

PUBLIC WORKS COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

Pursuant to the notice filed with the Town Clerk, a virtual and in person public meeting of the Public Works Commission in accordance with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Order of March 12, 2020 suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law was held at 4:00 p.m. on Wednesday, May 11, 2022. This meeting has been properly noticed with the Town Clerk and has been recorded.

PRESENT:

Commissioners:

Jef Fasser
David DeLong
Andrea Solomon
James Terry
K.C. Winslow

Staff:

Alan H. Cathcart, Director
Steve Dookran, Town Engineer
Jeffrey A. Murawski, Water and Sewer Superintendent
Erik Shaw, Assistant Highway and Grounds Superintendent
Nelson Mui, Management Analyst
Bob Hill, Management Analyst
Melissa Simoncini, Environmental Services Program Administrator
Anna R. Trout, Administrative & Special Projects Coordinator

Other:

Robert Hilsinger (League of Women Voters Observer)
Nancy Nelson, 1695 Lowell Road
Mary Hartman, 16 Concord Greene #6
Nick Pappas
Bill and Sallie Satterthwaite
Terri Ackerman
Susan Mlodozeniec

A: ACTION ITEMS

A-1 through A-3 - The meeting was convened at 4:00 PM. by Commissioner Fasser. Attendance roll call of Commissioners was made as follows: David DeLong, Aye, Andrea Solomon, Aye, James Terry, Aye, K.C. Winslow, Aye and Jef Fasser, Aye.

The meeting minutes from April 13, 2022 were approved by roll call: David DeLong, Aye, Andrea Solomon, Aye, James Terry, Aye, K.C. Winslow, Aye and Jef Fasser, Aye.

Director Cathcart reviewed the PWC meeting calendar. He explained that the Solid Waste and Recycling Subscription Rate Hearing will occur at the June 8 Public Works Commission meeting. A discussion regarding Nagog will also occur. We don't anticipate holding a meeting in July or August unless an important issue should arise. In September there may be a special Town Meeting relating to Nagog.

D: DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

D-1: Water/Sewer Rate Public Hearing

Commissioner Terry **MOVED** to open the Public Hearing for the FY23 Water/Sewer rates, Commissioner Winslow **SECONDED**, and it was **UNANIMOUSLY VOTED** by roll call vote as follows: David DeLong, Aye, Andrea Solomon, Aye, James Terry, Aye, K.C. Winslow, Aye and Jef Fasser, Aye.

Superintendent Murawski explained that the proposed rate schedules and special service fees have been widely disseminated via the Town Manager's Enterprise Fund Budget Book, the Finance Committee Enterprise Fund hearing, postings in a newspaper of general circulation in Concord and on the Town website.

The program objectives include compliance with regulatory and statutory requirements, achieving a high level of customer satisfaction and providing sufficient supply for the current and future needs of Concord. Regulatory drivers include State and Federal regulations, emerging contaminants, cyber security and a revised lead and copper rule.

Concord's water system, currently valued at 26 million dollars, is comprised of one surface water supply (Nagog Pond), six groundwater wells, seven pumping stations, two treatment facilities, two water storage reservoirs, 134 miles of distribution mains, and 1,328 hydrants.

The FY23 Operations and Maintenance for water totals just over five million dollars with personnel services and depreciation comprising the greatest amounts.

The FY23 water fund capital improvement plan totals just over three million dollars including \$1,450,000 for Nagog Improvements and \$700,000 for water main replacements. The capital plan includes 16 million dollars of anticipated spending in FY24 and FY25 for a multi-year Nagog Treatment plant construction project, after which the capital plan is reduced to about two million dollars for each of the next seven fiscal years.

Concord's customer water revenue base is comprised of 56% residential, 24% commercial, 13% hospital and correctional facilities, 3% municipal buildings and public schools and 4% other.

The municipal wastewater system total infrastructure assets equal just over seventeen million dollars. This includes the advanced wastewater treatment plant, two large scale pumping stations, six neighborhood lift stations, 34 miles of collection mains and 903 manholes.

The FY23 Operations and Maintenance expense for wastewater totals about 3.4 million dollars. The bulk of this expense is for depreciation and for the wastewater treatment plant management contract.

The FY23 capital improvement plan for wastewater totals 1.4 million dollars. The highest expense is for a jetter/vactor which is needed for cleaning of sewers and for trenchless excavation. Station structures and plant equipment is the second most significant expense.

We have a stepped (increasing block) water rate structure for residential customers that is designed to mitigate against unnecessary water use in the warm weather. A 4% increase is proposed which equates to an increase of approximately \$23.40 per year. There are also stepped rates for commercial customers (which are imposed throughout the year), which is also proposed at a 4% increase. Municipal rates are also slated for a 4% increase.

Residential and commercial sewer rates will have a 2% proposed increase, with no rate change for the sewer improvement fee. The average impact for a residential customer is \$14.52 per year.

There are relatively few customers that are in arrears on their water or sewer bills. The long-term trend for increases in the water rate tends to be between three and five percent. The minimum bill covers the administrative costs of preparing and analyzing the bills. Customers will have the opportunity to opt out of the electronic meter read for the Light Plant and Water. The new meter technology will not depend upon a vehicle traveling through neighborhoods to read the meter, but it will be done through electronic routers.

Some residents utilize robust outdoor watering systems which results in their being charged a higher rate with the stepped rate system. Regrettably, this does not seem to discourage water use by many residents. The State has developed a standard for residential gallons per day usage at 65 gallons per day. The ten year average for Concord is 67. It is likely Concord will require a more aggressive rate structure if we are required to meet this standard.

Commissioner Fasser suggested that seeing the historical comparison on expenditures is very helpful, and he would like to see that continue. He also asked about unaccounted for water and how that is tracked and controlled.

Director Cathcart explained that this past year about 12% of the water falls within this category. Some of this is attributed to the meters mechanical systems as they age. Leak detection is performed on all water mains within the system at least once every two years, which results in finding cracks in pipes or a hydrant that may be leaking. Regulators have established a standard for unaccounted for water at 10%.

Commissioner Terry asked about the condition of the wells and what is done to maintain them. Director Cathcart explained that each pump station is furnished with specialized equipment that requires routine and non-routine service needs throughout the year. Every few years each station will undergo a fairly major rehabilitation (or cleaning) at a cost of 25 to 50 thousand dollars, depending on pump and motor replacement needs. Nagog is being conditioned to be ready to be turned on for summer demand. Director Cathcart reminded the Commission that there is another potential source of water, that has not yet been developed, that was purchased off of Ball's Hill Road. Commissioner Terry also suggested that given the challenges in procurement of equipment, perhaps the Town could collaborate with other municipalities to secure equipment needed to perform repairs to keep infrastructure in good order.

Commissioner Solomon asked about the new meter technology and if it may create new incentives for water conservation. Director Cathcart agreed that there will be some benefits in improved user account management, however, because the meter reading technology must also accommodate the needs of the municipal light plant, water customers may not be able to benefit from real-time leak notification services. The Division is continuing to evaluate how the new technology could be leveraged with an understanding that it is possible that daily (or 24-hour notice) exception reports may be possible.

Mary Hartman introduced herself as the new Select Board Liaison and asked if the rate increases will go up by the same percentage each year. Director Cathcart explained that rates are set based on a ten-year proforma with a goal of keeping rate increases between 3-5%. This year is 4% for water and 2% for sewer. Ms. Hartman asked if the income is greater than expenses, if that is what builds the reserve. When you have capital expenses you can draw down the reserve, or you can raise debt. Director Cathcart indicated that was correct. Ms. Hartman also asked that if the well off of Ball's Hill Road were to be put online, would that necessitate improvements to that road, to which Director Cathcart responded that it would. While the layout would not likely be changed significantly, a water main would need to be installed below the road.

The most significant borrowing anticipated by the Water and Sewer Division within the next ten years will be for Nagog Pond treatment. This is why we are looking at a Special Town Meeting this fall. The Town has recently learned that it is eligible for the drinking water State Revolving Loan for this project that would cap the borrowing rate at 2%/ To secure this loan, the Town must demonstrate it has the funds to support this program.

Commissioner Terry **MOVED** to close the Public Hearing for the FY23 Water/Sewer rates, Commissioner Winslow **SECONDED**, and it was **UNANIMOUSLY VOTED** by roll call vote as follows: David DeLong, Aye, Andrea Solomon, Aye, James Terry, Aye, K.C. Winslow, Aye and Jef Fasser, Aye.

Commissioner Winslow **MOVED**, to approve Water Rate Schedules and Sewer Rate Schedules as presented and described in the Fiscal Year 2023 – Water and Sewer Rate Schedules memo dated May 11, 2022, prepared by the Water/Sewer Management Analyst and issued by the Public Works Director, Commissioner Solomon **SECONDED**, and it was **UNANIMOUSLY VOTED** by roll call vote as follows: David DeLong, Aye, Andrea Solomon, Aye, James Terry, Aye, K.C. Winslow, Aye and Jef Fasser, Aye.

D-2: Roads Program Update

Steve Dookran, Town Engineer, explained that the focus of this update is to inform the Commission on the status of our current Roads Projects and plans for the newly approved 2023 budget. Previous updates have been made to provide general information and explanations on pavement management techniques. As a result of the Pavement Condition Index (PCI) survey that was conducted last summer, the PCI was determined to be 67, as compared with the 2018 index of 78.

Mr. Dookran informed the Commission that the cost of materials has risen approximately 30% since November of 2020, and it keeps going up. We recently received bids on asphalt projects where one ton of material is 50% more than costs a year ago. The industry is also seeing increased lead times, in obtaining materials, along with staffing shortages.

In past years the Roads Program budget averaged two million dollars per year including Chapter 90 funds. This did not include all the costs involved in the program. We are seeking approximately seven million dollars per year over the next five years. In Fiscal Year 23 we requested \$6,236,000 and received \$3,389,000. While it may be a reach, we are hoping to makeup the \$2,800,000 shortfall by obtaining some federal funding for parking lots, drainage, pedestrian, bicycle and stonewall improvements.

We have always used PCI to determine the road conditions across town and when planning for budget purposes. As mentioned, there are other factors including drainage and other infrastructure expenses that need to be considered in the overall cost.

The asphalt rubber road improvement projects are scheduled to begin in May. The cold in place recycling and microsurfacing contract is being renegotiated to bring down the cost with hopes of starting that work soon. The road reconstruction and road overlay project is in the process of being awarded soon. Crack sealing work is also being scheduled soon. The 2022 pavement marking will commence after crack sealing. The signal maintenance contract bids have been received and the contract will soon be awarded. Guardrail improvements are also being planned.

A consultant has been selected for the Town wide culvert and bridge assessment. This will be instrumental in completing an asset management and capital improvements plan for these important features. The Stow Street parking lot drainage improvements were completed last year, with pavement construction to occur in the next few weeks. Hubbard Street utility work was performed with Complete Streets funding last season. Reclamation, repaving and sidewalk work is now being completed.

Stormwater permit work is an annual requirement with a \$50,000 investment each year. Drainage improvements on Lowell Road and Prairie Street will be completed later this year.

We are doing our best to accurately forecast pricing for next year's projects, given the state of the current supply chain and expenses. We plan to bring those details to the Public Works Commission in the fall. As we all know, some of our main streets are in poor condition. The cost for improvements will be higher than other streets because of their width. Line painting and striping, signal maintenance and guardrail replacement will also be planned. The second phase of the Town wide culvert and bridge assessment will be planned, resulting in a drainage project later in the year. Traffic and signal improvements will hopefully be completed on Commonwealth Ave. and Laws Brook Road. We want to develop our asset management tool, using one system that will cost \$40,000.

Commissioner Fasser asked if Chapter 90 Funds were included in the FY23 budget request. Mr. Dookran explained that it was not included. The amount that is anticipated for Chapter 90 would be about \$450,000. The Town continues to look for grant funding to help with these expenses including Complete Streets and Safe Routes to School.

The Traffic Signal Maintenance contracts have been covering a three year period, which makes it easier in terms of the bid process. Multi-year contracts could be investigated for some other projects.

Commissioner Fasser asked Mr. Pappas who is the chair of the Transportation Advisory Committee about what sorts of issues his committee would be looking at and if there is any overlap with the Public Works Commission roads program work. Mr. Pappas said they don't particularly look at maintenance, which is

important. He was disappointed to hear that there is a lack of funding for road maintenance. He explained that a better range of services such as ride services and possibly buses is needed. Improvements to the roads needs to be made to make them safer for pedestrians and bicyclists.

Mary Hartman mentioned that the Town will be hiring a full-time transportation planner and that the Select Board will be sponsoring a transportation study.

D-3: PWC Reorganization

The Commission expressed thanks to KC Winslow for her years of dedicated service on the Public Works Commission.

Commissioner Terry **MOVED** to elect David DeLong as Chair and Andrea Solomon as Vice Chair of the Public Works Commission effective immediately following this meeting Commissioner Winslow **SECONDED**, and it was **UNANIMOUSLY VOTED** by roll call vote as follows: James Terry, Aye, Andrea Solomon, Aye, David DeLong, Aye, Jef Fasser, Aye and KC Winslow, Aye

D-4: Director's Report

Director Cathcart reminded the group that next week is National Public Works Week. He expressed he is fortunate to work with 50+ professional, responsible individuals who are dedicated to serving the Town and its residents. The Select Board also issued a proclamation declaring Public Works Week for the Town of Concord. A celebration will occur next week.

- **Engineering (Presented by Steve Dookran, Town Engineer) –**
 - **Cooler Concord Climate Festival** – Joseph Cormier from Engineering participated in this event, providing outreach materials focusing on stormwater management.
 - **Hubbard Street** – Work continued here with the street being binder paved.
 - **Sawmill Brook Erosion Control** – Erosion repairs were completed to finish off these repairs.

- **Highway, Grounds and Cemetery (Presented by Erik Shaw, Assistant Highway and Grounds Superintendent) -**
 - **Pot Hole Patching** – Pot Hole repair crews have been out on the roads making repairs two or three days per week.
 - **Bike Rack Installation** – A grant was awarded last summer to install a bike shelter in West Concord near the commuter parking lot. This work will soon be completed.
 - **Tree Planting Program** – 35-40 trees of 68 have been planted.

- **Arbor Day** – Arbor Day was celebrated on April 28, with a tree planting ceremony at the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail parking lot on Commonwealth Avenue.
 - **Conservation Coffee** – Justine St. John provided a presentation of the trash and recycling program
 - **Compost Site** – We were informed of some quality control issues in regard to the compost provided at the site. We temporarily stopped making the compost available to the public and consulted with a third party for guidance. We were advised that there are no requirements from the State and that sampling is not recommended. We received a similar response from the EPA. Compost is a very important sustainability program. We are following best practices and have provided information to the public, continuing operations as in the past.
- **Water/Sewer (Presented by Jeffrey Murawski, Water/Sewer Superintendent)-**
 - **Butternut Circle** – Road borings were performed as part of the design process providing soil makeup, indicating groundwater or ledge in preparation for water main rehabilitation or replacement.
 - **Portable Water Fountain** – This public water fountain is utilized at a number of public events, supplying local water conveniently.
 - **Nagog Ozone** - Liquid oxygen has been delivered and testing of the seasonal ozone equipment system has successfully been completed.
 - **Seasonal Water Conservation Advisory** – Signage communicating this advisory has been distributed throughout the Town.

D-5: Commissioner’s Comments

Commissioner Winslow raised an issue brought to her by a resident regarding a \$4,400.00 fee for sewer being charged because of the finishing of a basement. Director Cathcart mentioned that this is a Sewer Improvement Fee. This fee was established as a Town Bylaw and is directly connected to the Town’s need to manage its wastewater capacity. He reminded the Commission that wastewater is regulated via a NPDES permit (issued by EPA and MassDEP) which places limitations on flow and quality (load). Director Cathcart noted that as part of a recently initiated NPDES renewal process, Concord has formally requested an increase in our permitted flow capacity.

Director Cathcart presented Commissioner Winslow with a parting gift.

D-6: Public Comments

Mr. Pappas suggested that the Building Department should be consulted regarding a triggering event when adding living space to a home in Concord, with regard to wastewater capacity. He also asked how to report a pot hole.

Ms. Trout responded that residents call 978-318-3220. Another issue related to compost is jumping worms. The eggs from these worms are attached to leaf litter. Director Cathcart responded that the Town is aware of this issue.

Commissioner Terry **MOVED** to adjourn the meeting at 6:37 PM, Commissioner Solomon **SECONDED**, and it was **VOTED** by roll call vote as follows: KC Winslow, Aye, Andrea Solomon, Aye, Jef Fasser, Aye and James Terry, Aye.

ADJOURNED: 6:37 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Approved,

Anna R. Trout	Jef Fasser
Administrative & Special Projects Coordinator	Public Works Commission
Concord Public Works	