

As voted by the Board of Trustees and in accordance with the notice of the meeting, the monthly Workshop Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Portland Water District was held in the Nixon Training Center at the general offices of the District, 225 Douglass Street, Portland, Maine on Monday, February 11, 2019. In attendance from staff were Messrs. Crovo, Kane, Firmin, Wallace, Johnson and Meses. Lewis, Katsiaficas Clements and Demers. George Rheault from the public was in attendance. President Lunt convened the Workshop at 6:45 p.m.

All Trustees were present.

**1. DEP's Notice of Violation and Pending Enforcement Action at the East End WWTF.**

Scott Firmin, Director of Wastewater, provided the Board with an update.

Mr. Firmin provided a summary of the proposed preliminary administrative consent agreement issued by the DEP to resolve the overflow violation which occurred in 2018.

Mr. Firmin provided a summary of the number and nature of the violations which had occurred at the plant since the last permit was issued.

DEP has proposed a fine of just over \$15,000. It has its own formula for calculating the amount of what a fine should be. Mr. Firmin believes that the amount assessed is reasonable given the number and nature of violations the consent agreement addresses.

PWD will install gate alarms at the plant to help ensure a similar overflow situation does not happen again. The project needs to be completed within 12 months of the signing of the final consent agreement.

The Attorney General's office is reviewing the agreement. After the review, a final proposed draft will be sent to PWD. There will be a 30 day period for the public to comment on the consent agreement. Once that period is over, a final consent agreement will be issued. The Board will be asked to ratify the agreement.

The fine levied against PWD can be used to perform a supplemental environmental project. The City of Portland has a project in Evergreen Cemetery which may qualify for use of the funds. It involves stabilizing a banking and an access road area. The project might not otherwise be done without the funds from the PWD fine. The project will be assessed after the snow melts. A form must be submitted to DEP providing a proposal for the projects and seeking DEP approval.

Staff proposed the General Manager sign the final agreement, provided that it is substantially similar to the consent agreement already proposed. The Board would then be asked to ratify the agreement.

President Lunt asked about the application of the fine to a supplemental environmental project. He asked how much of the \$15,000 fine was attributable to the overflow. Mr. Firmin said \$2,000.

Trustee Libby asked about the public comment period and how many comments are usually received. Mr. Firmin said DEP usually doesn't receive many comments at all. Friends of Casco

Bay has already received a copy of the notice of violation issued to PWD and they have contacted DEP and voiced support for PWD and how the overflow was handled. Trustee Willey asked about the SOP's and if there have been any changes in the work plan at the East End as a result of the overflow. Mr. Firmin responded that Dustin Price had reached out to the staff and made updates to the SOP's at the plant within 30 days of the overflow. Mr. Firmin also detailed the specific procedures that have been changed and updated at the plant.

Trustee Rich suggested that PWD use the opportunity of the Evergreen Project to publicize its contribution to the project.

General Manager Lewis confirmed that the Board was in support of the proposed use of the fine for the Evergreen Project.

Trustee Willey thanked Scott and his staff for the hard work they do.

Trustee Siviski commented that it sounded like the consent agreement terms were reasonable, likely because the DEP recognized that Mr. Firmin and his staff were doing their best. President Lunt concurred.

Ms. Lewis agreed with their assessment.

## **2. Communications Update.**

Michelle Clements, Public Relations Manager, presented an overview of 2018's "Customer Communications and Outreach" and discussed plans for 2019.

A communications plan is created each year. Ms. Clements explained PWD's customer focus. The plan outlines PWD's target audience, goals, strategies, messages and tactics.

A summary of the community relations efforts was provided, ranging from water bottle filling station grants to the DiPietro Scholarship to a charity golf tournament. PWD facilities are opened to the public for tours several times a year. Clean Water Week is also observed through public events sponsored by the District.

PWD uses publications, including the annual water quality report and various bill stuffers to communicate with its customers. Trustee Willey asked if people using my online bill receive a water quality report in the mail. Ms. Clements responded the PWD does not mail them out any more, but provides it electronically through a link on the website. Certain communication campaigns have been tailored to particular initiatives – for example the cross connection control program changes. Ms. Clements provided detail as to what that particular communication campaign entailed. She went on to detail a campaign designed to recruit employees into the water industry and PWD in specific.

Ms. Clements continued by detailing the media outreach efforts she manages on an ongoing basis.

This year PWD will be updating and refreshing its website front page. PWD had over 800,000 page views on its website in 2018.

Trustee Willey commented on the similarity of bill stuffers and pop up ads. He asked if PWD had a bill stuffer on a topic, why shouldn't it have a pop up on the same topic on its website. He believes PWD has an incomplete outreach if it doesn't have a pop up on the same general topic as would be covered in a bill stuffer. Trustee Levinsky concurred.

Trustee Cote asked about my online bill and whether a bill stuffer was provided to customers using the service. At present, PWD does not utilize the capability to provide a link to a bill stuffer due to its rudimentary nature.

Trustee Rich noted that she used Facebook, and relied on it for information that would otherwise be provided by PWD in a pop up; she preferred using Facebook and PWD's website to a pop up.

President Lunt stated support for a pop up if it appeared when a water bill was reviewed. He believed integration of a pop up system might work and should be explored with the implementation of the new billing system.

PWD has a presence on both Facebook and Twitter. Trustee Libby asked if PWD would be expanding to Instagram or other social media platforms. Ms. Clements indicated PWD has a YouTube channel. Instagram has not been discussed.

Trustee Garrison asked if PWD was using Linked In for recruiting. Ms. Clements said no, not really yet.

Live streaming of Trustee meetings was started in 2018. Viewership is low. Trustee Willey noted what was important was that the opportunity was being given to the public to view and/or participate. Ms. Clements asked if the stream should be moved to PWD's Facebook page. The cost is \$25.00 a month. The Board expressed a consensus opinion that live streaming should be moved to Facebook once viewership of the live stream increases.

Trustee Grant asked if PWD responded to comments left on PWD's Facebook page. Ms. Clements said that yes, she often responded, usually in a private communication. Trustee Grant suggested that PWD publicly comment in reply to acknowledge receipt of the comment. A discussion ensued as to whether comments should elicit a response from PWD and the nature of the response.

Internal Communication efforts were then detailed. These included placement of video monitors in the buildings to keep employees informed.

The customer satisfaction survey was wrapped up in 2018.

### **3. Other Business.**

The General Manager noted that the conference schedule is in the Trustee packets.

A motion to go into executive session pursuant to 1 M.R.S. §Section 405(6)(A), for the General Manager's review was made by President Lunt, seconded by Trustee Libby. Unanimously approved at 8:05p.m.

**4. Adjourn.**

The meeting adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Submitted by,

Donna M. Katsiaficas  
Clerk