

Belfast Water District Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes of February 5, 2024

The Belfast Water District Board of Trustees met on Monday, February 5, 2024, at the 41 Wight Street office.

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

Roll Call: The attendees present for the roll call were as follows: Chairman Bruce Osgood, Vice-Chairman Kenneth Colby Horne, Treasurer Stephen Hall, Secretary Jill Goodwin, Trustee Chad Otis, Superintendent Frank Short, and Administrator Tammy Morse.

VOTED: On a motion by Stephen Hall, seconded by Chad Otis and unanimously approved 4-0, to accept the minutes of the regularly scheduled board meeting of January 8, 2024. Chairman Bruce Osgood abstained due to his absence at last month's meeting.

Next Meeting Date: The Board discussed and agreed on the next meeting date of Monday, March 4, 2024, at 1:00 p.m. at the Belfast Water District office, located at 41 Wight Street in Belfast, Maine.

Frank presented his Superintendent's report to the Board of Trustees:

General Resolution Loan Application: As recommended by our accountant Nick Henry from HVM, LLC (formerly Horton, McFarland & Veysey, LLC), the District has prepared the General Resolution Loan Application through the Maine Municipal Bond Bank for necessary capital improvements. The projected estimated cost of \$1,565,254 provided by our engineer, Tim Sawtelle of Dirigo Engineering, includes the Jackson Pit Transmission Main, water main replacements under Route 1 at Waldo Avenue, and under Route 1 at High Street. The City of Belfast has sewer projects on Waldo Avenue and High Street that have gone out to bid; therefore, if funds allow, we will replace our water mains in conjunction with the City's sewer main projects. The application deadline is February 7th. If the Trustees agree to apply for the General Resolution Loan with the Maine Municipal Bond Bank, the adoption of a vote should be on the record.

VOTED: On a motion by Stephen Hall, seconded by Jill Goodwin and unanimously approved 5-0, to apply to the Maine Municipal Bond Bank for a \$1,565,254 General Resolution Loan for capital improvements.

SCADA System: Tim Sawtelle and Jim Sorenson of Dirigo Engineering plan to return to complete the work on the SCADA system at each site location (Smart Road, Jackson Pit, and Lincolnville Avenue), including removing the unused components, labeling the remaining wires, and creating the as-builts.

Office Generator: Our crew installed the propane line for the new generator at 41 Wight Street. Dead River Company inspected the installation and completed the hookup. It is now ready for our electrician to perform the initial startup.

Crocker Road Tank Site Project: Our crew removed part of the fence so a local woodcutter could access the site to do the clearing. The City of Belfast Code Enforcement Officer, Steve Wilson, suggested conducting a site inspection to document wetlands; the District hired Rick Pershken from Dirigo Engineering. This report was then forwarded to Mr. Wilson, enabling a building permit to be obtained before the fill could be transported to the site. Meanwhile, Frank has been evaluating various building types for cold storage of our equipment and parts.

Veterans' Memorial Bridge: Frank mentioned that he and Tammy researched the archives to determine the type of pipe and fittings used for the water main suspended under the bridge before the beginning of the MDOT project. They discovered that the pipe and fittings were 12-inch cement-lined cast iron. This information will be shared with the State's Engineer. Additionally, they found out that the pipe and fittings used on Waldo Ave under Route 1 and on High Street were 8-inch cement-lined cast iron.

Crew Job Opening: Frank informed the Board that although Hayden Bradford expressed his gratitude for the promotion to Foreman, he desires more time to make a sound decision before making a permanent commitment. He has, however, temporarily assumed the Foreman's position since Dustin's last day, Friday, January 19th.

The District has advertised for a Water Operator through various channels such as the Maine Water Utilities Association, Maine Rural Water Association, Maine Municipal Association, the Republican Journal, Village Soup, and all water utilities in the State of Maine. The job description and employment application are available on the District's website homepage. Three applications have been received, and the plan is to conduct interviews soon.

Priscilla Lane Subdivision: In 2018, the Sanderson's on Priscilla Lane had inquired about water service when establishing a seven-lot subdivision off Priscilla Lane, which connects to Congress and School Streets. Their engineer, Thomas Fowler, has emailed the District to confirm that the water availability for these proposed lots remains the same.

Tower Site Lease: Cunningham Security monitors and alerts us of intrusions at our well sites. The District allowed them to place an antenna on our Lincolnville Avenue tank in exchange for their services. The District pays an annual fee of \$492 to monitor our office separately. However, the lease agreement for their antenna has expired. Frank stated that he is renegotiating a new contract with them because our normal lease agreement income from other tenants is around \$345-\$380 monthly.

Proposed Congress Street Project: Thomas Kittridge, the Economic Development Director for the City of Belfast, has applied for a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) for a proposed project on Congress Street and inquired whether the Belfast Water District would like to be included in the project. The deadline for the application was the end of the week. Frank, in response, provided a quick estimate to replace 2,400 feet of water main from Wight Street to Grove Street using 8-inch high-density polyethylene water pressure pipe (HDPEDIPS), three hydrants, three gate valves, and domestic and temporary services; the total cost would be around \$599,000.

Water Leaks: Our pumping volumes were still up, so Frank contacted Andy Gilson of Maine Rural Water Association again to assist with leak detection. A leak on Robbins Road was found and repaired on January 11; the water went into a brook and then out to the bay, losing an estimated 100 gpm. Another water main break was found on Waldo Avenue late Monday afternoon (Martin Luther King Day) and was fixed the next morning. Finally, our pumping is back to normal for this time of year.

New Ditch Pump: Our 20-year-old ditch pump became inoperable. Having three ditch pumps in operation at all times is imperative, so we purchased a new ditch pump from USA Bluebook for \$2,078 and ordered replacement parts for the other pump.

Waterfront Storm: The Belfast Water District survived the two big back-to-back storms that caused so much damage to the waterfront without any problems.

Fire at the Admiral's Ocean Inn: Last month, there was a fire outbreak at the Admiral's Ocean Inn located on Searsport Avenue. Despite the fire, the water used during the firefighting process was minimal. However, in case of any shortage, the interconnect with Searsport Water District was activated to increase flows and aid firefighting. The Belfast Fire Department responded promptly and extinguished the fire, saving most of the building.

This past month, the crew:

- Set the meter and activated the domestic service at GEO Logic at 52 Little River Drive.
- Set the meter and activated the domestic service at the Convenient MD at 20 Belmont Avenue.
- Removed a portion of the fence behind the Crocker Road Tank to make room for fill.
- Repaired water mains on Robbins Road and Waldo Avenue.
- Performed the year-end inventory.
- Installed the fuel line for the generator at 41 Wight Street.
- Performed equipment maintenance.
- Checked for frozen hydrants and kept them clear of snow.

Upcoming this month, the crew will:

- Check for frozen hydrants and keep them clear of snow.
- Perform the annual maintenance at the wells.
- Perform equipment maintenance.

Capital Improvements: Annual funds are calculated and set aside for capital improvements based on the depreciation method set by the Maine Public Utilities Commission. This year, the amount is \$290,000. As discussed with our accountant, Frank reviewed the upcoming projects and equipment purchases as follows:

- Crocker Road Tank Site Project-storage for equipment, stockpile, parts.
- Completion of the SCADA system.
- Upgrade 200 feet of 12-inch water main from Starrett Drive to McDonald's.
- Improvements to all fire hydrants.
- Replace the 6-year-old Superintendent's truck.
- Replacement meters.
- Office equipment.
- Miscellaneous tools.

Budget: As stated at last month's meeting, Nick Henry (HNV, LLC) created a budget with Tammy and Frank for the Board of Trustees to approve. This budget was prepared based on the Maine Public Utilities Commission's (MPUC) approval of our 30% rate increase. The District bills monthly and quarterly; therefore, Nick recommended the budget be presented quarterly to the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees briefly discussed the presented budget.

VOTED: On a motion by Stephen Hall, seconded by Kenneth Colby Horne and unanimously approved 5-0, to adopt the 2024 budget and to present the financial reports on a quarterly basis to the Board of Trustees.

Employee Compensation: With the entire Board of Trustees present, Frank gave the Board of Trustees his proposal to raise employee wages by the 2024 annual cost of living allowance of 3.2%, along with the possibility of merit raises. Frank explained the District's position of retaining our loyal, committed employees while keeping a new hire in mind.

VOTED: On a motion by Jill Goodwin, seconded by Chad Otis and unanimously approved 5-0, to approve the employee compensation as presented by the Superintendent, retroactive to 1/1/2024.

On-Call Duty Response Time: In our search to hire a new water operator, the Employee Handbook, On-Call Duty Distribution System Personnel must reside within a 20-minute response time because they are expected to provide On-Call Duty one week per month after regular business hours for emergency call outs. After briefly discussing the limitations of a 20-minute response time, the Trustees concurred to change the requirement to reside within a 20-mile radius of Belfast.

VOTED: On a motion by Stephen Hall, seconded by Chad Otis and unanimously approved 5-0, to amend the requirement for On-Call Duty Distribution System Personnel to reside within a 20-mile radius of Belfast.

Moment of Remembrance: The Chairman requested a moment of remembrance to honor the memories of two individuals who recently passed away. Henry L. Chalmers, who served on the Board of Trustees from 2004 to 2022 and Milford E. Rhodes, who was hired in 1955 and served the Belfast Water District as Superintendent from 1979 until his retirement in 1985.

VOTED: On a motion by Jill Goodwin, seconded by Kenneth Colby Horne and unanimously approved 5-0, to adjourn the regularly scheduled board meeting at 2:44 p.m.



Jill B. Goodwin, Secretary/Clerk