

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 remotely on Monday, March 8, 2021. In attendance from staff were Messrs. Crovo, Kane, Wallace, Firmin, Paradis and Ms. Lewis and Katsiaficas. President Douglas convened the Workshop at 6:37 p.m.

All Trustees were present except Trustee Siviski.

### **1. Large Meter Testing Program**

Roger Paradis, Distribution System Manager, provided an overview of the Large Meter Testing Program.

Mr. Paradis had a PowerPoint presentation for the Board.

The large meter testing program is only a few years old. Meters are tested to insure fair billing and be sure meter readings are accurate. Meters wear down and lose accuracy over time. Large meters greater than 2 inch make up more than 15% of PWD revenue. The PUC and PWD's terms and conditions require meter testing.

Meters are tested on low, intermediate and max flows. Specs for testing are created by AWWA. No meter can be placed in service if it registers more than 2% above or below the intermediate or max flows, or 90% below the minimum flow. If there are errors, adjustments to a bill can be made - overpayments are refunded, underpayments may be recovered. To date, no billing adjustments have been required.

Testing of a meter may be done in place, or in testing chambers in the meter shop, or sent to the manufacturer. Testing conducted in the meter shop takes about an hour for the business. Small meters are primarily used for residential and light commercial. The serviceable life of those meters is up to 20 years; they are 5/8 inch up to 2 inches.

Large meters are 3 to 10 inch meters, used for industrial and large commercial uses, as well as fire protection. They require periodic testing and calibration. They have a 10 year battery life guarantee. The price ranges from \$1,800 for a 3 inch to \$20,000 for a 10 inch compound meter.

Trustee Garrison said he would be interested in knowing how many customers have substandard plumbing related to the meter.

Mr. Paradis gave examples of meter infrastructure and said PWD is working with customers to bring the infrastructure up to standards. Some of the infrastructure PWD does not own, and PWD must work with the customer to bring the infrastructure up to par to make it safe.

Meters are read using an ERT, either with a drive by or a handheld read. The ERT has a 20 year battery life, and is installed in pits or basements. Readings can be stored in the ERT. The ERT battery is only active when it is being prompted to receive and transmit data.

The Large meter test team consists of Operations, Customer Service, IT and Finance Staff.

Mr. Paradis reviewed the recent goals and accomplishments of the program, which include documenting and developing SOP's, setting inventory requirements, and setting goals on the number of meters to be changed for the year (50 in 2020).

Utility Specialists are integral to the testing process. In 2020, there were 51 large meters tested. The most PWD has done since the beginning of the program.

There is no small meter comprehensive testing program at PWD at this time. When a large meter is replaced, it is being replaced with a meter of the same size.

PWD is focusing on higher use meters and trying to prioritize them for testing before the meters actually fail. The testing is for meters that slowly start to slow down over time. PWD is working with customers to address meter pit issues in advance. Older pits are being reviewed and PWD is working with customers to inspect them and bring them up to safety standards.

The program will need to be transitioned to Cayenta, PWD's new software billing system.

A discussion ensued as to when small meters are due to be replaced. Staff responded probably sometime beginning in 2026.

## **2. Legislative Update**

Donna Katsiaticas, Corporate Counsel, provided an update on the bills the District has been watching at the Legislature.

Ms. Katsiaticas noted that this has been a busy session, with many bills re-introduced from the last session, as well as new bills. Bills for the last session that did not get voted on by the full legislature due to the pandemic expired at the end of the session, and need to be introduced anew with this session. Hearings are held all over again, and the bill is treated as a new bill, with a new LD number.

Ms. Katsiaticas explained to the Board the manner in which PWD is monitoring legislation during the present legislative session. There are 3 approaches to the monitoring of legislation. For those bills which do not directly affect PWD as a water utility, but only effect generally, PWD is monitoring the legislation. The purpose of the monitoring is to determine the impact on PWD and if a bill is passed, to prepare for its implementation.

The second type of bill is the type that affects all water or wastewater utilities. In those instances, PWD works with the Maine Water Utilities Association or Maine Water Environment Association, and assists those organizations as needed. This includes helping to provide information, drafting testimony, and occasionally testifying on behalf of the Association. To date, in this legislative session, PWD has not actually testified on behalf of the Association. Roger Crouse of the Kennebec Water District has been testifying before the legislature.

The third type of bill is a bill that will substantially affect PWD, such that it is important that PWD testifies or provides comments directly to the appropriate Committee. There have been few bills like that so far this session. There is one that has been printed, LD 555, which deals with the ability of public employees to strike. This bill is similar to a bill proposed last year. PWD will be providing testimony on that bill, nearly identical to its testimony from the previous legislative

session, asking the Committee to classify water and wastewater workers as essential workers not able to strike.

Last week, Senator Bill Diamond of Windham reached out to PWD on LD 311, which was a bill requiring that people certified in anti-corrosion applications be required to work on MDOT jobs as well as water and wastewater jobs. As a result of PWD's response to Senator Diamond, and testimony of the Maine Water Utilities Association, Maine Rural Water Association and Maine Water Environment Association, the bill was changed, and will no longer have an impact on our industry.

Ms. Katsiaficas asked the Board how they would like to see the monthly legislative report organized and how much information they would like to see. The consensus of the Board was that they would prefer an email with the links to all legislative bills that PWD was monitoring instead of receiving copies of each bill attached to the report. Ms. Katsiaficas agreed to continue to provide a summary of the major bills impacting PWD as well as actual testimony filed by PWD, or testimony which was written for the MWUA by PWD. This will be tried for the next month or two. If it does not work for the Trustees, they will reach out to her and she will change the reporting to accommodate what they are looking for.

### **3. Other Business**

President Douglas noted that officers will be elected at the March business meeting.

The Administration and Finance Committee has been asked to approve another \$250,000 for the integration of the asset management system with the billing system. The request is pro-active and may not be needed, but the General Manager is asking for additional funds in case they are needed, so that the project will not be stalled waiting for approvals.

The General Manager advised the Board she had provided 8 hours to every employee as additional vacation time for the employees' contributions to the operations of the District during 2020.

Bill Lunt thanked the staff and everyone for their expressions of condolence on the passing of his wife.

### **4. Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 7:37 p.m.

Submitted by,

Donna M. Katsiaficas  
Clerk