

BOARD OF WATER COMMISSIONERS  
MINUTES FOR THE MEETING OF  
AUGUST 13, 2024

A quorum being present, Chairperson Sheldon called the meeting to order at 5:03 p.m. He announced that the virtual version of the meeting was being recorded and requested those in attendance to state their name and title for the record by roll call:

Board Members Present in Person: Robert H. Sheldon, Commissioner and Chairperson - Present; Robert E. Boyd, Jr., Commissioner - Present; and Joshua M. Fox, Commissioner - Present.

Board Members Present Virtually: None.

Others Present in Person: Vincent J. Roy, Executive Director - Present; Thomas S. Travers, Treasurer - Present; Karen A. Moretti, Assistant Treasurer - Present; and Renee M. Adams, Executive Administrator - Present.

Others Present Virtually: None.

**1. Review and Vote to Approve the Minutes from the Board of Water Commissioners Meeting held on July 23, 2024.**

The Commissioners approved the minutes for the meeting of July 23, 2024, as amended. Commissioner Boyd made the motion for approval, which was duly seconded by Commissioner Fox, and approved by unanimous roll call:

Robert E. Boyd, Jr., Commissioner - Aye  
Joshua M. Fox, Commissioner - Aye  
Robert H. Sheldon, Commissioner and Chairperson - Aye

**2. Review of the Director's August 9th Bi-Weekly Report.**

Director Roy presented his bi-weekly report, covering the following topics:

**Raymond Road Water Treatment Plant (RRWTP) PFAS Project**

Director Roy reported that the new PFAS treatment system has been operating as planned since its startup on August 5th. Although the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) approved the system on July 31st, the startup was delayed until the following Monday due to staffing shortages caused by employee vacations. This delay allowed for clarification of sampling requirements with MassDEP and ensured the availability of the appropriate sample bottles. The first PFAS sample results are expected in early September.

Mr. Roy stated that, in addition to the removal of PFAS compounds, the new system would also reduce total organic compounds (TOC) which produce undesired disinfection by-products when combined with free-chlorine in drinking water. The reduction in TOC will decrease the chlorine demand while also improving water quality. The District will collect three additional PFAS samples per month for about a year to monitor how long it takes for PFAS to break through the carbon layers in the treatment vessels, as required by MassDEP.

Treasurer Travers inquired about the costs associated with testing. Director Roy responded that chlorine testing incurs no additional costs as it is performed in-house. Although the District initially considered regenerating and reusing the carbon in the vessels, MassDEP approval mandates the use of only virgin carbon during media changeouts. The carbon replacement will be outsourced due to the large quantity involved (30,000 pounds per vessel). Commissioner Boyd asked how the carbon is removed from the vessels. Director Roy explained that a tractor trailer tanker truck equipped with a commercial vacuum

system will be used to extract the carbon, and he assured the Commissioners and Treasurer Travers that the District has sufficient funds within the fiscal year budget to cover the added costs associated with using virgin carbon. Mr. Roy also stated that he will be working with Weston & Sampson on submitting a request to modify the MassDEP requirement to use virgin granular active carbon to allow the use of regenerated carbon taken from the District's carbon vessels once expensed.

### **East Street Water Treatment Plant (ESWTP) PFAS Project**

Director Roy informed the Commissioners that he held a kickoff meeting earlier that day for the ESWTP PFAS project. The meeting, attended by Weston & Sampson (the project engineer), Barbato Construction (the general contractor), and District Foreman Michael Abbondanzio, was productive.

### **PFAS treatment for Wells 4 and 6**

Weston & Sampson and the District representatives discussed a scope of service for PFAS treatment at Wells 4 and 6 after the meeting on the ESWTP PFAS Project. Director Roy noted that instead of constructing individual PFAS treatment systems at each well, it was deemed more cost-effective to reroute the water to the Raymond Road PFAS Treatment system. He also mentioned that this project could be combined with a water main replacement initiative to remove asbestos cement pipe. The trench for this project would need to accommodate two water main pipes: one for pumping raw water to the plant for treatment and another for pumping treated water back into the distribution system. He emphasized that the District is eligible to apply for a low-interest loan through the State Revolving Fund (SRF) due to the involvement of PFAS treatment.

### **New Employment Position**

Commissioner Sheldon requested an update on the new hire and clarification of the specific position. Director Roy reminded the Board that the position was budgeted for in the 2025 fiscal year and is necessary due to the increased demands of the PFAS treatment plant and the ongoing needs of the distribution system. The role will be a hybrid position, working between treatment and distribution. Director Roy mentioned that several highly qualified applicants have already applied, and interviews are scheduled for later in the month.

### **MassDEP Notice of Noncompliance**

Director Roy informed the Commissioners that the District received a Notice of Noncompliance (NON) from MassDEP, because Well 4 had not been included in sampling for the month (May 16). Mr. Roy explained that Well 4 had not been included in the sampling, because it was not on line at the time of the sampling. However, increased water demands a few days later required that Well 4 be brought on line. Mr. Roy stated that he had planned to sample the well in early June. However, Amy LaPusata, from the MassDEP Northeast Regional office, clarified that MassDEP requires a PFAS sample to be taken within the same month when a well is activated. Director Roy intends to appeal the decision. If the appeal is unsuccessful and the NON stands, it must be included in the 2024 Consumer Confidence Report

Commissioner Sheldon asked if the District could include an explanation of the NON in the report. Mrs. Adams replied that while the District must use language approved by MassDEP, it can provide a more detailed explanation after the required language.

### **Fire Hydrant Installation Project**

Director Roy reported that the Fire Hydrant Installation Project, although slightly behind schedule, is progressing well overall and is expected to be completed by the end of August.

There were no further questions regarding the Director's Bi-Weekly Report.

### **3. Water Abatement Appeal Request - 17 Trailside Circle**

The Commissioners discussed an abatement appeal request for 17 Trailside Circle, a topic that had been deliberated in several previous Board meetings. The Commissioners reassessed Mr. Crane's theory that vibrations from the nearby Eversource transmission line construction project caused the water meter to inaccurately record excessive usage. Director Roy disagreed with this theory, pointing out that the positive displacement mechanical meter (Neptune T10) removed from Mr. Crane's home tends to lose accuracy with age, typically leading to under-registration, not over-registration. Bench test results for the Neptune T10 meter confirmed that intermediate and high-flow rates met industry standards (+/-1.50 percent), but the low-flow rate under-registered at 94.7%, supporting the comment that, if any major discrepancy exists, it is under representation of the flow rate. Based on this information, the Commissioners concluded that Mr. Crane's theory, suggesting that construction vibrations caused the meter to disproportionately spin forward was highly unlikely.

As a condition for reconsidering the abatement, the Commissioners required a full audit of the household plumbing and irrigation system by a Massachusetts licensed plumber. Mr. Crane agreed to this condition, and the professionals he hired to perform the audit confirmed no active leaks. They then discussed whether the circumstances of the appeal met the criteria outlined in the current abatement policy. Commissioner Fox acknowledged the unique set of facts and circumstances of the situation. While water usage was extraordinarily high, the cause and location of a leak, as well as proof of repair, could not be documented as required by the policy for abatement consideration. The Board also recognized that, due to the significant time elapsed since the discovery of the issue, the exact cause may never be definitively determined.

After extensive deliberation at this meeting (in addition to deliberations at previous meetings) consideration of Mr. Crane's compliance with the full plumbing audit, and the installation of a new Mach 10 R900i meter with data logging capabilities, the Commissioners reluctantly agreed to approve the appeal. However, Commissioner Fox emphasized that abatements are granted on a one-time basis only, and that Mr. Crane's remaining balance would be due upon his receipt of the abatement decision notice.

Commissioner Boyd moved to grant the appeal for a leak abatement for 17 Trailside Circle in the amount of \$10,094.02. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Fox and approved by a unanimous roll call vote:

Robert E. Boyd, Jr., Commissioner - Aye  
Joshua M. Fox, Commissioner - Aye  
Robert H. Sheldon, Commissioner and Chairperson - Aye

### **4. Review of the Leak Abatement Policy**

Chairperson Sheldon presented a proposed draft amendment to the District's current Leak Abatement Policy for the Commissioners for review and comment. He also provided a copy of the City of Framingham's Leak Abatement Policy for comparison, offering alternative language for consideration. The Commissioners deliberated on the proposed changes, incorporating suggestions from each Board member.

Commissioner Fox inquired about the criteria under which a customer is entitled to a reduction in their water bill. Director Roy explained that a customer may be eligible for a reduction if they have a broken meter, verified by a meter bench test, or if they are experiencing a hardship. Commissioner Fox asked Director Roy to send him an electronic copy of the proposed changes so that he could work on an amended draft abatement policy before the next scheduled meeting. The discussion of the policy included the following considerations:

- **Proposal:** Change the Leak Abatement Policy to Abatement Policy.
- **Define:** What qualifies as a leak in accordance with District policy?
- **Payment Upfront:** Required customers to pay 50% of the abated bill before consideration of an abatement.
- **Time from receipt of bill to apply for abatement:** Require customers to apply within 45 days of the date on the bill.
- **Abatement Limit:** Shall not exceed 50% of the total bill.
- **Broken Water Meter:** If a customer challenges the validity of the meter's accuracy, the meter shall be sent to a meter test lab, independent of the meter distributor (to avoid a conflict of interest). If the meter is proven to be working within the industry standard (+/-1.5%) the customer shall be required to pay for the meter bench test, and consideration of an abatement shall be denied. If the meter is found to be working outside of the industry standard, the District shall pay for the meter bench test, and consideration to abate the bill to average use (determined by the same previous three quarter water consumption) shall be given by the Commissioners.
- **Evidence of Leak:** Applications should include compelling evidence of leaks, such as photographs, certified reports, or invoices from a Massachusetts licensed plumber or irrigation specialists.
- **Financial Hardship.**
- **Payment Extension.**
- **Limit: One-Time.**

#### **Conclusion of Open Meeting**

Commissioner Fox moved to conclude the public open meeting and not move into executive session. The motion was duly seconded by Commissioner Boyd and approved by unanimous roll call:

Robert E. Boyd, Jr., Commissioner - Aye  
 Robert H. Sheldon, Commissioner and Chairperson - Aye  
 Joshua M. Fox, Commissioner - Aye

There being no further discussion the meeting adjourned at 6:32 p.m.