

Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Water Commissioners
Monday, July 12, 2010
North Brookfield Water Treatment Facility
14 Bell Road
North Brookfield, MA 01535

Present: Jim Kularski, John Thomasian, Tim Nason, Steve Jones and Shiela LeBlanc – Recording Secretary

Absent: None

Guests: None

Meeting opened: 6:05 pm

1. **Mr. Nason made and Mr. Kularski seconded a motion to approve the minutes of the June 14, 2010 meeting as written. So voted.**
2. **Horse Pond Dam Update** – Mr. Jones noted that due to vacations Mrs. LeBlanc has been handling the dam project and she will be handling the update for the Board this month.

Mrs. LeBlanc brought the Board up to date regarding the bidding documents for the Horse Pond Dam. She explained that this document had been submitted to Town Counsel for review and he had issues with the document that he would like to see changed. Due to the fact that this is a USDA document we would need to pursue any of his recommended changes at the federal levels. This could jeopardize our funding and postpone the start of the construction.

Mrs. LeBlanc explained that she had emailed the Selectmen for their approval on the bid document as written in order to move this project forward. She received notification from two of the Selectmen that they had no issue with the document unfortunately we are now being held up by the USDA and have been put off until the beginning of August.

Mrs. LeBlanc explained that she is facing the same issue with proposed changes to the engineering contract document. Town Counsel has some changes he would like made to the contract and recommended sending them on to the Federal Level of USDA.

Mrs. LeBlanc explained that one of the changes was to have a change order for the current engineering contract so the town is not doubled up on. The Board of Water Commissioners signed the requested change order deducting Tasks #7&8 off the current contract. They will become the tasks in the USDA Engineering contract.

Mrs. LeBlanc explained that with this signed change order she will be forwarding all this information to the Board of Selectmen for their review. They are the signing authority and therefore it will be their decision if they

choose to sign the engineering contract as written or pursue the recommended changes of Town counsel.

In light of all these changes and additional requests made to them, Lenard Engineering has submitted an email to Mr. Jones requesting additional funds for this portion of the engineering contract. These services exceeded their anticipated scope of services for this portion of the contract. They are asking for an additional 12 hours for both Scott Charpentier and Karen Fung totaling \$2,640.00. They did note in their email that they were willing to delay any requests for additional funds until construction bids are received.

After some discussion the Board asked Mrs. LeBlanc to send a letter to Scott Charpentier informing him that we will take his request under advisement and revisit the issue when the construction bids are received.

Mr. Jones asked if all the problems on the engineering contract have been addressed. Mrs. LeBlanc informed him that we would be sending it to the Selectmen for their approval with this change order the Board just signed. It is a redlined version from Town Counsel. It has been emailed to the Selectmen already so they have it. This is a follow-up to find out if they will agree to the Engineering Contract also.

3. **Energy Audit** - On Tuesday, July 6th, Custom Insulation came to the Water Treatment Plant and added 6” of open blow cellulose insulation to both sections of the attic. This 6” has an R-value of 19, which is on top of the original 6” of the same type of insulation that was installed during construction. They also added 6.25” unfaced fiberglass bats on top of the tiles in the office, corridor, lunchroom, control room, bathrooms, conference room, and lab ceilings. This also has an R-value of 19 and should help keep the office warmer in the winter and save money at the same time.

The cost of the blown in insulation was \$3,795.00 and for the bats it was \$1,150.00. The Energy Grant acquired through the State of Massachusetts Energy Audit program that we participated in will pay this. The audit recommended an infrared heating system for the water treatment plant and a water-to-water heat transfer system for the Pump Station. Neither project proved feasible, as Mr. Jones had informed the Board previously. Mr. Jones was able to talk the state into letting us use the money for the added insulation.

Thanks again to Peter Shipman for including us in this process. He didn't have to do this. Mr. Jones recommended the Board send a letter of thanks to Mr. Shipman.

The Board asked that Mrs. LeBlanc write a letter to Mr. Shipman and to send a copy to the Office of the Superintendent.

4. **Budget** - The continuation of the Annual Town Meeting was held on Friday, June 25th. Mr. Kularski and Mr. Jones were there as water department representatives. The level funded budget with the added \$18,700.00 for the new operators health insurance was passed without any questions.

We had received a warrant before the meeting to show that the Finance Committee and/or Board of Selectmen had changed the Water Department budget after the Board of Water Commissioners had approved it. The raises that the Board of Water Commissioners had approved had been taken out of the budget. The actual money stayed in the budget and was added to expenses.

At the last meeting, it was stated by Finance Committee Co-chair Bob Smith that no one was getting a raise again this year as a justification for them to take the raises out of our budget. Since then we have been notified that all non union school employees did get a 2% raise, the police are getting a 2% raise, and negotiations are still ongoing with the highway department, school janitors, and teachers.

The sewer department has discussed placing an article on the fall town meeting warrant to place the raises back into the budget. Mr. Kularski and Mr. Jones have discussed this and feel it might be the way to go. This decision will have to be made by the September meeting.

Mr. Nason made and Mr. Kularski seconded a motion to add the 3.5% raise for employees back in for the fall special town meeting. So voted.

Mr. Kularski noted that what they don't realize is that we need to keep moving forward. We are losing out to other towns and employees can make more money somewhere else.

Mr. Thomasian doesn't understand how they can alter our budget after we submit it.

Mrs. LeBlanc noted that during a review of the Finance Committees posted meeting minutes of June 21, 2010 she noted that Selectmen, Mary Walter provided the Committee with written information from Mass Department of Revenue regarding the authority of the Finance Committee and Selectmen to review and approve or disapprove the budget request of enterprise funds.

Mrs. LeBlanc recommended requesting a copy of this information. She informed the Board that they can submit this article to reinstate the 3.5% raises but noted that it is the warrant of the Selectmen and they can choose not to include that article on it. The only other way to get it on the warrant would be to get a petition to have the article added to the special town meeting warrant and you would need so many signatures of registered voters to do this.

Mr. Nason asked if it was the same process as the recall. Mrs. LeBlanc said yes but she was not sure how many signatures were needed. She was not sure if it was different.

Mrs. LeBlanc also noted that she located information from the Department of Revenue stating that the executive authority shall submit it's recommendation to the town meeting, town or city council as the case may be which shall act upon the budget in the same manner as all other budgets.

The Board asked that Mrs. LeBlanc submit a letter of request to the Selectmen asking for a copy of this information that was provided to the Finance Committee regarding the enterprise funds.

5. **West Boylston Water District Compensation Survey** - Back in the spring Mr. Jones received a request to participate in a Compensation Survey sponsored by the West Boylston Water District. They had hired Stone Consulting to conduct the survey. Mr. Jones provided the information they requested in the survey and they assured him that we would receive a copy of the results.

Mr. Jones received the final results this past week. They requested information from 35 towns in the area and received results from 19. They found that the number of services, miles of water mains, employees supervised, and size of operating budget were the major factors in the pay scale. Equations were developed to reflect these relationships and then they were applied to each of the responding water department's employees. He has the complete survey in the office if the Board would like to read it.

According to their study the North Brookfield Water Department Superintendent pay scale should be between \$62,400 and \$71,782. Mr. Jones is currently receiving \$58,465 plus Overtime for the FY 2011 year, which would put him in that range.

For the Operator's pay, the results showed an hourly pay of \$21.65. Our Operator pay is \$18.24. Not receiving the proposed raises for the last 2 years has hurt this hourly rate. We are not paying enough to our operator and it may affect our ability to hire a licensed operator.

The Administrative Assistant's recommended pay from the survey is \$18.34. Mrs. LeBlanc is receiving \$12.46. Obviously her pay is way off the mark according to this survey and Mr. Jones would very much agree with it. North Brookfield needs to start paying higher amounts of money to important employees to be able to keep good people.

Mr. Nason made and Mr. Thomasian seconded a motion to send the survey and results to both the Selectmen and the Finance Committee. So voted.

6. **New Operator** – Mr. Jones informed the Board that we have advertised both in the newspaper and the Mass Water Works Web site for a licensed drinking water systems operator to replace Richard Kennan. We received three resumes, only one of which has the correct licenses to be able to step in and run the plant and distribution system once he gets trained. The other two applicants do not have any licenses.

Mr. Jones recommended that the Board set up an interview with the licensed operator as soon as possible. Even if we hire him this week he would still have to give his notice and wouldn't be able to start until the end of July at the earliest. It will then take time to train him. In the meantime Mr. Jones is working everyday and the Board will have few options if something happens to him.

Mr. Kularski asked if any of the other applicants have an operator in training at all. Mr. Jones noted that the licensed applicant is an operator in training license not a full license.

The Board agreed to conduct the interview on Monday due to the fact that we need to post the meeting for 48 hours. Mrs. LeBlanc will contact the applicant to make sure that time works for him.

Mr. Kularski asked what the backup plan is if the best applicant doesn't take the job. Mr. Jones stated that is up to the Board but we did advertise for licenses only. He knows a number of people that didn't apply because of that. He would suggest that we repost the position.

The Board needs to remember that if we hired anyone without a license we will need to hire a contract operator to cover the licenses the candidate doesn't have. Mr. Thomasian feels that we need to hire a licensed operator. Mr. Jones agreed but also noted we have one applicant with the licenses and in the event that doesn't pan out we need to know what will need to be done.

Mr. Kularski noted that the Operator in Training License could be gotten at just about any time. They can study for it and take the test at an H&R Block. Mr. Jones noted that this is two licenses not just one.

Mr. Thomasian feels that the first step is to get this applicant interviewed. We need to see how it would work out. Mr. Kularski feels that this job is a great opportunity. Mr. Thomasian agreed but feels that we need to make sure we get someone that works out especially if we are looking for him to step into the Superintendent position down the road.

Mr. Kularski would just like to be prepared if this should fall through that we are ready to post it again.

7. **Low Pressure Area Update** – Mr. Jones informed the Board that two more houses have had booster pumps installed at our cost by Roger Charpentier per DEP regulations. Mr. Charpentier has one more to go and he sent the quote to Mr. Jones last week for that one it was around \$1,400.00. Mr. Jones approved the quote so Mr. Charpentier should be doing this last one sometime this month.
8. **Superintendent Reports – Operator Vacation Pay** -We have not heard from the Board of Selectmen regarding what we owe Mr. Kennan for vacation days. They did bring it up at one of their meetings and decided to send it on to town council for an opinion. We are waiting for an answer. We will be cutting a check for approximately \$2,189.00 in the next warrant to Mr. Kennan for the 15 sick days that we owe him.

Meter Reading - Meters were read at the beginning of July and the readings are being checked by Administrative Assistant, Shiela LeBlanc for high and low usage. We are proactive regarding high readings to try to catch leaky toilets or faucets that run up the water bills. Mrs. LeBlanc runs a software check that is built into the billing program that flags reading that are a certain percent higher than average and she then checks each one personally looking for discrepancies. She will then put together a package for the homeowner that includes a past history of water usage, dye tabs to check toilets for leaks, and other helpful information such as a sheet to teach homeowners how to read their own water meters. Mr. Jones will visit the residence and work with the homeowner to try and find the reason for the high reading. We have already started visiting the residences with high readings.

Water Usage - With this dry spell we have been in the water usage has gone up considerably. The reservoir is at approximately 90% full. The usage increased by 45% during the first two weeks of July but has dropped since the rain on Saturday. We usually average 275,000 gallons per day and we were up over 400,000 during that dry spell. We are able to handle the usage by pumping at a higher rate. Usually we pump at 700-800 gpm but now we are pumping at 1000 gpm.

9. **New Business – Water Quality** – Mr. Kularski asked if we had any water quality concerns reported. Mr. Jones responded no. Mr. Kularski was thinking that the pond treatment worked out well treating the pond before all this hot weather. Mr. Jones noted that we have been incredibly successful for the third year in a row by treating in May. As of right now we are ok but two years ago we hit a taste and odor issue in August.

Mr. Jones noted that Mrs. LeBlanc does taste and odor samples everyday on the raw and finished water. We are hoping that we can pick it up before it

gets really bad. She is the only one that has the taste buds to pick it up. It has to be really bad for Mr. Jones to pick it up.

Lead & Copper Tests – Were taken a couple weeks ago and we don't have the results back yet.

Meeting adjourned: 6:48PM

Respectfully submitted,

Shiela LeBlanc,
Recording Secretary