

Board of Water Commissioners  
Meeting Minutes  
Acton Water District  
693 Massachusetts Avenue, Acton, MA  
Monday, March 20, 2023

**AGENDA**

**A. Comments from the public**

**B. Approve minutes from the 2/16, 2/27, and 3/6 meetings**

**C. Appoint one Commissioner to sign warrants while conducting meetings virtually**

**D. OLD BUSINESS:**

1. Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS)
  - Current sample data, if available
  - Proposed EPA Regulation
2. Discussion of Water Bill Discount Program

**E. NEW BUSINESS:**

1. Habitat for Humanity Discussion on Connection Fees
2. Review of Annual Meeting

*Any agenda item(s) which did not come to the attention of the Water Commissioners 48 hours prior to this meeting and were not reasonably anticipated.*

Due to the Covid-19 stay-at-home order by Governor Charles Baker, the Board of Water Commissioners meeting was not held at the Acton Water District Office; instead, the meeting was held via Zoom Webinar and was recorded. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM on Monday, March 20, 2023, by Mr. Barry Rosen.

**Present at Tonight's Meeting:**

Commissioners: Erika Amir-Lin, Barry Rosen, Stephen Stuntz (Chair)

District Manager: Matthew Mostoller

District Treasurer: Christine McCarthy

District Counsel: Mary Bassett

Finance Committee: Bill Guthlein

Environmental Analyst: Alexandra Wahlstrom

Commissioners Secretary: Lynn Protasowicki

**Public Present:** Joe Robb, Ron Parenti, Chris Allen, Lucy Kirshner, Carolyn Read, Irene Iborski  
Janet Adachi

**A. Comments from the Public.**

No comments this evening.

## **B. Approve Minutes from the 2/16, 2/27, and 3/6.**

Mr. Rosen moved to approve the meeting minutes of 2/16/2023. Ms. Amir-Lin seconded, and it was unanimously approved by a roll call vote: Mr. Rosen, Ms. Amir-Lin, and Mr. Stuntz.

Mr. Rosen moved to approve the meeting minutes of 2/27/2023. Ms. Amir-Lin seconded, and it was unanimously approved by a roll call vote: Mr. Rosen, Ms. Amir-Lin, and Mr. Stuntz.

Mr. Rosen moved to approve the meeting minutes, as amended, of 3/6/2023. Mr. Stuntz seconded, and it was unanimously approved by a roll call vote: Mr. Rosen, Mr. Stuntz, and Ms. Amir-Lin.

## **C. Appoint One Commissioner to Sign Warrants While Conducting Meetings Virtually.**

Mr. Rosen moved to appoint Erika Amir-Lin as the Commissioner to approve warrants while conducting meetings virtually until the next meeting of the Commissioners. Mr. Stuntz seconded, and it was unanimously approved by a roll call vote: Mr. Rosen, Mr. Stuntz, and Ms. Amir-Lin.

## **D. OLD BUSINESS:**

### *1. Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS)*

- Current sample data, if available
- Proposed EPA Regulation

Matt provided an update on the sample data. We have February results for North Acton and South Acton. North Acton we are at 20.1 PPT and South Acton is at 15.4 PPT. We are waiting for the Acton Center results for February.

EPA's proposed regulation – Matt stated that he and Alex are reading over this proposal. The EPA is not adopting this regulation until early 2024 with a three-year compliance period. We are still guided by MassDEP. MassDEP is required to complete a three-year review of its existing PFAS regulations. One of the things he can tell the group is that two of the compounds: PFOA and PFOS each have a 4 PPT proposed maximum contaminant level. Unfortunately, those two levels will force us into treating. The good news is that the four compounds for which the EPA has established what they call a hazard index (HI), appear to be in compliance based on our initial data review. He just wanted to highlight those few points, but we are still digesting all the information in the proposed regulation.

Ron Parenti asked if the Commissioners are intending to submit formal comments during the EPA's public comment period? The Commissioners stated that they are still digesting the information and waiting to hear from MassDEP. Ron will ask the WRAC committee tomorrow to put something in formal writing to have ready to then send during the EPA's comment period.

EPA is having a Webinar on March 29<sup>th</sup> that Matt and Alex plan to attend.

### *2. Discussion of Water Bill Discount Program*

Erika stated that the Board had taken up about a year ago to look at going through all the various discounts and abatement programs that the town offers that we might consider offering to our customers. Christine stated that she was aware of this and had completed a cursory review of

what the town offers. They offer six different property tax exemptions. Citizens are allowed to pick one per year. The following exemptions include:

- Over 65 years old
- Surviving spouse/persons over 70 years old
- Hardship
- Veterans and disabled veterans and medal winners
- Blind person
- Surviving spouse of police or firefighter

Additional property tax relief that may be granted through the following local programs:

- Clause 41A: Property Tax Deferral
- Community Preservation Act Exemption
- Senior Service Program (Administered by the Human Resources Department)
- Senior Circuit Breaker Tax Credit (Administered by the State)

Low-income heat assistance program which is administered by the Southern Middlesex Opportunity Council (SMOC).

Steve – do we know how many people take part in each of these programs? Christine will inquire.

Barry reviewed each of these and he thinks that the most people could qualify for the CPA exemption program.

Steve inquired as to how many of our customers are renters and who pays the water bill? Is it the renter or the landlord? Erika said that we have both. Is that something that we can find out? Matt said we don't have any way to readily find out that information.

Steve suggests putting this back on the agenda when Christine has more information.

## **E. NEW BUSINESS:**

### **1. Habitat for Humanity Discussion on Connection Fees**

Carolyn Read, with Habitat for Humanity, presented to the Commissioners. The slides will be shared with the District and will be included with the minutes.

Irene Iborski, who is an Acton resident, is on the local project committee and represents Acton. The house is located on 26 Carlisle Road.

The family for this home has been selected. It is a family of five with three small children. They hope to have this family moved in by June.

Carolyn is asking the Commissioners to consider an abatement or different fee structure for affordable housing so that they are able to continue to build affordable housing in Acton.

Erika Amir-Lin stated that this is a policy change so we can't make the decision tonight. What do other towns charge?

Carolyn stated that water connection fees in other towns that they have built in include:

- Fitchburg \$3,000
- Athol \$2,000
- Concord \$3,500
- Sudbury \$2,500
- Ashburnham \$5,000

Matt stated that we did work with them on the mitigation. We charged them \$1,135. This part of town there are still homes on private wells so there has never been a connection, therefore the costs are greater for this particular project.

Janet Adachi is speaking on behalf of Acton Community Housing Corporation. She thinks it will require more time and analysis on the water district. Her thought was because you just had an annual meeting with a non-binding resolution to engage in a water rate study which would encourage water conservation and keep water rates affordable for low-income Acton residents, she would suggest that in the course of their discussions we may want to think about equity.

Erika stated that at what point do you set the budget for one of these houses? Carolyn stated that we have the budget as we answer the RFP and we base it on previous builds that were done. This one was based on Covid pricing and they carried \$2000 for water. We have to keep the price of the house to what a family of four earning less than 60% of area median income can afford. Our costs are about the lowest that we can do. We do ask for in-kind contributions from area businesses. Erika highlighted that other towns may have lower costs for water infrastructure than Acton.

Carolyn stated that this is our fifth house in Acton. We build in 30 cities and towns in MA. Our service area is from Acton to Athol (Western Middlesex to Northern Worcester counties).

Erika stated that this will be a topic of conversation for us for future meetings.

## 2. Review of Annual Meeting

Matt wanted to give the Commissioners an opportunity to comment on the meeting. He thought it went well. Fortunately, all 25 articles passed unanimously.

Erika – liked the venue. Barry agreed. Steve suggests getting next year's meeting scheduled now. Overall a good meeting. She wanted to acknowledge how much work by staff and Mary Bassett it took to get ready for it. We were all well prepared.

Barry – more clarification on wording – Free Cash vs Surplus

Bill Guthlein – had an historic citizen's petition – wanted to point that out – true democracy works – what is the plan for the Commissioners on this petition? Steve – we need to create a

good clear scope of work. The finance committee will need to start drafting up the work that someone could bid on. Bill – we are happy to take on that role.

Ron Parenti – one of the best venues. Good idea for Finance Committee to begin with an overview of the various accounts to help with clarification. And the Finance Committee would be interested in setting up scope of work that the consultants could potentially do with the citizen's petition.

Ron suggests that after routine articles are dealt with this could then be the time that the Finance Committee could present a few charts with explanations of the upcoming articles.

Barry – The clearer we can make it the more transparent it will be for people to understand.

Erika – there should be more discussion as we get closer to drafting articles next year.

**Other New Business:**

Regarding the email from Janet Adachi on behalf of the League of Woman Voters asking if they can place voting signs on District property.

Matt does support them to utilize District property for their voting signs.

Commissioners all agree to allow the League of Women Voters to place voting signs on District property.

*Mr. Rosen moved to adjourn the open meeting at 8:30 PM. Mr. Stuntz seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved by a roll call vote: Mr. Rosen, Mr. Stuntz, and Ms. Amir-Lin.*

**Next Meeting: April 10, 2023**