

Joint Meeting of the Board of Water Commissioners and District Finance Committee

Meeting Agenda

Monday, July 15, 2024 @ 7:00 PM

AGENDA

- Comments from the public
- Approve minutes from the meetings of 6/13 and 6/24
- Appoint one Commissioner to sign warrants while conducting meetings virtually

OLD BUSINESS:

- Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS)
- Current sample data, if available
- Discussion of Additional PFAS Upgrades
 - Approve SAWTP PFAS System Notice of Award to Baystate Regional Contractors, Inc. of Yarmouth, MA
 - Approve CAWTP PFAS System Notice of Award to WES Construction Corp. of Halifax, MA
- Bottled Water Rebate Update
- Update on 549 Main Street
- Conservation Restriction Status
- Preview Event June 27th
- Update on Flume Rebate Program

NEW BUSINESS:

- Order of Taking for Baldco Property
- Renewal of General Obligation Bond Anticipation Notes of the District dated July 25, 2024
- End of Fiscal Year Transfers
- Staffing Update

In attendance

Board of Commissioners: Barry Rosen, Erika Amir Lin

Finance Committee: Ron Parenti, John Petersen

District Manager: Matt Mostoller

District Treasurer: Christine McCarthy

Environmental Manager: Alexandra Wahlstrom

Members of the Public: Alissa Nicol

START OF MINUTES

Mr. Rosen opened the meeting of the Acton Water District Board of Commissioners at 7:00.

Mr. Petersen opened the meeting of the Acton Water District Finance Committee at 7:02.

Comments from the public

Ms. Alissa Nicol commented on an inaccurate website listing that was included in the reading of the virtual meeting script.

Approve minutes from the meetings of 6/13 and 6/24

Ms. Amir Lin motioned to approve the minutes of 6/13/24. Mr. Rosen seconded, and it was approved via a roll call vote, Ms. Amir Lin, Mr. Rosen.

Ms. Amir Lin motioned to approve the minutes of 6/24/24. Mr. Rosen seconded, and it was approved via a roll call vote, Ms. Amir Lin, Mr. Rosen.

Appoint one Commissioner to sign warrants while conducting meetings virtually

Mr. Rosen motioned to appoint Mr. Stuntz to sign warrants until the next regularly scheduled meeting. Ms. Amir Lin seconded, and it was approved via a roll call vote, Ms. Amir Lin, Mr. Rosen.

OLD BUSINESS:

Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS)

Current sample data, if available

Mr. Mostoller informed the board that the July 5th PFAS update email was sent to the list of recipients. June sampling results are as follows, Center Acton 8.4 ppt, South Acton 13.1 ppt, North Acton below detection limits. July sampling will be conducted this week.

Mr. Petersen asked from where samples are collected. Mr. Mostoller explained that they are taken from the sample tap 100 ft from where water leaves the treatment plant as recommended in state regulations. Mr. Petersen asked about the sample size; Ms. Wahlstrom replied that two samples of 250 ml are collected.

Discussion of Additional PFAS Upgrades

Mr. Mostoller informed the board that they continue to make progress with the South Acton Project. They recently met with the engineers to determine the color of the building exterior. The building color will be sandstone with brown doors to complement the existing brick and metal at the South Acton Plant. They continue to make progress with the GAC vessels. There has been a design issue for South Acton as the connection points were designed for a different style GAC vessel; the engineers are currently working to remedy this design issue. Both projects have received authorization to award.

Approve SAWTP PFAS System Notice of Award to Baystate Regional Contractors, Inc. of Yarmouth, MA

Ms. Amir Lin motioned to approve SAWTP PFAS System Notice of Award to Baystate Regional Contractors, Inc. of Yarmouth, MA. Mr. Rosen seconded, and it was approved via a roll call vote, Ms. Amir Lin, Mr. Rosen.

Approve CAWTP PFAS System Notice of Award to WES Construction Corp. of Halifax, MA

Ms. Amir Lin motioned to approve CAWTP PFAS System Notice of Award to WES Construction Corp. of Halifax, MA. Mr. Rosen seconded, and it was approved via a roll call vote, Ms. Amir Lin, Mr. Rosen.

Mr. Mostoller informed the board that once awarded they are hoping to break ground on both projects sometime in August. Mr. Mostoller did note some existing delays in starting because of the need for the Special District Meeting.

Bottled Water Rebate Update

Ms. McCarthy updated the board on the Bottled Water Rebate. The June 2024 rebates totaled \$7,365. Of the total, \$6,045 was on bill credits for 149 customers, and the remaining \$730 will be disbursed to 16 tenants via checks sent directly to them. In the last quarter the rebate program added 3 people but 6 left the program for a net total of 165 participants. Mr. Rosen asked what the total was in the previous quarter, Ms. McCarthy informed him it was 168. Mr. Petersen asked a question about how the water is being provided which Mr. Rosen clarified that the program is not offering water but money for purchasing bottled water.

Update on 549 Main Street

Conservation Restriction Status

Mr. Mostoller announced that on July 11th they received the Conservation Restriction with the signature of the Secretary of Environmental Affairs. Town Counsel is now working on the closing which they expect to hold in 1-2 weeks. The next step will be finalizing the land management plan, which should be completed soon, then the funds from the Community Preservation Act will be transferred to the District. Mr. Mostoller reminded the board that this is on top of the funds they already received from the MVP grant.

Mr. Mostoller informed the board that they also received verbal confirmation that the Drinking Water Supply grant funds will be released before the end of the month. The District is also in conversation with the Town regarding public use.

Mr. Rosen asked if the Selectboard gave their approval for the necessary items, which Mr. Mostoller affirmed they did approve. Ms. Wahlstrom informed the board that the base for signage was installed today, later this week the front of the sign will be installed, and later in the summer the rear portion will be installed. This delay is due to a backorder of the necessary display panel.

Preview Event June 27th

Mr. Mostoller reviewed this event with the board. Three abutters were in attendance as well as Alissa Nicol for the Acton Exchange. Mr. Mostoller noted the lower turnout was likely due to the extreme heat of the day. Abutters in attendance were thrilled to hear about the project and the opportunity for pedestrian connections.

Ms. Alissa Nicol asked the board what the announcement of public access will look like and where that information will be shared. Mr. Mostoller replied that public access is waiting to make sure the trails are more available, open, and properly marked. There are some rules and regulation information signs that need to be installed, but the announcement will likely be in several public meetings of relevant bodies and boards, as well as on social media.

Ms. Amir Lin asked if the Town is going to assign a land steward to the property. Mr. Mostoller replied that this is currently under discussion and the goal is to have a land steward for the property.

Update on Flume Rebate Program

Ms. Wahlstrom updated the Board on the Flume Rebate Program. The rebate was offered for 80 devices in total. 71 of those have been installed and connected, 7 were returned mostly due to discomfort with the data sharing. 2 devices were purchased but were not installed or connected. The agreement had a 30-day installation period and once that passed the two accounts were charged for the discount received on those devices so that

those devices may be given to those on the waiting list. One device is still not connected due to network connectivity issues, this person is working with Flume to resolve this. Of the devices returned, 5 have already been purchased by those on the waitlist. The waitlist currently has 71 people.

Mr. Rosen commented that Flume previously agreed to honor the existing price through the end of 2024 if offered to additional devices. He asked if they have received any data supporting an extension or expansion of the program.

Ms. Wahlstrom informed Mr. Rosen that Flume sent out a survey for those participating at the end of June. Ms. Wahlstrom then reviewed preliminary feedback which highlighted that 85% of respondents felt Flume made them more aware of their water use, and 50% said Flume helped change their water consumption behaviors. 55% of respondents feel Flume positively influenced their view of the District, 25% remained neutral, and some did not change their view. Overall satisfaction was 96%. 75% said the rebate motivated them to participate.

Mr. Petersen shared his experience as a Flume user, noting it miscategorized some items because of differences in shower heads, and the delay in reporting. Ms. Amir Lin commented that a multi-family unit Flume user told her that it assisted them in finding a leak in their home. Ms. Wahlstrom responded that multi-family units were not subsidized so the District does not have direct access to those devices.

Mr. Mostoller commented that the board can wait another month or two for more results to come in and evaluate if the District would like to expand the program. Mr. Rosen asked about how the District is monitoring the program, to which Ms. Wahlstrom explained through access of the Flume Portal. The Board then reviewed information about Flume ownership after the study will conclude, and Flume's business model.

NEW BUSINESS:

Order of Taking for Baldco Property

Mr. Mostoller introduced this item and the relevant information included in the packet. He highlighted the timeline of the draft Order of Taking that is necessary 30 years prior to closing, and the necessary letter of intent to the property owner.

Mr. Rosen motioned that the commissioners as authorized by and on behalf of the Water Supply District of Acton take by eminent domain for the purpose of protection and conservation of ground water aquifers and recharge areas for water supply, well protection, and development, watershed protection purposes, and for all things pertinent to its duties as a water district, those certain parcels of property known as 104 Powder Mill

Road Rear, and 36 Knox Trail Acton, consisting of approximately 18.27 acres more or less, as described in Article 16 of the Official Warrant of the Annual Meeting, as unanimously voted on March 15th, 2023, and pursuant to that authority and the authority granted to the district in its enabling act by the Massachusetts General Laws to execute an Order of Taking, and to award to the owner of said property, Baldco Incorporated, for the taking, damages in the amount of \$142,000 based on the sellers agreement, and the appraised value of the property taken, as determined by appraisal dated January 31, 2020.

Ms. Amir Lin seconded the motion. The Commissioners opened discussion on the motion. Ms. Amir Lin asked about the timeline, to which Mr. Mostoller reviewed the expected closing timeline.

The motion was approved via a roll call vote, Ms. Amir Lin, Mr. Rosen.

Renewal of General Obligation Bond Anticipation Notes of the District dated July 25, 2024

Ms. McCarthy updated the board on the Renewal of the General Obligation Bond Anticipated Notes (BAN) which were originally issued in July 2024. The sale took place on Thursday, July 11th and they had only one bidder. The District received an interest rate of 5.05% for a three-month BAN which will be dated July 25, 2024 and will mature on October 25, 2024. The District did not receive a premium on the BAN. Ms. McCarthy then informed the board that the District should receive the reimbursements for both projects from the Clean Water Trust prior to the maturity date. Ms. McCarthy then informed the board she will need them to provide signatures this week for this BAN so she may upload the Note and related documents to Gateway for certification by the Bureau of Accounts.

End of Fiscal Year Transfers

Mr. Mostoller informed the board that they anticipate going over budget on the legal line item. This is because they had two attorneys representing the District, and with the Special District Counsel they had three attorneys. This is also due to significant legal work on property transactions that the District had this year. Mr. Mostoller is requesting the board approve a transfer of \$6,400 from the reserve fund to cover this overage.

The Finance Committee then discussed this request. Mr. Parenti commented on the relatively small amount of this transfer.

Mr. Parenti motioned to recommend an end of fiscal year transfer of \$6,400 from the reserve fund to the legal line item. Which was seconded by Mr. Petersen and approved via a roll call vote, Mr. Parenti, Mr. Petersen.

The Board of Commissioners then discussed this item, reviewing its place in the larger budget.

Mr. Rosen Motioned to transfer \$6,400 from the reserve fund to legal. Ms. Amir Lin seconded, and it was approved via a roll call vote, Ms. Amir Lin, Mr. Rosen.

Mr. Rosen asked Ms. McCarthy for the cost of lights, power and fuel, to which she provided the end of year figures.

Staffing Update

Mr. Mostoller informed the board that this week will be Ms. Wahlstrom's last week with the District as she is moving on to a new career opportunity with MassDEP. Mr. Mostoller thanked Ms. Wahlstrom for her work with the District and noted that she will be greatly missed. They have begun advertising the position and have kicked off recruitment efforts. Due to existing staff shortages and shifts in the workload they have reorganized the roles into multiple potential positions, Project Engineer, Environmental Manager, and Environmental Analyst. Until positions are filled the team is working to cover the shortages as best they can.

The commissioners thanked Ms. Wahlstrom for her work and wished her the best in her new position. Ms. Wahlstrom thanked the Board and the District for their support.

Mr. Petersen echoed these sentiments and asked Mr. Mostoller to expound on the three positions they are advertising and the recruitment efforts.

Mr. Mostoller explained that usually when they recruit for this type of position the District has asked for 8-10 years of experience. However, due to recent low response the District has lowered that threshold to between 5-8 years' experience or less for the analyst position. The Project Engineer position is new. Several years ago, the District hired a consultant to review their job descriptions, and these changes are informed by that report's findings. They are looking at this as an opportunity to recalibrate technical roles.

Mr. Petersen asked if they considered shifting some of the workload to support firms. Mr. Mostoller responded that because these roles are highly involved in daily operations there is likely too much oversight needed to send this work out to support firms. The Board continued to discuss staffing shortages. Mr. Mostoller informed the Board that next Tuesday the District will host 50 emerging water professionals at North and Center Acton treatment plants through an event with the Mass Water Works and New England Water Works Associations. He is hoping to gauge interest for these positions at this event. Mr.

Petersen asked about competition in the industry for these positions, which Mr. Mostoller briefly explained.

In other new business, Mr. Mostoller informed the board that last Friday night the District had a disruptive water main break. At 9:30 pm they noticed a drop in the level at the Great Hill Tank, and increased flow at the treatment plants. They got a call from dispatch and quickly shut down the break at Alcott St. Only 5 homes were impacted, and given the hour of the night, weather forecast, and the delayed response from other utilities they decided to perform the repair in the morning. The repair took about 12 hours to complete. They were in direct contact with the affected residents. Mr. Mostoller warned that there would be discolored water due to the repair work and wanted to inform the board as they have gotten some calls and social media posts from the public about the discoloration. The repair work replaced about 10 feet of pipe and a hydrant branch.

Mr. Petersen asked if old age caused the pipe to break. Mr. Mostoller affirmed that it seems age did cause the pipe to break, which is common in the area because that section of town has old pipe. Mr. Mostoller then reviewed similar repair work in that neighborhood in 2016, 2020 and 2021. He informed the board that this neighborhood presents an opportunity for the District to invest in new or rehabilitated pipes to combat these breaks. When Mr. Petersen asked about a price estimate for this kind of project, Mr. Mostoller declined, saying there are too many variables to even predict what the cost may be. The Board extended their thanks for the update and to the District crew for responding to the issue.

Mr. Petersen asked the board to consider a standing agenda item at the end of their meetings to allow those in attendance to propose future agenda items. The Board discussed the feasibility of this type of suggestion, noting they already make themselves available for people to contact should they have an item for the agenda. The Board also noted that most often the agenda items are standard, however, non-standard items are typically not even known until the week before the meeting. After a brief discussion the board agreed to revisit this idea when all the commissioners are present.

Mr. Parenti motioned to adjourn the meeting of the Finance Committee, which Mr. Petersen seconded, and it was approved. Mr. Petersen, Mr. Parenti. The Finance Committee meeting closed at 8:13.

Ms. Amir Lin motioned to adjourn the Board of Commissioners meeting. Mr. Rosen seconded, and it was approved, Ms. Amir Lin, Mr. Rosen. The Board of Commissioners Meeting closed at 8:13 pm.

Meeting Closed at 8:13 pm.