

As voted by the Board of Trustees and in accordance with the notice of the meeting, the Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Portland Water District was held at the Jeff P. Nixon Training Center, 225 Douglass Street, Portland, Maine, and via Zoom, on Monday, August 28, 2023. Attending from staff were S. Garrison, J. Wallace, S. Firmin, J. Hudak, M. Demers, M. Clements and C. Cote.

The meeting was convened by President Lunt at 6:02 p.m.

### **ROLL CALL**

The roll was called by the Clerk. All Trustees were present except Trustee Beck.

### **ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES**

Trustee Willett motioned to accept the minutes of the July 24, 2023, Regular Meeting, seconded by Trustee Cote. It was voted all in favor.

Trustee Cote motioned to accept the minutes of the August 14, 2023, Workshop Meeting, seconded by Trustee Siviski. It was voted all in favor.

### **INVITATION FOR PUBLIC COMMENT**

None

### **REPORTS**

#### **Operations Committee**

There was no report for the month of August.

#### **Planning Committee**

There was no report for the month of August.

#### **Administration and Finance Committee**

There was no report for the month of August.

### **General Manager's Report**

- A recent story aired in regional media outlets about PFAS in drinking water recently suggested that PWD could have PFAS in its drinking water. PWD has sampled the treated drinking water for Greater Portland for 25 different PFAS contaminants, an independent lab did not detect any PFAS.
- Since introducing auto-enrollment in paperless billing for new accounts PWD has added 4,500 new paperless accounts, which equates to an annual savings of \$33,750. PWD now has nearly 32,000 customers receiving electronic bills, that's roughly 56% of customers.
- PWD recently issued \$16.345 million of water bonds. The bonds financed \$12.29 million of water main replacements and the Windham Water Tank. The balance, \$4.055 million, was used to refinance a 2013 bond at a lower interest rate saving almost \$290,000.
- Year-to-date SLWTF production is running 8% lower than in 2022.

- The second draft of the 2024 Operating Budget has been developed. Expenses were projected to be up 9% from 2023, but now are projected to be up 8.4%, \$355,000 lower than the first draft numbers presented to the Board in July. The needed water revenues increase is projected by 6% or lower.
- **From Crisis to Collaboration**, an article about disease surveillance at PWD's EEWTF was featured in the magazine Water Environment & Technology (WET)
- Gary Grimaldi announced his retirement from PWD after 45 years of service.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

There was no new business for the month of August.

### **Customer Service Satisfaction Survey**

Michelle Clements, Public Relations Manager, presented the results from the recent Customer Service Satisfaction Survey.

A customer satisfaction and perception survey was sent to customers in May this year and PWD received the results in early August. The purpose is to measure how well PWD is doing to meet the needs of its customers, measure the level of satisfaction among customers, and gain more insight and understanding into customer perceptions, values, and interest in various services.

This year is the first year that PWD has gone fully online with a survey. A random sample of customers was targeted for participation. PWD increased the incentives and offered three prizes for participation.

- A total of 574 customers participated, which gave a margin of error of plus or minus 4 percentage points at a 95% confidence level.
- Roughly 96% of customers surveyed are satisfied with the PWD and its services, and six out of 10 say they are very satisfied.
- Approximately 78% of surveyed customers are satisfied with the price they pay for water.
- Seven out of ten customers agree that PWD provides good value for the money.
- Nine out of ten customers are satisfied with PWD's customer service, including two out of three who are very satisfied with it. The share of customers who are satisfied with the PWD's customer service is higher in 2023 than in 2017.
- Nine out of ten customers are satisfied with wastewater service overall, and 61% are satisfied with the price they pay for wastewater services.

- Almost all customers are satisfied with the overall quality of their water, with seven out of ten saying they are very satisfied. PWD saw a statistically significant increase from 2017 in the number of customers who are now satisfied with water quality.

Customers were asked to rate the three most important and three least important aspects of service to help PWD understand what is important to them. Of the 14 items listed in the survey, water safety is the most likely to be seen as the most important component of PWD's service, followed distantly by water that tastes good, protecting Sebago Lake, and reasonable cost. In-person customer service appears to be the least important service component.

PWD also enjoys a favorable reputation and brand awareness. Across 18 characteristics listed in the survey, customers are – by a wide margin – most likely to say that PWD is “safe” or “reliable,” with strong majorities saying those terms describe the organization.

The majority of customers believe PWD is experienced and knowledgeable, can be trusted to do the right thing, and are well-run.

99% of customers are satisfied with the reliability of water service. This is a new question this year, and 79% of customers indicate they believe our bills are accurate.

PWD continues to measure interest in possible new services. Nine out of ten customers say they would be likely to use targeted notifications of service interruptions if they were made available, making this – by far – the most popular of seven potential services listed in the survey. A sizable number of customers say they would be interested in daily usage data, appointment reminders, and online chats with customer service representatives. New this year, the survey asked customers if they would be interested in selecting a specific bill date and budget billing to spread out payments over the year; 35% are interested in selecting their bill date and 17% are interested in budget billing.

Email is clearly the preferred method of communication for customers for all categories of information listed. Although many would like to receive information about service interruptions by email, many would also like to receive information about service interruptions by text message.

Ms. Clements provided an update on the PWD Style Guide and the refreshed logo. The intent is to transition in a cost-effective way to the refreshed logo and brand, beginning with PWD's digital, online, and electronic presence and a public announcement on November 1. Large stocks of printed materials and more costly assets like signs and vehicle decals will take more time to replace.

Trustee Lunt requested that the Board vote on the refreshed logo. This will be done at the September business meeting.

**OTHER BUSINESS**

None

**SECOND INVITATION FOR PUBLIC COMMENT**

None

**TRUSTEE COMMENTS**

Trustee Levinsky congratulated Michelle Clements on her appointment to the American Water Works Association's Public Affairs Council.

President Lunt thanked Gary Grimaldi for his 45 years of service and for being an exemplary employee.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION**

None

**ADJOURNMENT**

Meeting adjourned at 6:54 p.m.

Submitted by,

Carrie E. Cote  
Assistant Clerk