

Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Water Commissioners
Monday, December 12, 2011
North Brookfield Water Treatment Facility
14 Bell Road
North Brookfield, MA 01535

Present: James Kularski, John Thomasian. Stephen Jones and Shiela LeBlanc
- Recording Secretary
Absent: Tim Nason
Guests: None
Meeting Opened: 6:00 PM

1. **Mr. Kularski made and Mr. Thomasian seconded a motion to approve the minutes as written of November 14, 2011 as written. So voted.**
2. **Horse Pond Dam Update** - Phase 1 of the Horse Pond Dam repair project has been completed. The report on the removal of the low-level outlet plug was shown to the Board. The new gate valve has been tested. At first it was opened ½ way and stayed that way for three minutes before closing. Then it was opened all the way and again allowed to stay open for three minutes before closing. The valve operated well with no problems. Opening the valve will become one of our annual SOPs. This will also be the way the water level is controlled during the spillway construction. Mr. Jones asked the contractor to pull the control wheel off so it could not be turned by anyone breaking into the gatehouse. He has stored the wheel here at the treatment plant and locked up the wheel shaft.

As we talked about at the last meeting, Change Order #4 was for the grout and pointing up of three levels of blocks. The cost came in at \$17,101.00. The joints in the gatehouse foundation were filled with a mortar mix and then pointed up. This has stopped much of the water flow into the gatehouse. The drain has been left open to keep the water level low in the gatehouse but the engineers have recommended that it would be better to close the drain and let the gatehouse fill up slowly to equalize the inside and outside pressure.

On Thursday, December 1st, there was a walk through at the dam with the Conservation Commission. Ann Hicks, Trevor Brusco, and Bob Locatelli were there for the Conservation Commission, Mary Walter and Mr. Jones were there for the town, Project Manager Scott Charpentier and monitoring Engineer Roger Hurlbut were there from Lenard, and Roach Project Manager Darryl Roach was there. The Conservation Commission seemed happy with the way things were going. Lenard has not received any correspondence from them regarding the walk through.

On Friday, December 9th, we had the 5th Pay Req. meeting. Mary Walter, Shiela LeBlanc, and Mr. Jones were there for the town. Mr. Jones brought up a few things that he felt should be completed before shutting down for the season. At

this time, there will be no more of these meetings until Phase 2 starts in the spring.

Scott Charpentier, Lenard Engineering has started talking to Larry Gordon of East Brookfield about the amount of water we will have to release to be able to get to the level that is in the contract. Due to the heavy amount of rain we have had this fall, the Quaboag watershed is overfull. Lake Lashaway will not be drawn down this year unless the amount of water downstream is reduced considerably. This may limit the amount of water that we can discharge. We are waiting to hear from Roach as to when they will start the Phase 2 before we make any decisions on how to proceed.

We have received a few calls lately about the high level of water in the downstream watersheds being a result of us lowering the level of water at the Horse Pond Dam for the construction. This is not true, it is a rumor that has been going around. Since the new gate valve was installed and tested it has been closed. We have been blamed for the Five Mile River being high and also for the flooding last week at Quaboag Pond. According to the National Weather Service web page, we have had 18.64" precipitation above average so far this year, much of it coming this fall. This is the reason for all the watersheds being full. Mr. Jones is sure the 2" - 3" rainstorm we had last week was the cause of any flooding in Brookfield. We have not been discharging any water from Horse Pond to facilitate the construction other than the testing of the gate valve.

Mr. Thomasian noted that Brookfield floods all the time anyways. Mr. Jones stated that he knows that but he has received two calls. One from Charlie Haddock and Mary Walter received one from Rudy Heller regarding Brookfield. Mr. Jones wanted to make the Board aware of this rumor in case anyone contacts them. The problem is we will have to lower it going forward with the project.

Mr. Jones had included in the Commissioners' packets the Final Accounting for Phase 1 of the project. It shows that there was approximately \$39,000 in overruns. Of this amount, \$26,000.00 was due to the over 3' of concrete that had to be removed from around the low level gate valve and \$18,000.00 of overruns was due to the miscalculation in the amount of trees that needed to be removed. The one large under run was due to the deletion of the gabion baskets and mattress after the buttress re-designing, which saved \$5,000.00.

The one expense that isn't mentioned in the overruns is the monitoring. The budget for the monitoring by Lenard has been pretty much used up at this point. We will have to use the contingency money to fund the monitoring for the rest of the project.

We have used \$81,000.00 for change orders that covered the improvements for the access roads, bracing for the gatehouse, overnight monitoring when the gate valve was removed, and for the grout and pointing up of a section of the

gatehouse foundation. Adding the total overruns of \$38,970.00, a total of \$120,791.00 has been used from the contingency account that started at \$249,204.00 this leaves \$128,000.00 in the contingency account, about ½ of what we started with, With the money needed for the monitoring for the next phase of the project and also the Phase 1 Inspection that will need to be done at the end of the project. Mr. Jones will give the Board better numbers regarding the monitoring when he gets them.

Lenard is supposed to be getting us an estimated cost of the remaining monitoring and that is the only thing we have to do at this time.

Mr. Thomasian asked about something in the minutes that was reported to have been leaking. Mr. Jones explained that when the new gate valve went in Darryl Roach noticed leaking in the couplings. He is actually the one that reported it and they pulled the valve out and replace the gaskets.

Mr. Jones also included in the packet the minutes for the construction meeting held on November 18th and the monthly report for the pay requisition meeting that was held last Friday.

3. **Departmental Raises** – Originally Mr. Jones had put this on the agenda so that the Board could write to the Selectmen to find out what was going on regarding the 5% raises that we had read about in the newspaper. There had been no communication from either the Selectmen or Finance Committee regarding what was going to happen regarding raises.

However, after the dam pay req meeting held last Friday, Mary Walter stopped by the office and explained to us that the town is looking to give raises totaling 5%. The way she explained it, if anyone had received raises over the past few years, they would receive a raise that would bring the total up to 5%. An exaple would be if the Highway had gotten two 2% raises their raise would be 1% to bring them to the 5%. For someone who hadn't received any raise, they would receive 5%, retroactive to July 1, 2011. We asked if that meant all three of us and the answer was maybe not. Mrs. LeBlanc will receive the 5% raise as she has not received anything.

Mr. Kularski asked if Mr. Jones would get the raise. Mr. Jones explained that we don't know. Mr. Lalashius received an extra \$2.00 an hour this fiscal year due to his getting his Class 2 licenses but since this was promised at hiring it will not be considered a raise and he will also receive the 5% raise.

Due to the way Mr. Jones' contract was set up, he may not. They are saying that his base pay increased with his contract. When he was changed from an hourly employee to a salaried employee his overtime was rolled into his regular pay to come up with a fair salary. As a result, his base pay went up, even though he did not receive any extra money. This may be interpreted as a raise.

Mrs. LeBlanc noted that there is a clause in his contract that he is eligible for all raises received by other non-bargaining units get. Mr. Kularski stated that Mr. Jones' salary was not considered a raise, that is the normal working hours expected to work when someone is on vacation or there is a break. It was time that is worked anyways over and above. He also stated that he feels Mr. Jones should get the 5%.

Mr. Thomasian stated that if they are going 5% across the Board then that is the way it should be. Mr. Thomasian doesn't know what other formulas they could bring into it but they want to mandate who gets it and who doesn't. Mr. Jones feels that they are interpreting it different ways for different people and not across the Board. Mr. Thomasian stated that we would wait and see what they are proposing and see how we will respond. Mr. Kularski stated that we have to look at the area towns to ensure that we are keeping in line with them and the raises that they are giving.

Mr. Jones feels that we should wait and see what comes out of the meeting of the Board of Selectmen and the Finance Committee and then he will review his contract for the wording regarding raises.

The Selectmen and Finance Committee are supposed to be meeting tonight to work out the details. As we talked about at the last meeting, we will have to submit an article for the special town meeting that will occur in January to be able to fund these raises.

4. **Proposed 2013 Budget** – Mr. Jones noted that this is a very rough draft. Mr. Kularski questioned why the Operator Salary went down. Mrs. LeBlanc explained that when she calculated out the number of days worked, the Operator would be working fewer days during the next year.

Mr. Jones noted that Mrs. LeBlanc's was also down but you can't see it because of the 5% raise Mr. Jones had put in the budget for her. Mrs. LeBlanc explained that she went through and counted the workdays for both her and the operator. Mr. Kularski asked if included overtime and Mr. Jones stated that was covered in the overtime line item.

Mr. Jones also noted that he may be short on the overtime this year but he did increase it for next year.

On Sheet 13, Mr. Kularski questioned if the 50 gallons of diesel was for the tractor only. Mr. Thomasian pointed out that the dollar amount for gas and diesel were incorrect. Mr. Jones noted that the diesel is for the tractor only. We will change this tomorrow. We have it adding instead of multiplying. These numbers will increase.

The budget is due on February 1 and Mr. Jones wanted to give the Board a rough draft of it at this meeting so we can hopefully have a finished budget for their next meeting. Once again the Selectmen have told us to level fund the budget. As explained above, there are changes in salary that have not been included in this rough draft.

Mr. Jones noted that he has budgeted in \$5,500.00 to replace one of our handheld meter-reading units. The ones we now have are obsolete and will not be supported beginning December 2011. The plan for the future would be to purchase the laptop unit that works with this handheld unit next year.

He has also budgeted \$3,200.00 for a new server. The one we now use was purchased in November of 2006 which makes it over 5 years old. This is a very important unit in that it holds all the data for the water dept billing and sewer dept billing. We cannot afford to let this computer get old and break down.

He has also included \$3,300.00 in the Other Salary account to be able to keep a part time worker from November until April for two days a week. As of now, we have a part time worker from April through October. This job includes mowing, painting, cleaning and any other work that is needed. From November until April we do all our own cleaning, we do not hire a cleaning service. With the increasing workload from new regulations, Mr. Jones' work has become much more desk orientated. This leaves Mr. Lalashius to do much of the plant and system operating work and does not leave much time for washing the floors or maintaining the equipment. We need a third operator, but at this point Mr. Jones would settle for a part time worker that would free up our operator from the janitorial work that needs to be done.

Sewer - The contract that the Water Department signed with the Sewer Dept is over at the end of June 2012. Mr. Jones feels that the Board should write the Sewer Commissioners that we should go back to the way it was, neither department charging for services. This would free up \$10,000 to cover the above expenses.

Many things have changed over the 5 years of the contract. In 2005, the filters were flushed 1123 times. Shortly afterward we installed a coagulation injection point at the RWPS to improve the efficiency of the filters. Moving the coagulation injection point and the fact that we are pumping less water now has combined to lower the amounts of flushes to an estimated 742 for 2011, a decrease of 34%.

On the opposite side of this is the fact that it has been found that the WWTP uses considerably more water now than we knew about in 2005. There is a water line that runs from the office building to their filters that is run 24/7 from March until November or December. The water is to help their clarifiers run better. We did not know about this water use in 2005 as the line was installed before the meter.

It was discovered during a cross connection survey and has since been corrected. In 2005 we recorded 18,300 gallons of water use from the office building. Once the line was moved to after the meter, the water use jumped to 2,510,800 gallons, an increase of 14,000%. This increase has made the Sewer Department the largest municipal water user in North Brookfield.

Other considerations for this contract include the data entry and billing program expertise of Water Department Administrative Assistant Shiela LeBlanc. She is not only essential for the Water Department, but is also important for the Sewer Department.

Meter equipment costs continue to rise. The Town of Rutland has recently gone to a 50/50 split in regards to all meter related costs between the sewer and the water departments. This includes meters, reading equipment, software, final readings, and regular meter readings. These expenses and way of doing business should be reflected in any new contract.

Due to these changes over the past five years Mr. Jones feels that the two departments should go back to the original agreement that was formed in 2000 when our treatment plant went into operation. We used to split all the other costs like computer repairs etc.

Mr. Thomasian feels that these points are key points that need to be written into a letter to the Sewer Commissioners. Mr. Jones and Mrs. LeBlanc will draft a letter for approval from the Board of Water Commissioners.

Mr. Jones has not added anything to the System Improvement Account this year after lowering it last year to keep the budget level funded. The amount we budgeted last year and this year is enough to do general repairs, but there is not enough to do any proactive work such as replacing some of the older fire hydrants in town.

One other thing regarding the budget is that Mr. Jones feels the cost of fishing permits should be increased from \$10 to \$15. He feels that \$10.00 for a lifetime permit to fish Horse Pond is too low. We have sold 85 permits so far and he doesn't think an extra \$5.00 will curtail the interest there is in fishing Horse Pond.

Mrs. LeBlanc noted that we currently charge \$5.00 for the fishing permit. She noted that this is separate from the budgeted income. It does not affect our budget.

After some more discussion it was determined to raise the fee.

Mr. Thomasian made and Mr. Kularski seconded a motion to raise the cost of a permit to fish at Horse Pond from \$5.00 to \$10.00 effective July 1, 2012. So voted.

As of right now, the budget is \$2,557.00 over the level funded amount. This will change with the raises. If this stays over budget we may have to cut the part-time worker. If we can make changes in the agreement with the sewer department, this amount will be covered along with any other raises that might be needed and still have money to add to the System Improvement account so we can do some additional fire hydrant replacement.

5. **Superintendent Report - F350** -We brought the F350 to MHQ last Tuesday to get the utility body replaced as planned. It was supposed to be done today but calling today Mr. Jones found that they had just started it and there is no set finish date, they will call him when it is done. The truck is eleven years old with 81,000 miles on it. Hucks inspected it awhile back and said it was still in good shape but the utility body was rotting through in many places, especially the doors. Hopefully, with good maintenance and upkeep we can keep this truck going for many more years.

Class – Both Mr. Jones and Mr. Lalashius attended classes last month. Mr. Lalashius attended a class titled Water Quality Complaints: How to Prepare, How to Resolve Them & Lessons Learned at the NEWWA building in Holliston. He received 3 Training Credit hours for attending the class. Mr. Jones attended the 8 Hour OSHA Class 2 Asbestos Training: Asbestos-Cement Pipe Worker Safety class at the Littleton Water Department. He received 5.5 Training Credit hours and a 5-year certificate that enables him to work on AC pipe. He will need to take a 2-hour refresher course every year to keep the certificate valid. We have signed up Mr. Lalashius for the same course that will be held in West Springfield in January. These courses cost \$225 for member of the Massachusetts Water Works Association, more for non-members.

Railroad Meeting - We have not heard back from the Selectmen regarding the Board's letter to them asking to be put in contact with the owner of the railroad to set an SOP for water line problems under the tracks.

Electricity - We received a contract from Hampshire Power for the electricity for the next year. As we talked about at the last meeting, we have chosen to go with the real time rate based on the ISO New England daily cost. The Chairman of the Selectmen signed the contract and it will go into affect on December 14th.

Storm Clean up - We completed cleaning up the branches and trees that fell during the October snowstorm. The only area that hasn't been cleaned up is the pipeline area that runs from the Horse Pond reservoir to the pump station. There are 5 or 6 trees across the pipeline and he is waiting to hear whether we will get funding to clean this area up like we did after the ice storm a couple of years ago.

Hydrants - Once again we had problems with the fire hydrant on Grant St by Hannaford's driveway. This hydrant has been replaced twice in the past ten years

and it broke again last week. When we dug down we found that the bolts holding the shoe onto the barrel had corroded to the point where they were barely holding. We were able to replace the bolts with stainless steel bolts from Klem's. This saved us from replacing the hydrant. We don't know for sure what caused the corrosion, the hydrant had only been in the ground for six years

Watershed Inspection - During our weekly watershed inspection Mr. Jones noticed trees cut on town property that abuts Rufus Putnam Road and the North Brook Canal. Checking the situation out he found one large oak tree cut on property that most likely belongs to James Mendala of Barnes Road. He also noticed a red pine tree that had been cut that was located on town property. Both trees had been cut so they fell into the North Brook Canal and the tops of the trees are still there.

He called Highway Department Superintendent, Gary Jean to see if he knew anything about the tree cutting. He informed Mr. Jones that he did not.

He called Tree Warden, Tony Holway that morning and left a message. He returned the phone call that evening and said that he did not know anything about it and that this kind of thing does not fall under the Tree Warden responsibility.

On Tuesday, December 6, 2011, he went to the Police Station and reported this to Officer Chris Donais. Officer Donais said that he would look into it and talk to Mr. Mendala. Mr. Jones asked him to let me know what happened. We have not heard back yet.

Mr. Jones has put together a letter to the Conservation Commission, which will be going out tomorrow.

Land Trust - Mrs. LeBlanc and Mr. Jones had a meeting with Anne Hicks of the Conservation Commission and Cynthia Henshaw, the Executive Director of the East Quabbin Land Trust this afternoon. Ms. Henshaw has been in contact with Carolyn Cullen of Rufus Putnam Road regarding some land she may want to sell to the town. The land involved is in the Horse Pond Watershed, along the east leg of Stoddard Brook. This was a preliminary meeting to gauge the interest of the Water Department. He feels it would be a great purchase for the town of North Brookfield to protect its water supply. Ms. Henshaw talked about three (3) separate grants that might help to pay for the purchase. He told her the next step on this end would be to meet with the Water Commissioners and then the Selectmen. She will be getting back to us.

Town House Bell - The Board might have heard, we are storing the town house bell here at the Water Treatment Plant. Julie McCarthy had called to ask if we had space to store it. Mr. Jones went down and measured it and let her know that we did have space. The Highway Department lifted it up from its storage area outside by Langevin's old barn and placed it on Mike Toomey's trailer. Mr.

Toomey transported it up here, the highway loader again picked it up off the trailer, placed it on the loading dock and we picked it up with our pallet jack and moved it over to its present storage area, against the back wall

6. **New Business – Muskrat and or Otter** – When Mr. Kularski was checking out the dam work this weekend he noticed a muskrat or otter that took off when he showed up. He thinks this is something we may want to look into. They borough into the banking. Mr. Jones will contact Malcolm Speicher to see if he traps otters and muskrats.

Meeting adjourned: 6:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Shiela LeBlanc, Recording Secretary