



**TOWN OF BLANDFORD
WATER DEPARTMENT**

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WATER COMMISSIONERS

Brad Curry, Chairman
Peter Thayer
Michael Keier

Gordon Avery, Superintendent

**COMBINED BLANDFORD AND CHESTER
WATER COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
FEBRUARY 1, 2024
4:30 PM**

MEETING HELD IN BLANDFORD
SELECTBOARD CHAMBERS

1. OPEN SESSION

Meeting Opened at 4:30 p.m. and is being recorded.

In Attendance

Town of Chester

Bob Daley, Water Commission
Tom Beane, Water Commission
Nick Chiusano, Water Commission
Andy Myers, Finance Committee

VIA ZOOM

Michael Szlosek, Town Administrator
Ira Brezinsky, PVPC

Town of Blandford

Michael Keier, Chairman, Water Commission
Brad Curry, Water Commission
Pete Thayer, Water Commission
Gordon Avery, Water Superintendent
Steven Grondin, OIT
Karen Shaw, Administrative Assistant

2. EXAMINATION OF RECORDS OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS:

- a. Review of the minutes of the January 4, 2024 Water Commission meeting**

MOTION: M. Keier made a motion to accept the Minutes of January 4, 2024, as written.
P. Thayer Seconded.
All in Favor.

3. ACTION ITEMS

- a. Revised Application for Abatement of Water Tax Form**

K. Shaw presented a revised abatement application for the Commissioners to review. To arrive at the revised form, she reviewed abatement forms from various municipalities. In review B. Curry noted the name of the abatement form contains the words water tax which can be misleading and confusing. The form will be named "Application for Abatement of Water Charges." In addition, the heading Taxpayer Information about Abatement Procedure will have "Taxpayer" omitted from that heading to read Information about Abatement Procedure. The form will also omit the term "taxes" and change it to charges.

MOTION: B. Curry made a motion to accept the Revised Application for Abatement of Water Tax Form with the noted changes.

Mike Keier Seconded.

All in Favor.

4. UNFINISHED BUSINESS FROM PRIOR MEETINGS:

a. Shared Water Operator Grant Allocation Apportionment /Meeting with Chester Water Commission

G. Avery discussed with the Commissioners the equipment that Blandford has that can be shared with Chester. He discussed in his recent visit to the Chester plant he noticed there will need for Chester to acquire safety equipment that will be required for the safety of Blandford's shared operator in order to perform the work in a safe manor specifically dealing with caustic chemicals. Safety glasses as well as neutral vinegar to neutralize burns. He suggested Chester might want to work with the vendor, American Safety as they are well versed in what is required to maintain a safe environment. G. Avery noted that he did not see any fall prevention equipment connected to the spiral staircase going down into the pit.

In reference to scheduling the sharing of Blandford's OIT, Steve Grondin, for two days a week it is noted it will work well. After discussion the two Commissions came up with Wednesday, February 14th 12:00 – 3:00 for Steve Grondin to work with Jim Gogal, Chester Water Operator. This will be confirmed and going forward a set schedule will be compiled. Ira Brezinsky pointed out the need for additional scheduling due to what is contained in the grant and the late start in the actual sharing of the operators. The scheduling of additional hours in keeping with the grant would be advantageous. The amended budget can be submitted to DLS for approval and the more shared hours the better. It is speculated that unused hours could be encumbered for the next fiscal year.

Bob Daley advised to meeting attendees that Andy Meyers worked up some numbers and suggestions to toss out on what Ira was suggesting. A. Meyers distributed a chart for review and made the suggestion that while Blandford's OIT is in Chester that he should be on the Chester payroll at the rate he is currently receiving and vice versa for Isai, the Chester OIT. All the expenses that Chester has had thus far have been on the equipment side. Nothing has been done on the personnel side. The grant has it worked up as 44% on the personnel side and 50% on equipment and about 6% goes towards administrative fees. Questions were raised and discussed relative to the division of benefits and hours and the goal that they be equitably dealt with accounting wise. Tom Bean noted the projection shows there will not be as much towards personnel costs as

there is towards equipment which is a projection that shows some flexibility. He also discussed his interpretation of the goal of the grant. Ira noted that additional money has been spent on equipment that surpasses what the grant allows therefore leaving overages that will need to be paid by the respective towns. There may be surplus money for PVPC services that could be used for each town in the equipment area. It is important to come up with a revised budget delineating the amount of money to be spent on each category of the grant. Tom Bean noted the grant verbiage states projected budget meaning in his opinion it may not need to be exact and could fluctuate between equipment, personnel services and administrative and keep in conformance with the grant. Ira volunteered it needs to be within the ballpark though. Bob Daley suggested Andy reach out to Mike, Blandford's Town Administrator to go over this.

At 5:10 p.m. the joint meeting with the Chester Commissioners ended. The Blandford Town Administrator and PVPC via zoom left the meeting.

Mike Keier asked if Blandford should continue to go forward and G. Avery advised one of the Chester water employees was well versed in chemical and lab work that Blandford's operator could learn from and it would be advantageous to go forward.

An in-depth discussion ensued between the Water Superintendent and the Commissioners relative to an evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the Blandford Water Plant.

b. Water Department Trailer Registration

At the last meeting Brad Curry was going to look into other avenues in which to pursue in order to get this trailer registered. He advised with the recent weather conditions and demands he has had on his time due to this, he hasn't had an opportunity to follow through with it. It will be tabled until the next meeting.

c. Water Meter Project Update

Karen has advised meter readings are not going forward at this time due to the upcoming change in software which will have an impact on the project. There was a zoom meeting with Vadar on January 25 which Karen and Gordon attended. Files were required from EJP which were sent but not what Vadar representatives needed so that is in the works. There is a possibility this will be converted by June of FY24 or July of FY 25. It is hoped that once the conversion is done, it will be straightforward on getting accurate meter reads accomplished. Gordon advised meter reading is on hold until the software change.

d. Indirect Costs and Water Billing for Town Owned Property

The new Town Administrator is now on board and Mike Keier asked if he has been made aware this is a pending matter for the Water Department. Gordon stated he has had a discussion with the Town Administrator so he is aware this is a hot topic for the Water Department. He does know about it and he is aware he will need to negotiate it. Brad will check with Huntington's Treasurer to see what their indirect costs are and learn how it is negotiated there. Gordon advises that they will be discussing the budget and that the Water Department would like the numbers for indirect costs.

e. FY 25 Budget

The Budget will be discussed by Gordon, Brad and Mike on February 15th at 3:30 prior to a meeting with the Town Administrator.

f. Water Department Rate Study

Gordon discussed this with Wright & Pierce who volunteered they will revisit the cost of this study. Gordon advised he doesn't need a high, in-depth report but just a rate study. The goal is to get this study for under \$10,000. This can be revisited at the next meeting.

5. NEW/OTHER BUSINESS:

a. Water Superintendent Update

Highway has advised he wants to pave Russell Stage Road and there may be grant money for infrastructure for the water pipes. Gordon advised he signed up for various webinars in order to get up to speed, one of which is "One Stop for Growth." He has also reached out to Steve Garrity and Jeremy of EJP for prices to do Russell Stage Road and Maple Lane. While he gave a price, they will need to go out to bid. Pricing for 5,700 feet and 41 service replacements is \$750,000 which is considered good. Asphalt paving is included but not needed. LB Corporation would be doing the excavation. LB Corporation's pricing is fair.

- **Sanitary Survey**

The sanitary survey was done and the Town is conditional and the issues were brought up. Many of the problems are the same as in the past. There were several problems that Gordon does not agree with and he has contacted Hem regarding them. One of the items has to do with ozone which is not running and there is a form that needs to be filed by an engineering company relative to this. Technical issues were discussed with the Commissioners relative to the Sanitary Survey.

Gordon and Steve are working with the LCRR Report detailing the number of residents in each household. Karen is working with the Town Clerk on getting this information together.

As it is stated that the primary treatment and distribution operator, Bernie St.Martin, will be retiring, Gordon will need to come up with a succession plan. The shared operator grant with Chester will be a part of this succession plan.

Relative to metering stats, the report states 60% of residents are metered and 10% of business are metered which is incorrect. All residents and business have meters but not all meters are recording properly.

Another area of the ASR Review is the Emergency Response Plan there is no checklist for review. We are now required to supply a checklist for review of the 2024 ERP. Emergency response training is required yearly as well.

It was reported the flow control valve was not working properly and needs to be repaired or replaced. It actually is and just needs to be adjusted manually.

Report noted clear well vent screen mesh was fitted with larger screen holes than permitted and will need to be replaced with 24 inch mesh. It is now required to do monthly inspections according to the MA DEP inspection requirements on the clear water storage tank and they will need to be reported.

Water usage was 103,426 gallons per day and Gordon said he will advise DEP it was due to several leaks which took a couple months to find and have been repaired. This was the reason usage went over 100,000 gallons per day.

DEP would like to move forward on a WMA permit which Gordon is questioning the need.

Gordon will work on getting those required together for the ERP.

In all the Sanitary Survey scored better than in previous years.

6. MEETING ADJOURNED

**MOTION: B. Curry made a motion to Adjourn.
Mike Keier Seconded.
All in Favor.**

Meeting adjourned at 6:22 p.m.


Respectfully Submitted by Karen Shaw
Administrative Assistant
Blandford Water Department

WATER COMMISSION



Michael Keier, Chairman

Brad Curry, Clerk



Peter Thayer, Member