

Belfast Water District Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes of December 5, 2022

The Belfast Water District Board of Trustees met on Monday, December 5, 2022, at 1:00 p.m. at its new office location at 41 Wight Street.

Bruce Osgood, the Chairman, called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

A roll call of attendees was as follows: Chairman Bruce Osgood, Vice-Chairman Kenneth Colby Horne, Treasurer Stephen Hall, Secretary Jill Goodwin, Trustee Chad Otis, Superintendent Keith Pooler, Superintendent in-training Frank Short, and Administrative Assistant Tammy Morse.

VOTED: On a motion made by Chad Otis, seconded by Stephen Hall, and unanimously approved 5-0, to accept the minutes of the regularly scheduled board meeting of November 7, 2022.

The Board discussed the next meeting date and agreed on Monday, January 9, 2023, at 1:00 p.m. at the Belfast Water District office at 41 Wight Street, Belfast, Maine.

Keith Pooler, the Superintendent, presented his report to the Trustees.

The Belfast Water District was moved entirely out of 285 Northport Avenue on November 30th and into 41 Wight Street. Keith thanked the Board for approving the purchase of such a nice, roomy office building centrally located for our customers and in-town businesses. Unfortunately, the cell phone reception is worse at 41 Wight Street; therefore, cell booster equipment (weBoost) from Wilson Amplifiers was purchased and scheduled for installation on Monday.

The office staff is doing a great job of organizing our new office. The lobby area to the left of the entrance is the Belfast Water District's history for everyone to view. The office renovations are almost 100% complete, with expenses slightly over budget at \$228,000. On the other hand, the construction of the new garage is 80% complete, and the expenditures to date are under budget at \$375,000. Charlie Plourde, the project's overseer, initially estimated \$660,000 and now estimates the final cost under \$550,000.

Keith mentioned to the Board that we should consider retaining the 20-foot container for permanent overflow of materials. Keith will investigate our options on whether to rent or buy.

Keith directed the Board to view the tv screen image of a tree limb that came down onto the office's roof during the bad windstorm and damaged the roof's peak. JR Lapham and Don Hahn repaired the minor damage with materials left over from the garage construction. Also, during the storm, the cellar window next to the driveway failed, causing 5-10 gallons of water per minute to pour into the basement. Keith set up a 2-inch sump pump to remove the water from the cellar. The crew sealed the window and adequately rerouted the drain, preventing this issue from happening again.

December's meeting is the usual time for discussing wages. Keith stated he spoke with other water utility superintendents in the State of Maine comparable to our system size regarding their wage increase proposal. Most propose between 8%-8.7% based on the 2023 Consumer Price Index and the cost of living. Keith asked the Board to consider approving 8-8.7% for our employees. Last year, the cost of living was 5.9%, and the Board approved a 5% increase. The Board expressed that our employees deserve great benefits and that 8% is fair and ensures staying competitive in Maine. On behalf of the BWD employees, Keith and Frank expressed to the Board how much the District's employees appreciate the value of their benefits and wages provided to them and for all that our Board of Trustees does for them.

VOTED: On a motion made by Jill Goodwin, seconded by Chad Otis and unanimously approved 5-0, to increase employee wages by 8% for 2023.

Keith informed the Board that CD interest rates have increased. First National Bank approached the District through our Trustee Jill Goodwin, offering up to 3.10% for a 23-month CD and 2.70% for a 13-month CD. The Board concurred to investigate rates further, comparing all the local banks to see what they are offering and to contact Camden National Bank, as they have been very good to the District over the years; then consult with the District's accountant, Nick Henry of Horton, McFarland & Veysey.

This past month, the crew:

- Assisted with the garage construction at 41 Wight Street.
- Checked and flagged hydrants in preparation for cold weather.
- Turned off and removed meters for seasonal customers.
- Completely moved the contents of the office to 41 Wight Street.
- The office staff implemented Record Retention and hired Shred On-Site to shred old records at 285 Northport Avenue.
- Installed three 1-inch services at 44 Patterson Hill Road.
- Assisted 126 Church Street with their sprinkler system testing issue, to no avail, so they are hiring EJ Prescott.
- Installed a new water meter at 285 Northport Avenue, Nordic Aquafarms' office.

Frank Short has enrolled in the Maine Water Utilities Leadership Classes that feature a specific topic for each session through May 2023.

Due to ongoing issues with the 15-year-old SCADA system, it was agreed to research updating the program. In the meantime, the District's engineer, Tim Sawtelle of Dirigo Engineering, is repairing the system to get us through.

Water Falls Arts on High Street had a water complaint about an odd taste at their building. After further investigation, their sprinkler system backflow failed, and due to their sprinkler line and water line placement, non-toxic antifreeze was causing the off-taste within their building. Water Fall Arts said they would repair the backflow and install the dual check valve as recommended. Keith said he would follow up and, if it's not fixed, issue a letter of demand following our Cross-Connection Program rules to resolve this issue.

Crew will:

- Continue assisting contractors and setting up the 41 Wight Garage
- Perform routine winter maintenance.
- Continue to check hydrants and make sure they are flagged.
- Turn off seasonal services.
- Assist 126 Church Street.
- Assist Tim Sawtelle, Dirigo Engineering, with the repairs of the SCADA system.
- Follow through with the Waterfall Arts sprinkler system backflow device failure.

We are still awaiting the MDOT final invoice for the Belfast Water District's portion of the Route One Goose River Project.

Chairman Bruce Osgood recommended the Trustees and Superintendent(s) gather for a picture to mark the occasion of moving into our new facility here at 41 Wight Street and publish it in the local paper to announce our move to our customers and the general public. The Belfast Water District employees should also gather for a picture by the BWD sign.

Keith expressed his appreciation to the Board for allowing him the opportunity to have worked with a great group of Trustees for the past 17 years. Belfast Water District has an outstanding Board of Trustees! They are the most reasonable group to work with, and the Board of Trustees are the ones that make the decisions. This Board has been through unique issues. Each trustee brings something different to the table. The Belfast Water District is fortunate to have a Board of Trustees that has regard for its customers and employees.

VOTED: On a motion made by Stephen Hall, seconded by Colby Horne, and unanimously approved 5-0, to adjourn the meeting at 1:40 p.m.



Jill B. Goodwin, Secretary/Clerk