

Board of Public Works 03/23/2023 – Minutes Conference Room A

DPW Board Members: Thomas A Nephew, Chair; John Patrick Harrington, Vice-Chair; Joe Mercado, Lewis L. Lunn, James T MacDonald

Not in attendance: Thomas A Nephew, Chair; Lewis L. Lunn

DPW Staff: Kenneth Kalinowski, PE, Dir. DPW; Paul Brinkman DPW Business Manager

Also in attendance: Derek Flanders, Parks & Cemetery Operator

Call to Order

Vice-Chair, Pat Harrington called the meeting to order at 5:38 p.m., announcing that it was being recorded and will be broadcast at a future date. The video recording can be seen at: <https://pepperell.vod.castus.tv/vod/?video=a8d0818f-798e-45ce-a47c-904b79db229f>

Acceptance of Meeting Minutes

- February 16, 2023 (Regular)

The vote to accept meeting minutes was moved out of order to allow for a quorum.

Abatements

None

Water / Sewer – *taken out of order to allow for Joe Mercado to be present for PFAS updates*

- DPW Staffing Changes
 - Joel Gilbert resigned from Water Department Operator's position.
 - Dan Mattus resigned from Water Department Operator's position.
 - Shaun Pillsbury transferred from the Highway Department to fill one Water Department Operator position.
 - Actively recruiting to fill one vacant Water Department Operator position.
 - Actively recruiting to fill 2 vacant Highway Department Driver/Laborer positions.
 - Potential to recruit to fill one Cemetery part-time position, this position could become full-time if the FY24 Budget is approved at Town Meeting. Previously the Cemetery Department had 2 seasonal, part-time employees, these positions could be merged to one single full-time position if the budget request is approved.
 - Recruitment to fill all of the DPW vacancies has been challenging. We are competing with several close surrounding towns also recruiting to fill vacancies.
 - The pool of licensed Water Operators in Massachusetts has been decreasing.
 - To obtain a Class B Commercial Driver's License (CDL), candidates must successfully complete training which can cost anywhere between six to ten thousand dollars and each additional endorsement adds additional cost.
- Misc. Updates – *taken out of order*
 - The variable frequency drive at the Jersey Well has failed and needs to be replaced. The wait time to receive the replacement part can be up to a year. Fortunately, Adam Dufour was able to repurpose and use a comparable part from the Nashua Well (currently off line). The replacement part is also currently on order and expected to arrive in approximately 12-weeks.

DPW – *taken out of order*

- Transfer Station – MSW Contract Renewal
 - The 6-year Municipal Solid Waste contract with Wheelabrator expires at the end of the fiscal year. The new proposed contract renewal includes a 30% rate/per ton increase over what we are currently paying, in addition to a 5% minimum annual or cost of living increase, whichever is greater, and an additional \$1.50/ton environmental fee that increases by \$0.50 annually.
 - Seven or eight years ago, we replaced one steel trailer with an aluminum trailer at the Transfer Station and had the second old steel trailer repaired. The second old steel trailer is again in need of repairs. If repairs are not possible, we may need a capital item request to procure a second aluminum trailer.

- Spring ATM Warrant Articles – Discussion
 - Draft warrant articles have been sent to Town Counsel for format/wording and will be published mid-April as required for Town Meeting:
 - Proposed FY24 Enterprise Fund budgets.
 - Three FY23 supplemental appropriation adjustments to cover operating costs.
 - Article for Cemetery expansion.
 - PFAS – new EPA proposed regulations have been released, discussion will continue later in tonight’s meeting.
- Misc. Updates
 - Mike Schrader will be undergoing surgery and is expected to be out for a couple of weeks.
 - Pepperell has a new DPW/Highway tree truck:
 - 2009 International Model 4300, with a 57-foot working insulated boom which will be safer working around wires. The truck has only 55,000 miles/9,000 working hours. The cost of the truck was \$44,000, and we’ve spent an additional \$4,000 for tires, etc.
 - Snow & Ice spending is now at \$258,500, spending should be slowing down.
 - Pat Harrington expresses thanks to Jim Whitcomb who was driving a wing plow near the end of his driveway and safely provided a wide berth.
- Heald Street Culvert Replacement – Update
 - The contractor plans to restart the Heald Street culvert replacement mid-April. Heald Street will need to be closed for a couple of months. Notices and detours will be posted.
- Master Plan Review – Discussion
 - Status is updated every six months and reported annually.
 - The Planning Board and Select Board have requested DPW ranking and comments on the reprioritization plan recommendations and is using the Eisenhower Matrix. Master Plan Recommendation items discussed and ranked include: crosswalks, sidewalks, intersection safety issues, Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP), Town Charter updates & revisions, heavy vehicle traffic exclusions, transportation projects, parking, etc.

Review, Approve and Sign Any Documents Requiring Board Signatures – taken out of order

- February Commitments
February Commitments were signed by the Board.

Water / Sewer – Joe Mercado is now present, item was moved out of order from earlier in the meeting agenda

- PFAS (Update)
 - New EPA proposed regulations were released on March 14, 2023, a public hearing will be held May 4, 2023 with hopes to finalize by the end of 2023.
 - Eight compounds are currently regulated. MassDEP PFAS regulations include 6-compounds with maximum total contaminant limit of 20 ng/l (parts per trillion).
 - The Bemis Road Well, and Jersey Street Well meet the MassDEP current standards, the Nashua Road Well does not.
 - The EPA PFAS goal is for the Maximum Contaminant Level Goal (MCLG) to be zero/non-detectable. The EPA has set PFOA & PFOS with a total threshold of 4 ng/l (ppt) for one or the other, refer to the Health Index ratio of four other specific compounds to standard, the total cannot exceed 1.0.
 - The Bemis Road Well meets the EPA proposed standards, the Jersey Street (PFOA & PFOS) and Nashua Road Well do not.
 - We are striving to determine the source of contaminants (septic systems, dump sites, etc.). The industry believes 20% of PFAS exposure comes from drinking water, 80% of exposure comes from elsewhere. PFAS does not break down over time.
 - We are actively working to determine the best type of groundwater treatment, defining costs, finding new resources (Dunstable) and to find funding (national lawsuit, SRF loans) to help recover the financial cost and impacts.
 - Future actions include remediation known releases, cost recovery, groundwater protections, expanding the sewer district and new sources.

- Board members want to be proactive and get ahead of this. Paul has been working on putting together the cost estimate, Ken notes that we have a DPW warrant article on reserve, we're just flushing out the numbers.

Commissioners Comments

- There is a pothole on Prescott Street.
- Overdue Water Accounts – Update
 - We have a few customers that have caught up with the recent billing that went out, however, there are still a number of accounts still past due.
 - Monthly payment plans are calculated to include the total past-due balance, plus estimated future bills, and interest. This total balance is divided over a 24-month payment period. Last year there were 13 customers on payment plans, 4 customers have since paid in full, 5-6 are currently ongoing and 4 customers have defaulted. We are looking at establishing new payment plan calculations that will include a 25% initial down payment.
 - We are exploring other billing software systems that are capable of supporting collection efforts better and include automatic emailing and payment plan controls. The existing billing software is not automated, and is unable to establish and manage payment plans which currently requires intensive time and effort because everything is managed manually.
 - Water shut off processes take time, effort and have additional costs involved (Constable, certified mailings). Board members would like to be more aggressive in collecting money owed. Customers that have failed to make payments according to the payment plan, will have water services shut off due and will need to pay the balance in full to have the water turned back on.

Public Comment

None present or online

Next Meeting Dates

- April 20, 2023 – BPW Regular
- May 1, 2023 – Annual Town Meeting

Acceptance of Meeting Minutes – *moved out of order to wait for a quorum vote.*

- February 16, 2023 (Regular)

*James MacDonald motions to accept the Meeting Minutes for the meeting held on February 16, 2023 as written, Joe Mercado seconds the motion. **The motion passes unanimously.***

Adjournment

*James MacDonald motions to adjourn the meeting of the Board of Public Works, Joe Mercado seconds the motion. **The motion passes unanimously***

The meeting adjourned at 7:28 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Donna Lane-McPartlan
DPW Program Administrator, Highway Division