

**Acton Water District  
Finance Committee Meeting Minutes  
November 15, 2023  
693 Massachusetts Avenue  
Acton, MA 01720**

In attendance were Finance Committee members Ron Parenti, Bill Guthlein, and John Petersen.  
Also in attendance, District Treasurer: Christine McCarthy  
Public Present: Kim Kastens

Mr. William Guthlein called the Finance Committee meeting to order at 8:02 AM.

Mr. Petersen opened with a synopsis of the discussion that took place during the November 6, 2023 Board of Water Commissioner's meeting. Mr. Parenti confirmed Mr. Petersen's account.

**Comments from the Public**

Kim Kastens- Kim is disappointed that the comments from the public agenda item was initially skipped over. She stated we should honor the original purpose of the citizen's petition. She feels we have reached an impasse between the Finance Committee and the Board of Water Commissioners; ready to start thinking of alternative ways to reach the goals of the three-legged stool.

Kim also recommended placing the bulk of any rate increase on the summer rate versus the winter rate. Concord water reports based on tier- she recommends reporting these metrics on a regular basis and see if the metrics warrant ramping up the tier structure. Her final comment was that the appropriate venue for these discussions is in a public venue following open meeting law vs. utilizing an ad-hoc committee.

**Old Business**

- Update on Rate Study Proposal

**Update on Rate Study Proposal**

Mr. Petersen stated that he has been under the impression that the current rate structure is not inadequate to cover the increasing costs.

Mr. Guthlein agreed. He said the townspeople are certainly capable of paying the operating costs.

Mr. Parenti added that if something is added to the rate structure the impact is relatively small related to the number of people who have difficulty paying.

Mr. Guthlein mentioned that he has read articles on price sensitivity, and sensitivity does exist. He also stated that any reduction typically comes from discretionary uses such as outdoor watering, etc., not typical general household usage habits.

Mr. Parenti mentioned that he and Mr. Guthlein have gone through multiple analyses and have concluded volumetric billing tends to shift the burden to those using the most water. He also stated that his impression from the last Board of Commissioners meeting is the Board is not interested in talking about the rate structure anymore.

Mr. Petersen remarked that we need to find a way forward.

Mr. Guthlein nominated Mr. Petersen to represent the Finance Committee on the ad-hoc committee. Mr. Parenti seconded, and it was approved by a roll call vote:

Mr. Parenti, yes, Mr. Guthlein, yes; Mr. Petersen, yes

Kim Kastens then commented that the Finance Committees discussion speaks to the point about why water revenue is part of the citizen's petition. She learned through her research that water departments and districts found revenue was dropping and the blame was placed on conservation. She thought it was important to include environmental justice as part of the conversation. The three goals are intentional with each other. She wants us to remember to balance all three and not let the other two goals get in the way of the goal of having enough revenue to cover expenses.

Mr. Petersen then spoke about how we want to help the disadvantaged, but how do we do this? How can we measure this?

Mr. Guthlein then asked Kim if she would be bringing this up again at the next Annual Meeting?

Kim Kastens stated that the Annual Meeting is a ways off so she is hesitant to say what she may or may not speak about.

Mr. Guthlein then stated the conclusion is that absent a regime change of the Board of Water Commissioners we are not moving the ball forward very far in terms of the rate structure change.

Kim Kastens agreed that we are at an impasse.

Mr. Petersen then said that he would like to invite Kim to join the ad-hoc committee as a representative of the public.

Kim Kastens said she is open to doing this and will respect whatever decision is arrived at.

Mr. Petersen will bring this proposal for public participation on the ad-hoc committee before the committee.

Mr. Petersen motioned to adjourn the finance committee meeting at 8:41 AM. Mr. Parenti seconded, and it was approved by a roll call vote:

Mr. Parenti, yes, Mr. Guthlein, yes, Mr. Petersen, yes.