

**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' MEETING**  
**MEETING MINUTES**  
**April 4, 2023**  
**7:00 P.M.**  
**CHERRY VALLEY & ROCHDALE WATER DISTRICT**

**I.** CALL TO ORDER - The meeting called to order by Chairman Bergin @ 7:02 pm

The following were in attendance:

Kevin Bergin, Chairman	1 in person subscriber
Arthur E.J. Levesque, Commissioner	
Benjamin Morris, Superintendent	
Robert H. Lemieux, Sr., Commissioner	
Jennifer Wood, Treasurer – absent.	
Cheryl Balkus, Clerk	

- II. District Member Forum** – Subscriber Greg Buteau mentioned from the prior meeting Treasurer Wood announced the district was certified for free cash in about \$650,000 and wanted to know if there would be another meeting regarding rate decrease. Per Chairman Bergin we have not been able to have discussions regarding rates. If we produce x amount of water and the unknown of chemical costs, electricity costs we are not able to reduce rates. Per Superintendent Morris, when we reduced the budget last year, budget was adjusted \$114,000 from the City of Worcester. We need the hard data of the well and full costs involved. Prior prices were lower and now are much higher than expected and would not feel comfortable in putting us in a situation looking at a rate decrease. Subscriber Buteau commented that there are too many balls in the air to make recommendations currently and the overall budget went down. Per Chairman Bergin will have a better handle next year with much more hard numbers. It is much the same when we went through this with the City of Worcester when we connected, we need to get a handle of the new heat and chemical costs. Per Subscriber Buteau said he understands there are a lot of unknowns. There were no further questions or comments. Commissioner Levesque motions to suspend the forum. Seconded by Chairman Bergin All in favor. Approved. The forum ended in eight minutes and fifty-six seconds.

**III. APPROVE MINUTES**

- A. March 21, 2023, Meeting Minutes** - Commissioner Levesque motions to approve the March 21, 2023, meeting minutes. Seconded by Chairman Bergin. All in favor. Approved.

**IV. FINANCE**

- A. Approve March 27, 2023, Warrants** – Commissioner Levesque motions to approve the March 27, 2023, warrants. Seconded by Chairman Bergin. All in favor. Approved.
- B. Approve April 3, 2023, Warrants-** Commissioner Levesque motions to approve the April 3, 2023, warrants. Seconded by Chairman Bergin. All in favor. Approved.
- C. March Bank Transfer** – Commissioner Levesque motions to transfer from the water checking account \$61,787.55 to the sewer checking account. Seconded by Chairman Bergin. All in favor. Approved.

*As a reminder this money is collected by the water district on behalf of the sewer district. This money does not belong to the water district.*

- D. Draft Budget** – Per the Superintendent the only change from the last meeting is costs sharing with sewer. Everything else to remain the same. We have broken out the heat costs share with sewer, and this is what is shown in this draft. Per Commissioner Lemieux asked about the payroll line item and gives us a breakdown of 4% for each one. Per the Superintendent the operators are factored

into this line item. Includes weekend coverage throughout the year. This right now is just to go over and get approval with next meeting to have approved for the annual meeting.

Subscriber Buteau commented that to do the electrical was not an easy task and he has an idea and asked the board if they would be in favor of discussing it later and they are in favor.

**Draft Warrant Articles** – Per the Superintendent items 1 - 7 are all boiler plate articles. 8,9 & 10 are up in the air. Going back and forth about creating a stabilization account for the well and does not want to put it as a line item in the budget. The thought was to put the money aside. The media expires we can have a meeting to move money, or we can use the reserve. If voters gave approval and if we have an issue, they allow the commissioners to approve. We may not be able to do this and research it further. The media is not every year change out and we do not want to have the rate payer have to pay for each year when it is required to be replaced approximately every 18 months. Per Chairman Bergin commented 8 is the actual issue 9 & 10 question is what do you do with it? Will the auditors allow us? Per the Superintendent it is set aside for this particular purpose and not for anything else. Per Commissioner Lemieux seems to be extra work and not necessary currently. It is not needed for this year because we have it, and this is something that could be used for next year's budget. Per Chairman Bergin devil's advocate on the year if a onetime thing and maybe do we take away and not generate this type of resistance. City of Worcester we contemplate what they are going to charge every 3 years and we look at projection. He would rather have it there than to not have it and not to be treated as previously when we tied into the City of Worcester. Commissioner Lemieux stated he was in those meetings as a customer and now, being a board member, sees that there are no smoking mirrors. It is an operating expense, and the extra work is not necessary.

Per subscriber Buteau agrees with predecessor if you have something special you recommend that, and it makes sense but at this time to do next year to have it. Per Chairman Bergin it is a maintenance issue, and we need to have an article. It's happened before, the unfortunate history it has not happened that way. Per the Superintendent it is an item for discussion, and it can be removed and put on for next year. Commissioner Lemieux motions to remove the three articles 8,9 & 10. Seconded by Commissioner Levesque. All in Favor. Approved.

Article 11 - Lead Service Inventory – This is a mandatory project. Per the Superintendent we must show we have the money available the state keeps changing what is required.

Article 12 - Sargent St Water Line – Tata & Howard writing the scope for this and trying to go after the one stop grant. There is potential for a meeting to match funds does not have clarifications if previous expenses are part of this. We could be close to the 10% match does not know what it is and should know by next meeting. There is a strong need for this work in the area for the purpose of protecting the system. We are not getting a loan to do the work.

Subscriber Buteau commented asked If we don't get the grant is the intend to use our own funds or are we compelled to feel that we will get the grant? Per the Superintendent we have the funds but the longer we wait the more it will cost. The initial cost of the project a few years ago was \$140,000.00, now it is at \$330,000.00. Per Chairman Bergin we must start with the list of what needs to be done and the longer we wait the more it is going to cost. Per Commissioner Lemieux it is advantageous that we spend the money to get it done and per the Superintendent we are also going to try and get the rural grant. Per the Superintendent will have completed revised articles at next meeting.

## **V. ADMINISTRATION**

**A. Terminations** – To begin this month there are currently 53 accounts and most likely to be reduced before terminations begin.

## **VI. OPERATIONS**

### **A. Superintendent Report**

Brown water issue today was due to an activated water main on Route 56.

Working with Tata & Howard for the MVP

PFAS testing is being done next week.

Lead and Copper were completed and within the range. July, August & September will be again and if ok will be able to drop to once a year testing instead of twice a year and will be a cost savings.

The town to pave Pleasant Street. We marked out all water services.

The Well is running well. Over the weekend had some crystallization on the injector cleaned it and back and running.

Hydrant flushing notices were sent and will begin in the Cherry Valley beginning April 17, 2023.

Finalization of the annual reports done and to begin CCR (Consumer Confidence Report) to have posted for May.

Nationalgrid is flagging hazard trees in the area where there is critical power. They will be in to cut trees coming down the driveway, there are at least 75 hazard trees and should be starting end of April or the beginning of May.

Subscriber Buteau asked about solar. Per the Superintendent he spoke with company that installed mini splits and was not fond of the response he received. He is not confident about spending \$230,000.00 to work with this company, they claim we would see a return in four years. He has another avenue that he is looking into that makes small solar farms more reliable and is going to a trade show tomorrow to see if there is someone else out there. Per Subscriber Buteau if you are going to do solar you have to buy it up front and it will take four to six years for the return. We do not want to get into a big project to do this but doing more research is appreciated.

Next meeting date was voted at the previous meeting to hold the meeting April 18, 2023. Hybrid meetings have been extended to 2025. Due to no room availability at the Town Hall the meeting will be held Hybrid at 148 Henshaw St. Leicester, MA at 7:00 pm.

**VII. Executive Session:** The purpose of the executive session is to discuss strategy and conduct contract negotiations concerning the districts contract with Superintendent Benjamin Morris. Commissioner Levesque motions to move into executive session. Seconded by Chairman Bergin. All in favor. Approved at 8:19 pm

**VIII. Open Meeting:** Is to vote on the contract as discussed. Commissioner Levesque motions to open meeting to vote on terms of any new or amended contract with Superintendent Morris. Seconded by Chairman Bergin. All in favor. Approved. The open meeting began at 8:37 pm. Also, present Subscriber Gregory Buteau.

Per Chairman Bergin extensions to change of contract, clarifications as to be paid for the superintendent of sewer side and weekend coverage. Subscriber Buteau asked what the changes, conditions and clarifications are. Per Chairman Bergin informed Subscriber Buteau that he can make a request for the contract. Specifics have been given and numbers will need to be requested.

Commissioner Levesque motioned to approve the contract with the changes, Seconded by Chairman Bergin. Commissioner Lemieux not in favor. Approved.

**IX. ADJOURNMENT-** Commissioner Lemieux motions to adjourn the open meeting. Seconded By Chairman Bergin. All in favor. Approved. Open meeting adjourned at 8:42 pm.