



## BOARD OF WATER COMMISSIONERS

# Cotuit Fire District Water Department

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COTUIT, MASS. 02635

02/19/2020

The monthly meeting of the Board of Water Commissioners was held at Freedom Hall at 5:45 p.m. Chairman Mark Robinson, Commissioner Tom Hoppensteadt, Commissioner Scott Horsley, and Superintendent Chris Wiseman were present.

The meeting was called to order at 5:45 p.m. and the payroll warrant was reviewed and signed.

The district's water quality was reviewed. It was noted by the Superintendent that all total coliform tests were negative. Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC's) samples, which are due to be taken this quarter, will be done after Station #4 has been tested and is back online after the recent cleaning and repairs. The Consumer Confidence Report (CCR) will be mailed with the March minimum use bills and is currently posted on the district website. He also noted that there has not been any new communication from MassDEP regarding the PFOA/PFOS testing and we are hopeful that the testing will be complete by the end of the fiscal year.

The commissioners then moved the discussion to addressing the public in attendance with questions and concerns about the new water rates, as the first excess use bill with the new rates was issued on January 21<sup>st</sup>. Chairman Robinson summarized what was presented in April regarding the Cost of Service and Water Rate Study, the steps taken to educate the public regarding the increase and shift in revenue from Fire District tax rates to the water rates, when and how the budget is set and voted on by the district residents and the steps taken to encourage conservation in outdoor water use. The commissioners will reevaluate the water rates again in 5 years. Commissioner Horsley gave a presentation showing how the pumping of some wells impacted the surrounding wetlands in Zone II which, in addition to causing harm to the aquatic habitat and ecosystem, may pull manganese from wetland soils into the water supply. He referred to the Water System report from May from the engineering firm of Tata & Howard that was reviewed earlier this year. The report included a recommendation for a treatment system that would cost the district approximately \$10M dollars to remove manganese from the water supply. This could potentially be mitigated by reduced pumping from sources that pull from the surrounding wetlands. Commissioner Horsley provided several options to reduce consumption, including irrigation systems with rain sensors or onsite "fertigation" wells that would recycle the nitrates used in lawncare back into the irrigation well rather than back into the drinking water supply. He also provided a quote from a local well drilling company to show an estimated cost of putting in an irrigation well.

The meeting was then opened to public comment.

John Maher: If conservation measure decreases the amount of consumption to the point that the water rates no longer cover expenses, how will it affect the water rates? Response: At this time the offset would be the tax rate. Water rates will be evaluated again in five years.

Rick Pisano: Inquired if there would be considerations for financial hardship or if the board considered implementing commercial or irrigation rates. Response: Yes, hardship considerations will follow what the town currently has in place. If you qualify for some assistance from the town, the board will also consider granting relief. These will be reviewed on a case by case basis. Currently there is no rate differential for commercial or irrigation accounts.

Penny Levert: Ms. Levert urged the board to consider phasing in any future rate increase or irrigation restrictions rather than a significant increase all at one time.

Former Commissioner Don Campbell spoke in support of the increase and reiterated some of the steps that brought the board to the rate evaluation, the decision to increase the rates, and how they have built in some measures to help mitigate future capital improvement expenses. He encouraged the district voters to stay involved with the committees and vote on how their money is being spent at the annual district meeting.

Former Commissioner Mimi McConnell: Ms. McConnell thanked the board for their work on this as she understands how difficult their job can be. She noted that there is more regulation and scrutiny by government agencies and that the district needed to "bite the bullet" and be realistic about the water rates that have been so low for so long. She referenced other household expenses in relation to the cost of water and that they are not nearly as important as a quality drinking water supply.

Jim Danhauser: Reminded those in attendance that one of the most important meetings of the year is hosted by the Civic Association in May and that everyone should attend the "Budget and Candidates Night" to understand the district's finances and meet the candidates running for the board positions.

With no other questions or comments, the public comment segment was closed.

The Superintendent report was given for the prior month.

Monthly Pumpage Results is as follows:

	<u>2020</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>+/-</u>
January	6,524,000	7,135,000	-611,000

Mr. Wiseman noted that at the recent evaluation that the meter calibration was off by approximately 5% and that the master meters have been adjusted accordingly. This could account for part of the reduction in pumpage.

Stats:

There was one new service and two replacement services in January, as well as 4 repairs (3 curb stops and 1 hydrant).

Project Updates:

- Station #4 has been cleaned and repaired and samples were sent to the lab today. Flow tests will happen on Thursday and then the station can be put back online. Repairs will be made at Station #5 once #4 is back online.
- The SCADA conversion for Station #2 is scheduled for March 2<sup>nd</sup>.
- A contract has been signed for the tank cleaning (West St. Exterior, Santuit Tank Interior) and sanitary surveys. These will take place in the spring. The USDA reserve funds will be used to pay for the West St. Tank cleaning, approximately \$16,900.
- AT&T has removed the electrical equipment and propane tanks from the old Main St. Tank site. The C.O.W. has been disassembled and is ready to go. They are bringing in a crane to complete the work this week. Both Superintendent Wiseman and Russ Kleekamp of GHD will be following up with the carriers to make sure all remaining materials are removed. There is some work that the district will be responsible for (removing footings from the old tank, filling in an in-ground vault, fence repairs).

Russ Kleekamp from GHD, project manager for the SCADA system upgrade presented a financial updated on the project to date and discussed GHD's request for an amendment to the contract. Built into the contract were some contingencies for the unknown aspects of the project and they have exceeded their proposal as they have addressed some of these unknown elements. He will put a formal amendment together with an explanation of the costs for presentation to the board prior to the March meeting.

Given the amount of time given to other agenda items, Chairman Robinson deferred the budget and evaluation portion of the agenda to a separate meeting that was then scheduled for Wednesday, March 4<sup>th</sup> at 5:45pm at Freedom Hall.

Superintendent Wiseman then asked the board to review the status of one of the field operators step increase. Mr. Gallagher has completed all of his licensing requirements, years of service and safety officer training and as of January 5<sup>th</sup> was eligible for his step increase as directed in the performance evaluation plan that was implemented in the prior fiscal year. The budgetary effect in FY20 will be about \$1,500 and can be covered in the salary budget without causing any cost overages. The board voted unanimously to award the increase and directed the Superintendent to meet with the treasurer to move forward with the compensation retroactive to the operator's anniversary date.

The board then discussed changing the regular meeting to the 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of the month to accommodate other meeting schedules. Having agreed on this, the next regular meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, March 25th at 5:45pm at Freedom Hall. The meeting was adjourned at 7:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Robinson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M" and "R".

Mark Robinson, Chairman