent was only aware of Shaw Pond did not know that they had a well.

Per Commissioner Levesque when Moose Hill was first built, the deal was to use that well, Henshaw Pond, pump the water up to Moose Hill and sell the water to the water districts. That is what he has for his own records.

Commissioner Lemieux ask what type of project that the developer was doing. Per the Superintendent this is an existing facility (Millbrook Distributors) and they are proposing to change the piping to go in the building as this is going to be a marijuana facility. They want to increase the pipe capacity and flows on a quarterly basis that will be astronomical and does not think it would be beneficial to the system. The quarterly demand is 5-6 times more for a couple of days to flush their system and that demand and the time frames could cause issues in the service area what they normally want. The plans have been given to Tata & Howard, a deposit has been received, this will not cost the district additional money. Tata & Howard to run their flow capacities, fire flow demand, and put this into our hydraulic model of our system so we know, and they know what they can and can not do in our system.

Commissioner Lemieux asked if they are looking at worse case scenarios, such as drought or fire somewhere if they can do this. Per the Superintendent these are items that they are looking into to put into their model and so forth. There are a lot of complex issues that he requires Tata & Howard to be involved with.

Per Commissioner Lemieux perhaps they can install a storage tank, draw water from our system and when they do their flushing can use the tank instead of jeopardizing our system or demands. Per the Superintendent they will give the recommendations, he does not have the model or ability to run to a model to this nature. Therefore, we have the Construction Article because it allows us to spend money and be reimbursed by a customer for plan review such as this.

Commissioner Lemieux asked if they are proposing or taking into consideration utilizing rainwater to store and recycle. Per the Superintendent he has had brief discussion with their project manager as they have complex system. They will catch and reuse water from plants, heating unit condensation and so forth that will go thru a system to be reutilized.

Subscriber Buteau for a follow up to the community development block grant that was done and if there is no information available for this meeting if it might be available for the next meeting. Chairman Bergin gave some latitude as it was not covered in the Superintendent Report, we can do some but in depth will need to be added as an agenda item for next Superintendent Report.

Per the Superintendent information came in and we did meet some of the criteria, they have the information and its in their hands now nothing we can do they are to take the data to apply for the grant when available in the Spring. We did our part, and they must do their part with approval to go forward with the grant. We did what we needed to do met the deadline and wait when the grant opens in the spring. If they require more from us, we will get whatever they need. Projects were discussed with what projects we are looking for it the grant is approved.

## **VII. PERSONNEL**

- A.** Update – Per Superintendent Morris Christian passed his second license exam. He has two of the four required and is now subject to the \$1 per hour increase. Commissioner Levesque motions to allow the additional \$1.00 per hour more in his rate. Seconded by Commissioner Lemieux. All in Favor. Approved.

Per the Superintendent we have not had any real discussion of when COVID started. To the board to advise handling payment to an employee if they must quarantine. Are we paying the employee, or do they have to use their vacation sick time? He has done a lot of research with the conclusion that it is up the employer.

We have one employee who is in close contact with someone who tested positive for COVID and must quarantine and do they need to use personal/vacation time. The Superintendent has a concern with this because if an employee is positive that they may not report it and come to work. We need a plan and move forward.

It is one employee who is out with this situation. It can be up to 14 days this situation 7 days. There are some guidelines to get essential workers back quicker and then if they are out sick with it then it is 14 days. We are going to track so if there is relief money available can be reimbursed and be under a COVID related expense.

Per Chairman Bergin there have been so many updates and has not drilled deep into as he is not an employer per say. Is there guidance from municipalities and up to them to adopt or a general rule of thumb that you have a guidance?

Per the Superintendent he has seen through some forums that they pay the employee and hope there is a relief package that may be available to recoup. It is money outside of our budget that will not have a negative impact and have the funds to cover. We want to ensure that the employee is safe and the other employees as well. Concerned that if they are told that they need to use their personal vacation then if they are actual positive that they will not tell and come to work and expose the entire workforce because they do not want to be out without pay.

Per Commissioner Lemieux there is no perfect solution. We do not want anyone to abuse and believes our team being a small group and that it will not be abused. If they are penalized, then they will not report. If it will not be an impact on our budget financial burden and says we will monitor it. The State offers reimbursement and offer test results of negative. Did not know if it those who test positive or secondary exposure. Per Treasurer Wood can only be reimbursed when you file taxes and we are tax exempt, so the district does not qualify.

Subscriber Buteau asked if we have checked with what the town has done. Per Treasurer Wood the town is paying the employees and not taking away their time or sick leave. Per Commissioner Levesque if we have the money, to pay them and hope

that they do not abuse it. Commissioner Lemieux asked the Superintendent if a COVID report could be provided to let the board know how many days have been used and if staff has been impacted. He said that he would, he also consulted with the Board of Health as far as what he needed to do to quarantine.

Per Commissioner Lemieux motions to track with COVID without effecting the individuals time off personal vacation sick time and that we are subject to reimbursement and that we will apply for if available and make that we are fiscally responsible and monitoring for our subscribers. Seconded by Chairman Bergin. All in Favor. Approved.

Commissioner Levesque have designated anyone as assigning an interim superintendent or acting superintendent. Per the Superintendent we have not. Per Commissioner Levesque perhaps this may be something to discuss at a later meeting.

Per Treasurer Wood is expecting and due in May. Maternity leave begins when baby arrives. Per the Superintendent last time when this occurred, he took on her work along with his own. It was time consuming and pushing things off and would like to ask the board to hire a temp to fill in while she is out. Because of auditing practices Cheryl cannot do some of these things. This time it is different, there are a lot of distribution work and other projects that are going to need to be done and he cannot be in 3 places at once. Would be looking for someone at east 2 days a week and not calling Jen when she is out. There are some things that can be put off but some that must be done. Maternity leave is 12 weeks. Commissioner Lemieux agrees, Chairman Bergin & Commissioner Levesque agree to research to get someone to cover a couple days of the week. The research can be done by the office and when the decision is made will make the motion at that meeting. Commissioner Levesque made recommendation to consider someone who is retired, or Commissioner Lemieux perhaps reach out to the other Water Districts if they have someone available if they have someone like we have or perhaps someone from our neighboring town who understands how the district works instead of getting a new person who has not worked with a municipality and someone local will benefit from it. Commissioner Levesque will speak with the Superintendent tomorrow about someone he has in mind to consider

#### **VIII. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

**A. Approval of Next Meeting** - Commissioner Lemieux motioned to hold the next Virtual Meeting Tuesday, February 2, 2021 @ 7:00 PM. Seconded by Commissioner Levesque. All in favor. Approved.

**IX. ADJOURNMENT**- Commissioner Lemieux motioned to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Commissioner Levesque. All in Favor. Approved. Meeting adjourned at 8:24 P.M.