TOWN OF BLANDFORD
WATER DEPARTMENT
1 Russell Stage Rd
Blandford, MA 01008
413.848.4279 x 304

Water Commissioners
Brad Curry
Michael Keier
Peter Thayer

Water Superintendent
Gordon Avery

MEETING MINUTES
BLANDFORD WATER COMMISSION
OCTOBER 5, 2023
4:30 P.M.

1. OPEN SESSION:

Meeting Opened at 4:35 P.M.
In Attendance: M. Keier, Chairman, P. Thayer, Member, C. Dunn, Town Administrator, G. Avery, Water Superintendent, K. Shaw, Administrative Assistant, B. Curry, will be in attendance shortly. Meeting is being recorded.

2. EXAMINATION OF RECORDS OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS:

a. Review of Meeting Minutes of August 31, 2023.

MOTION: M. Keier made a motion to accept the Minutes of August 31, 2023, as written.
P. Thayer Seconded.
All in Favor.

3. ACTION ITEMS

a. There are no action items.

4. UNFINISHED BUSINESS FROM PRIOR MEETINGS:

a. Review of Truck Bids

There are no additional truck bids other than the initial one. The amount in the bid for the 2022 truck is $38,800.

MOTION: B. Curry made a motion to accept the truck bid as stated in the bid.
M. Keier Seconded.
All in Favor.

b. Water Meter Project Update

Not Discussed.

b. Water Department Trailer Registration

Fire Department was up with DCR last Saturday. He will get the required information for the trailer registration.

d. MOU with the Town of Chester & Chester Water Commission Emails 06.28.23 and 06.29.23

Chris asked the Commission how they would like to go forward with the shared services. Would it be good to reconvene so it can be discussed with both towns. Initially Steve was to spend time in Chester and this is now unclear. It won't be feasible for Chester's operator to come to Blandford due to the unwillingness of the lead operator to work with anyone. He could be brought over and paired with Blandford's OIT for general maintenance and some distribution work.

It is suggested a meeting be set up with The Water Commission Chairmen, the Town Administrators for the two towns and the Blandford Water Superintendent. Chris will reach out to set something up.

5. <u>NEW/OTHER BUSINESS:</u>

a. Class Action Settlement Aqueous Film-Forming Foams Products Liability Litigation

Not Discussed.

b. Abatement Applications from Highway and Fire Departments, Cemetery Commission, Historical Commission, Post Office, Town Hall, and Porter Memorial Library.

Chris Dunn talked about a prior conversation where it was discussed that the Town wouldn't charge the Water Department approximately $30,000 in indirect costs in exchange for not charging for the above water bills. An Abatement application has been filed for each of the bills. There is a question regarding the debt portion of the bill as it is the understanding that cannot be abated. It will be brought to K P Law for a legal ruling. Chris Dunn will contact legal counsel and have an answer prior to the next billing which will be issued December 1st.

Gordon Avery mentioned the sprinkler fees which are billed once a year. They will go out in the first billing occurring in 2024 which will be the March 1st billing (FY 24 Q3).

Gordon also discussed the metering of water for Watson Park which would entail putting in a meter pit which will be costly. Chris Dunn advised they were looking at initiating a grant for the Park and that could be included. Gordon advised the Water Department has an approved contractor form to populate an approved contractor list which could be referred to for work on it.

c. Town Water Bills and Indirect Costs

Discussed in 5.b.

d. SCADA Project

Gordon has not had an opportunity to talk with Mariusz. He has spoken to Jim. Jim sent an email regarding the rates which Kevin reviewed and it looks in order.

Chris advised the Westfield Evening News would like to do an article on Blandford Water Department receiving a substantial loan and is asking if anyone would like to contact them regarding this. It has been decided contact with the Westfield Evening News can be done a bit later and Chris will let them know.

In reference to rate analysis, Mike asked Chris about another company Chris had mentioned to him. The Company is in Northampton and the mane is DH Infrastructure and they would be interested in hearing from the Town. They do infrastructure economics as well as water rate studies. They would be interested in working with the Town initially without compensation up to a certain point. Write Pierce hasn't been overly responsive to the needs of the Town so it may be advantageous to look into using them.

On another matter, Chris advised the Town is going for a grant to get new municipal finance software. It is hoped the Town will be able to get something that will integrate better with the software that EJP has. The grant application will need to go out some time next week. Reviewing the issues that the Water Department is having with the meter reads would be advantageous prior to the grant application. Vadar has a municipal finance package that may be a good fit with the EJP software and regarding any company considered this would be a prerequisite that the new software would be more compatible than what is presently in place.

e. Wright & Pierce Delay on Research Regarding Rate Analysis

Discussed in 5.d.

f. Highway Department – Water present on Russell Stage Road

There has been ongoing problem with water flowing on Russell Stage Road. The Water Superintendent is of the opinion it is groundwater and not a leakage on the water line. The Highway Department advises they tested it and it showed the water contained chlorine which would indicate a leak in the line versus groundwater which would not contain chlorine.

There is concern in digging up the road and tampering with the waterline.

The Water Department will investigate what might be causing this water on the road. Pete will do a needle test with a filtered needle.

g. Water Superintendent Update

Gordon gave a lengthy and technical report on the water line break on Chester Road. Four houses and 6 people were involved. Water was turned on every day for a short period of time for showering and other water related needs.

The use of a water buffalo was discussed and the possible purchase of one in the future. Previous one went up for auction.

There are a few more classes that Steve Grondin will need to attend, one of which is safety/flagger and another on first aid.

Dave Waldron advised there will be some major work done at the rest areas. A meeting will need to be arranged with the state to deal with metering in these areas. As to procedure and semantics, it is advisable to contact the Town of Lee as they have rest areas on the pike as well and see how they handle them. Gordon will reach out to Lee to discuss.

6. MEETING ADJOURNED

Meeting Adjourned at 5:55 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Karen Shaw, Administrative Assistant
Water Department

WATER COMMISSION

Michael Keier, Chairman

Brad Curry, Clerk

Peter Thayer, Member