

Minutes of the Regular Monthly Meeting of the  
Suffield Water Pollution Control Authority & Treatment Facility

Call in #: 1-646-876-9923  
Meeting ID #: 840 3584 4304  
Password: 649389

February 9, 2021

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Chairman

Janet Davis

Members:

Jeff Davis

Daniel Holmes

Roger Ives

John P. Murphy

Chris Rago

**ALSO PRESENT:**

Jamie Kreller, Superintendent

Julie Nigro, Business Administrator

Andrew Lord, WPCA Attorney

Hugh Murray, WPCA Labor Attorney

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** Chairman Janet Davis called the Regular Monthly Meeting for February 9, 2021 to order at 7:02 p.m. with all present, with the exception of Frank Bauchiero. Also present, Superintendent Jamie Kreller, Business Administrator Julie Nigro, Andrew Lord, WPCA Attorney, Hugh Murray, WPCA Labor Attorney, and Michael Lanza, WPCA Collections Attorney.
2. **CITIZEN INPUT:** Jerry Mahoney was present and specified that although he's the Chairman of the Charter Review Commission, he is not speaking on behalf of the Commission. He requested the WPCA Commission give some consideration and discussion to the following positions:
  - The Town of Suffield has no role in hiring anyone who works at the WPCA
  - The Town of Suffield has no role in evaluating the performance of anyone working at the WPCA
  - The Town of Suffield has no role in negotiating any contract with the union representing the people working at the WPCA.
  - Those are the positions taken by the WPCA Commission in the presentation to the Charter Revision Commission. Mr. Mahoney went on to say that, the WPCA's counsel, Attorney Lord indicated he has no opinion on whether or not people working at the WPCA are Town employees. He urged the WPCA Commission to give that some consideration. If the WPCA commission is going to operate and conduct itself under the assumption that the people working at the WPCA are not town of Suffield employees, but WPCA counsel says he has no opinion on that, this would be an area for the WPCA Commission to engage in some discussions and consider how they want to go forward under those circumstances.
  - Janet Davis explained that the Commission did send a letter, and the letter included an opinion and court cases that addressed that particular topic. She went on to say that the Charter Review Commission should consider those court cases cited in the letter.
  - Jerry Mahoney stated that every member has a copy and the feedback from the CRC indicates that the members are in fact engaged in active analysis and consideration of those documents.

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- Roger Ives added that during the previous Union negotiations, the WPCA allowed Karen Ziemba (HR Director) to make proposals to the Union regarding the healthcare portion of the negotiations, since the WPCA employees are under the same healthcare contract.
- Jerry Mahoney left the zoom meeting at the conclusion of Citizen Input.

**3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

- January 12, 2021 Regular Monthly Meeting Minutes, Review & Approval:
  - Chris Rago motioned to approve the Regular Monthly Meeting Minutes of January 12, 2021
  - Jeff Davis seconded the motion
  - The motion passed unanimously.

**4. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA:**

- Janet Davis requested to add an Executive Session to discuss Union Negotiation strategy, as well as add into New Business, a discussion with Attorney Michael Lanza regarding the fee structure for delinquent accounts.
  - Chris Rago moved to add Executive Session prior to “Chairman’s Report” and add Attorney Michael Lanza to New Business.
  - Dan Holmes seconded the motion.
  - The motion passed unanimously.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION** – Discuss Union Negotiation Strategy

- Jeff Davis moved to enter into Executive Session at 7:18pm, with all in attendance except someone identified only as “iPad 6” on zoom.
- Chris Rago seconded the motion.
- The motion passed unanimously.

-Jeff Davis motioned to go back into regular session at 7:44pm (“iPad 6” was no longer on the zoom meeting at the conclusion of Executive Session & Hugh Murray left the zoom meeting immediately following) with no motions necessary following the Executive Session.

- Roger Ives seconded the motion.
- The motion passed unanimously.

**5. CHAIRMAN’S REPORT:** None

**6. TREASURER’S REPORT:**

- Roger Ives summarized the Administration (O&M) bills included in the packets, for a total of \$117,711.01 for 2020/2021 - which included additional bills totaling \$1,775.90.
- Roger Ives indicated there were no RCM bills, and reported January’s payroll of \$73,196.78 from the Admin account.
- Janet Davis addressed the \$114 billed to the WPCA from the Town for reimbursement for legal fees, as was mentioned at the previous meeting. Julie Nigro read the email response from Metzger Lazarek & Plumb office, as well as Attorney Hugh Murray’s response. Attorney Andrew Lord indicated that each party typically pays their own attorneys when

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attorneys are speaking to each other. The Commission agreed that this charge was not the WPCA's responsibility.

-Chris Rago moved to disperse accounts payable and payroll, as reported in the Treasurer's report.

-Jeff Davis seconded the motion.

-The motion passed unanimously

**7. COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

- Jamie Kreller reported that the Lake Congamond sub-committee met and as a result of their tallied scoring on the Quality Based Selection, is recommending Woodard & Curran of the four qualified firms for the study.
  - Jeff Davis moved to use Woodard & Curran as the Engineers for the Lake Congamond Study.
  - Chris Rago seconded the motion.
  - The motion passed, with all in agreement, and Dan Holmes abstaining.
- The next step will be requesting a quote from Woodard & Curran and a Study of Work.
- Janet Davis thanked the sub-committee of Jeff Davis, Frank Bauchiero, and Jamie Kreller, for all of their hard work on this.
- The sub-committee agreed to meet again, once the quote is received, before presenting to the Commission at the next monthly meeting.

**8. STAFF REPORTS:**

**a. Superintendent's Report-** Jamie reported on the following:

- Jamie Kreller reported that our nitrogen for January was 25 lbs. We had one week where it was 35 lbs due to wipes on one of the probes, and it slowed down the de-nitrification process on a Wednesday, which happens to be the day samples are sent to our lab. This has now been added to the "Rounds sheet" for the operators to check every day.
- The new timeclock will cost essentially the same as we are paying now, plus one additional charge of an iPad to be placed on a wall for punching in.
- After Hour Call In's - Jamie Kreller stated that Pump Station 9 (Conservation Drive) had a generator in alarm. The generator is currently out of service and is 31 years old. We're renting one from our generator vendor at \$700 per month. This is actually reasonable, as he's seen charges at other plants of \$1,000 per week to rent. The manifold is broken and they don't make it anymore. The computer board is also bad and will take 5 months to get. Jamie stated he's received one quote so far and waiting for two more. This was budgeted for next year, but Mr. Kreller stated he's going to move the purchase up for similarly aged generators and replacing 2 more next year. His plan is to replace generators after 25 years so this doesn't happen again.
- Complaints – Jamie Kreller apologized for the complaints in the Kent Farms area for surveying and indicated we won't have anyone on personal property in the future without letters first going out.
- Maintenance – Another two miles of sewer cleaning was completed.
- Pump station 11 (Mapleton Avenue) – replaced the control board and starter for \$2400. This is another generator to be replaced to avoid costly repairs.

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- Stairs to the belt filter presses – the operators repaired the rotting stairs by welding and painting the two sets of stairs, saving the WPCA money by doing this in-house.
  - Pump Station 8 (Kent Farms) – the operators painted the floor, installed sheetrock, and insulated the building.
  - The pipes and valves to the belt filter press #1 and #2 were cleaned and painted by the operators, using epoxy rust sealing primer and epoxy industrial paint recommended by Alex, due to the room's environment.
  - The basement walls in the pump and chemical building were cleaned and painted using the epoxy paint, and all of the areas on the walls that were leaking were fixed.
- b. Business Administrator's Report-** Julie reported on the December financials.
- The December variance report shows accrued expenses – which include the front-loaded expenses; December's report shows we are 56% unexpended versus an expected 50% - indicating we're well within our budget.
  - Our 2020 collection rate is slightly under 93%, and we collected about \$340 on our Major Delinquent list. The sale of one of the properties with a large amount due is still on, but now slated for later this month.
  - Julie went over the accounts that are 4, 5, and 6 years old, and indicated that the majority of those accounts are accounts we've asked to be turned over to new counsel. She believes the issue is largely a communication issue, as she's anticipating statements on a monthly bases, as was discussed a year and a half ago when she and Kira met with the attorney and his paralegal at the time. The major part that has been missing is knowing whether the accounts are paying as anticipated, how much they're paying, and what's remaining on the legal fees portion.
  - Janet Davis stated she's been on the commission since 2015 and heard this issue before, and asked how many accounts are we transferring to new counsel? Julie Nigro responded that five are being transferred, and this will leave eight with current counsel.
  - The commission agreed to leave up to Julie Nigro and Jamie Kreller as to how they want to proceed with collections.

**9. OLD BUSINESS:**

- a. Kent Farm Study** – Jamie Kreller stated the final report should be received by the end of February, as they completed surveying last week.
- b. Thompsonville/Cassotta SSE** – Jamie Kreller stated the letters for the dye testing were sent out this week and the dye testing is scheduled to be done in two weeks.
- c. Stony Brook Study** – Jamie Kreller reported the geo-technical sub-consultant completed his program and will submit it to Woodard & Curran shortly. Woodard & Curran completed the analysis of required pipe supports and contacted the Army Corps of Engineers to start working with them for permitting requirements.
- d. Lake Congamond Study** – discussed under "Committee Reports".
- e. 1760 Mapleton Avenue** – Jamie Kreller discussed a bottleneck at Burbank and Thompsonville and therefore do not have capacity available at this time for this project. Jamie will be responding to the developer with a proposal.

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**10. NEW BUSINESS:**

**a. Building Inspection-Sump Pump Letter -**

- Jamie Kreller explained that this letter will be sent to five homeowners in the Cassotta/Thompsonville Road area where we found sump pumps as a result of the inspections. Jeff Davis suggested the addition of the statement that the illegal connection of sump pumps to the public sewer present the risk of back-ups into resident's homes. Janet Davis suggested to include language that the fees will begin 90 days after the date of the letter.

**b. General Permit (MIU) Fee Discussion –**

- Jamie Kreller discussed the permit and that the State used to charge \$500 per permit and \$1000 per permit with a variance. The State will continue to handle the variance permits. Jamie suggested we charge \$500 per permit (good for 5 years) and \$100 per year, as we will be responsible for inspections. He went on to say that he anticipates very few permits. Jamie Kreller agreed to have the General Permit fee schedule available at the March meeting so that a Public meeting to approve it will be set and posted for a date shortly thereafter.

**c. Attorney Michael Lanza -**

- Attorney Lanza presented the process of the delinquent collections referred to his firm. He stated he's been collecting for the WPCA since mid – 2016 and closed out 75 files and currently has 13 open files. He went on to indicate that sometimes must begin foreclosure if all else fails and he believes he would first be instructed by the WPCA before doing so, and that there's currently a moratorium on foreclosures. He stated that he listened to the January meeting where the WPCA discussed accounts 4 years and older, and doesn't believe he has any that are that old. Attorney Lanza went on to say that often what gets the most attention is upon doing a title search, you send the mortgage holder a certified copy of intent to foreclose, and they then pay the arrears. Attorney Lanza stated that some places have a policy where the accounts automatically go into foreclosure after a period of time or a certain amount is due and didn't think the WPCA has a policy regarding this. He went on to say the WPCA's collection rate of 93% is pretty good, considering the times. Attorney Lanza requested direction as to what files he would keep, and that there's not a lot he can do with some of the files during the moratorium. Lastly, Attorney Lanza stated he sends reports to Julie Nigro as she requests them.
- Janet thanked Attorney Lanza and stated she would forward his status email to Julie. She went on to say the WPCA will be in touch with him and let him know what we would like to do regarding the foreclosures and utilizing his services. At this time, Attorney Lanza left the zoom meeting.
- Jamie Kreller stated that we have a Foreclosure policy that was revised September 12, 2017 and states that accounts are referred to legal for initiating foreclosure proceedings after they become 15 months delinquent.
- Julie Nigro stated she still prefers to give guidance as to when to initiate foreclosure vs automatically initiated by the law firm, as sometimes extenuating circumstances are involved. She stated there are issues that go beyond directing or not directing foreclosures.
- Dan Holmes asked about the discrepancy between what Attorney Lanza said regarding not having any accounts 4 years old and what our list shows. Julie stated, we do have accounts

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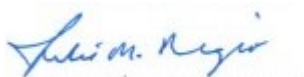
beyond 4 years delinquent, and went on to say that she thought she would have monthly reports listing who's paid and how much, so it can be reported back to the Commission. This was requested in a meeting a few years ago when there were some communication issues.

- Janet Davis stated we would discuss this further in the Business Administrator's report.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

- Frank Bauchiero motioned to adjourn the Regular Meeting of January 12, 2021 at 7:54 pm.
- John Murphy seconded the motion.
- The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,



Julie Nigro, Business Administrator