

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, March 9, 2020. In attendance from staff were Messrs. Crovo, Kane, Firmin, Wallace, and Mses. Lewis, Katsiaficas, Demers, Aloisio and Walker. Attending from the public were Michael Shaughnessy and Will Plumley.

All Trustees were present except Trustee Cote.

Vice-President Douglas convened the Public Hearing at 6:34 p.m.

Special Meeting

A Public Hearing was held to receive public input on the proposed average 2.9% increase in water rates effective May 1, 2020.

The District received one email stating an objection to the upcoming rate increase.

There were two members of the public present.

Ms. Lewis' remarks to the public and the Board are noted on the attached PowerPoint presentation.

Vice-President Douglas asked if there were any questions from the public. There were none.

The Public Hearing was closed at 6:49 p.m.

Vice-President Douglas opened the workshop meeting at 6:54 p.m.

1. Reclassifying the Lower Presumpscot River Water Quality. Michael Shaughnessy, President, Friends of the Presumpscot River and Will Plumley, Board Member, Friends of the Presumpscot River presented on the efforts of the Friends of the Presumpscot River to reclassify the Lower Presumpscot River water quality from Class C to Class B.

Mr. Shaughnessy gave an over view of the organization. It was founded 27 years ago. He gave a description of the River and its history. The River historically contained a wide variety of fish. Over the years, water quality declined. The water quality in the River is slowly coming back. Fish populations are beginning to increase again. The organization wants to promote the water quality of the River. It is seeking to upgrade the water classification of the River from Sacarappa Falls to Presumpscot Falls. This area is largely undeveloped.

Mr. Plumley explained the process to be undertaken by the DEP to upgrade the water quality. DEP is beginning the triennial process of reviewing and upgrading water classifications. The upgrade in the water classification of the Presumpscot River has been studied for years – at least since 2011. The organization is reaching out to stakeholders – including PWD – to ask as many stakeholders as possible to write a letter of support to the DEP supporting the reclassification of the noted portion of the River from Class C to Class B.

PWD has a source point discharge into the River at its wastewater treatment plant in Westbrook. Mr. Plumley asked what a reclassification of the River would do to PWD and its ratepayers. He was unsure of the consequences to PWD.

Trustees asked questions and asked about the process of reclassification. The DEP takes different proposals from around the state and reviews for a year. Sometimes public hearings are held and input is taken. After that point, staff submits a report to the Board of Environmental Protection. The Board may submit a package to the legislature for approval; this would be anticipated in September of 2022.

Trustees asked about point source and non-point source impacts on the nutrient loading of the River. Mr. Plumley indicated he did not have such information. He guessed that impacts on the River were from cumulative impacts. Questions also arose about whether DEP would pressure PWD during its next license renewal for the Westbrook plant to change processes to reduce nutrient discharges. Mr. Firmin indicated DEP might require reduction in phosphorous. PWD is looking at phosphorous reduction processes. There is no reference to phosphorous limits in the classification at this time. The DEP would look into what type of investment would be needed by any party – including PWD – to maintain a certain level of water classification.

Mr. Plumley was asked if the Organization expected opposition to its proposal. He has spoken with Sappi, and does not know their response. He believes it is possible one or more stakeholders might object. He asked about CSO's in Westbrook. Mr. Firmin supplied the information he sought. He was also asked if he had contacted the City of Portland. He responded yes, but they have not met with City staff. Trustee Willey noted that PWD looks for guidance from the City of Westbrook on this issue – it is really a Westbrook concern.

Further discussion ensued about the cost of phosphorous removal and future technologies that might assist in accomplishing the removal.

Trustee Lunt noted that water quality suffered at the mouth of the Presumpscot after the dam at Presumpscot Falls was removed. The response was that the silt that moved into the area after the removal of the dam was as a result of artificial levels that had been caused by the dam.

The Board was thanked for standing up for clean water. Mr. Shaughnessy said their efforts are about balanced use of the River.

2. Per - and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS). Scott Firmin, Director of Wastewater Services, provided an update on PFAS in biosolids and near-term challenges to the wastewater industry.

Mr. Firmin addressed the Board about PWD's biosolids management contract. Casella Organics is PWD's contractor. The current contract began January 1, 2006; PWD is currently in the third term. There is an option to have a 4th 5th year term with mutually agreeable terms. Mr. Firmin is asking for guidance as to whether to renew the contract or go out to bid for a new contract.

Mr. Firmin reminded the Board of the history of the contract. PFAS has created uncertainty in the markets and has limited the options for dealing with biosolids. The market is shrinking, uncertainties are increasing.

PWD hired Hazen for assistance in reviewing options for PFAS reduction and near-term options for disposal of biosolids. PWD has the largest amount of biosolids to be handled in the State. Hazen was also asked to look at capital intensive projects in handling the situation.

Potential contractors have been contacted to see if they would be interested in responding to a bid issued by PWD and what term of a contract they would be interested in. In New Hampshire, some biosolids are being shipped to Canada for disposal.

If PWD would issue an RFP, it might take 3-4 months to issue and get responses. It might take a few more months after that to negotiate a contract. Market uncertainties make vendors concerned about a long term contract.

Casella has been contacted to see if they are interested in continuing to serve PWD. They are, but are also concerned about uncertainties. They are not interested in providing a 5 year price. Casella has been helpful to PWD in the past. Casella would be interested in renewing the contract, with annual price negotiations. They are willing to provide services for approximately \$87.00 a wet ton – more than paid by PWD right now which is \$71.61. This price increase would mean about \$300,000 more in annual cost to the City of Portland; other communities would absorb additional costs as well.

Mr. Firmin asked for guidance. Trustee Libby said he had no concerns renegotiating a contract with the current vendor. He did ask what plans PWD has to decrease the wet tonnage produced and hauled. Mr. Firmin explained efforts that are underway to explore projects reducing volume. Trustee Lunt agreed with Trustee Libby. He liked the idea of having something more stable by staying with the present vendor. Trustee Douglas agreed. She voiced support for staying with what you know.

Trustee Garrison asked about regionalization. The Hazen report and the state task force report are speaking to that. Regional digestion might be explored.

Consensus from the Board seemed to be to stay with Casella and explore terms of a contract renewal. Mr. Firmin will do that and report to the Board hopefully in April.

Trustee Burns expressed concern of just moving forward with Casella and wanted more information about other options available; Trustee Garrison agreed.

Mr. Firmin noted that if this project goes out to bid, it should be out by May to allow for enough time to turn it around and get a contract in place in time.

The General Manager voiced support for an annual negotiation as to price. This might avoid a very high price now for a 5 year period which would be likely in order for the vendor to protect itself from uncertainty.

3. Other Business.

None

4. Adjourn.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Submitted by,

Donna M. Katsiaficas
Clerk