

**JOHNSTOWN WATER BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
NOVEMBER 12, 2019 6:00 PM**

CALL MEETING TO ORDER / PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Board Vice President Swierzowski called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M., followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

BOARD MEMBERS

John Swierzowski, Vice President
George DiMarco, Board Member
Brandon Lyon, Board Member
Marj Kline, Board Member
Michael Capparello, Board Member

ATTENDEES

John Denmark, Senior Water Plant Operator
Barbara Koehler, Clerk of the Board
Bradley Hayner, City Council Liaison

Absent - Michael Poulin, City of Johnstown Attorney

PUBLIC SESSION

Jake Tennis, PE, CT Male
Jake Gordon, PE, CT Male

Jake Tennis presented the proposed engineering design plan for the Cold Brook Reservoir regarding Subsurface Investigations at a cost of \$9,987.00. He advised that the project is needed to comply with DEC requirements. See exhibit "A" for CT Male proposal.

See *Emergency Motion* below

OLD BUSINESS

• **Capital Projects Review - Dam Phase II (Spillway)**

Board Vice President Swierzowski stated we need to know if we have been bonded for Phase II of the project from Treasurer Gifford. He noted that a memo was given to the Treasurer's Office dated 09/30/19 with the \$3,375, 000.00 request to be bonded for the project. Board Vice President Swierzowski stated a letter will be written to Treasurer Gifford requesting a response as to our bonding status for 2020.

• **Sand Filter Replacement – Filters 3 and 4**

Jake Gordon, noted Jablonski Excavation, Inc. finished the project at the Cork Center Reservoir. He requested Jablonski Excavation, Inc. be paid as soon as possible.

Board Member DiMarco asked Jake Gordon to supply the Water Department with post-construction photos as well as observation and testing reports.

Jake Gordon stated they will forward the documents shortly.

Sand Filter Replacement – Filters 1 and 2 (next project)

Board Vice President Swierzowski asked John Denmark to explain the next phase of the sand filter replacement project at the Cork Center Reservoir.

Senior Water Plant Operator Denmark stated the support media was damaged. He advised that CT Male originally was thinking about a total rehabilitation. Denmark suggested to CT Male that the Water Department remove sand down to where the support media is and then he can flush and clean it using the sand washer that we ordered and will have in a few months. He noted that after the sand is cleaned it can be put back in the filters. He added that would save us from having to gut the filters completely, thus saving a lot of money by doing the sand washing ourselves. Denmark stated that we could try it on one of the sand filters first to see what the product outcome would be.

Board Member DiMarco asked what the media specifications are.

Denmark stated the media is tiny, similar to pea gravel. He advised that there are five different gradients of stones, with the tiny layers of pea stone gravel layers keeping sand from getting into the rest of the media. Denmark noted the issue in the past was with the piping and what happened with those filters was Jablonski Excavation dug down too far. He further explained that when sand gets through into the bigger stone that is what gives high turbidity readings. Denmark suggested we put in a new support layer, flush that layer with two million gallons of water and then put the sand media on top.

Board Vice President Swierzowski asked where the two million gallons of water used for flushing the filters would go.

Denmark stated it is called “filter to waste” and the two million gallons of water used to flush goes right back into the creek again. Denmark advised that CT Male wanted to put cameras down the pipes to see if there was sand in them; however, there is no access and we would have to remove five layers of stone. He noted that we could save the sand but would need to replace the stone.

Denmark stated with the current project he made sure Jablonski Excavation left a 6 inch buffer away from the support media as a preventative measure. He noted last time Jablonski performed media filter replacement they went right down to the support layer which created a pathway for the sand to get into the large stone. Denmark suggested some exploratory work would be needed before the project is started. He advised that when the plants went online back in 1993 they did not flush the stone properly and were putting out a read of five MTU’s after a month. Denmark noted that anything over one MTU is too much. Denmark relayed that Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulations require an exact formula be utilized and further explained that if not exact there could be a boil water notice for the entire community.

RECESS CALLED

Board Vice President Swierzowski requested a brief recess from 6:19 PM to 6:30 PM.

NEW BUSINESS

- Discussion regarding new Neptune water meters from TI SALES.

Board Vice President Swierzowski noted we are still having issues with meters not reading properly. He advised after waiting four months for a shipment we received a pallet of 420 meters from Master Meter and there are currently approximately 300 meters with issues that need to be addressed. He stated he did not know if the issue are with the meters themselves or with the lack of training on behalf of the distribution crew. He asked John Denmark to train the crew as if they knew nothing about meters, including how to read meters, installation, and how to complete a work order.

Board Vice President Swierzowski asked Board Member DiMarco if there were issues with meter reads prior to the Master Meter product being installed.

Board Member DiMarco stated this switch occurred the year before he was on the Board. He noted that prior to using Master Meter the water department had a position for a meter reader who went to each house to get the manual reads. He added that the reads are now obtained electronically via a drive by with a data reader.

Board Vice President Swierzowski asked Denmark for an approximate time it takes the crew to read the meters before the billing cycles.

Denmark advised it should take 4 hours to read one district. Denmark noted it is best to read the entire route and give the data to Clerk Koehler. He explained that the clerk then gives the crew a list of what was not read or needs investigation. He stated that these meters are relatively easy to read and advised that if the distribution crew does a drive by and they see a missed read they should try to knock on doors to get reads or leave a card at the property to call to arrange a time to manually read the meter.

Board Vice President Swierzowski suggested the meters be tested before they leave the garage.

Clerk Koehler stated she does not know if the meters are actually stopped or the distribution crew is not reading missed reads. Koehler noted there has to be more diligence on the part of the distribution crew to get billing reads for the office and make an effort to get missed reads, not to just note "not available" especially where meter pits are involved. She advised that not having reads makes it difficult to figure out which meters are actually stopped or if the meters are just not read. Clerk Koehler also noted it is very important that the office be told if a meter is 5/8", 1", 2", 3", etc. and if the meters read in gallons or cubic feet. She stated that all of these factors affect the bills and could cost the department revenue. Clerk Koehler also stated she believes reading meters is not being taken seriously, noting she gets the missed reads 2 to 3 days before bills have to be sent out. She advised that if John Denmark does not tell them what to do the distribution crew does not follow up on what needs to be done. She reiterated that the revenue of this department needs to be based on accurate reads. She advised that residential revenue is lower than the previous year.

Board Vice President Swierzowski asked if there was any benefit to switching to Neptune meters. He noted that it is imperative that the distribution crew complete the task of providing accurate reads regardless of what meter product is being used. He concurred with Clerk Koehler's comments and stated that this is a revenue producing department and not having accurate reads leads to lost revenue.

Denmark stated that Neptune originally won the bid; however, the previous Board chose to award the bid to Master Meter. He added that the meters originally sent to us by Master Meter were defective due to having a shorter than stated ten year battery life. Denmark also noted the more data logs done on the meter the battery life of is shortened and this was not disclosed to us.

Board Vice President Swierzowski conveyed that once the department is able to get a quality meter product to be used throughout the City residents will be able to receive accurate reads.

Board Member Capparello assessed decreased annual revenue being a possible result of meters that are not working accurately.

Board Member DiMarco said the City has hired four Water Department employees over the past few years and two others recently went to work for the Town of Johnstown. He correlated a lack of meter reader consistency as a possible problem with getting accurate reads.

- DOH Haloacetic Acids (HAA5s) Violation Notice

Board Vice President John Swierzowski advised that the Water Department received a Notice of Violation from the Department of Health (DOH) Herkimer District office for the period of 7/1/2019 to 9/30/2019. This violation is an extension of the notice received in August/2019 for the period covering 4/1/2019 to 6/30/2019. He advised that another community-wide mailing will be done within the next few weeks to make the public aware of the violation.

Board Member Capparello inquired if there was another way we could circulate the notice in lieu of a bulk mailing. He asked if a notice could be put in the Leader-Herald newspaper instead of a mailing as the last letter created “mass hysteria” when someone from the public put misinformation on Facebook.

Clerk Koehler advised she would contact Health Officer Chris Demme of the Herkimer DOH with regard to Board Member Capparello’s question. She advised the Board that the August/2019 mailing consisted of approximately 3,100 notices sent to residents; costing the department \$1,550 in postage, not taking into account the cost of paper, envelopes and labor. She noted that the Board has 30 days to respond to be in compliance with the DOH violation.

According to Senior Water Plant Operator John Denmark whether you have to post or send out notifications is based on the Health Officer assigned to one’s district. There are other districts that have readings as we have and due to the fact they have another DOH Health Officer assigned to them they may not have to send out a notice. Denmark noted this is not a boil water issue. He advised that HAA5 is chlorine reacting with organic matter. He explained that the water sample was taken from a dead ends street where HAA5 accumulates as there is no water flow and this is not a representation of our entire system.

Denmark noted the hydrants have not been flushed this year as we were having issues with the sand media filters at the Cork Center reservoir. He noted this is expected to be resolved early next year, thus allowing us to flush hydrants. He advised that Chris Demme of the DOH is aware of why we are having these issues. Denmark stated once the filters at Cork Center are back online we will flush hydrants again.

• **OTHER TOPICS DISCUSSED (not on agenda)**

Senior Water Plant Operator John Denmark noted as of Monday (11/18/2019) the City of Johnstown will not be needing emergency water from Gloversville.

Denmark also stated the sand washer will be a good purchase as we will not need to purchase sand in the future and will be self-sufficient in that aspect. He estimated the expected delivery date of the sand washer is February/2020.

Board Vice President Swierzowski noted he agreed with Board Member DiMarco's suggestion from a recent meeting that we may need to raise rates as we have not had a rate increase in five years and there are many upcoming projects that are mandated.

MOTIONS & RESOLUTIONS

- **RESOLUTION 21-2019** to purchase Bin Belt Feeder and Power Box for Sand Washer for the Filtration Plants was made by Board Vice President Swierzowski and seconded by Board Member DiMarco.
Ayes 5 Nays 0 Absent 0 Abstain 0

- **MOTION** authorizing the Clerk to seek vendors to rewire/re-cable the building at 27-31 East Main Street (Water Department section of building only) for additional phone and internet-computer ports and repair existing wiring was made by Board Vice President Swierzowski and seconded by Board Member Kline.
Ayes 5 Nays 0 Absent 0 Abstain 0

- **MOTION (Emergency)** to approve the proposal presented by CT Male on November 12, 2019, as per Exhibit "A" attached, for additional services at the cost of \$9,987.00. Cost to be encompassed in the 2019 CT Male General Services Agreement was made by Vice President Swierzowski and seconded by Board Member Capparello.
Ayes 5 Nays 0 Absent 0 Abstain 0

- **MOTION (Emergency)** to approve the purchase of a SOHO Sonicwall for the Christman Reservoir SCADA system from GCS at a cost of \$1,496.00 was made by Board Vice President Swierzowski and seconded by Board member DiMarco.
Ayes 5 Nays 0 Absent 0 Abstain 0

Discussion:

Board Member Capparello wanted know why we need to purchase this.

John Denmark stated the communication between the plants is compromised thus resulting in the values on the computers for the reservoirs being compromised. He noted that using DSL will take the communication out of the airwaves.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- **MOTION** to accept meeting minutes of October 15, 2019 was made by Board Vice President Swierzowski and seconded by Board Member Capparello.
Ayes 5 Nays 0 Absent 0 Abstain 0

FINANCIAL

- **MOTION** to accept Claims and Vouchers for payment for November 2019 (Audit Approval) was made by Board Vice President Swierzowski and seconded by Board Member Lyon.
Ayes 5 Nays 0 Absent 0 Abstain 0
- **MOTION** to approve October 2019 Industrial Levy was made by Board Vice President Swierzowski and seconded by Board Member Kline.
Ayes 5 Nays 0 Absent 0 Abstain 0

EXECUTIVE SESSION

- **MOTION** to enter into Executive Session at 7:09 PM for “information relating to a current or future investigation or prosecution of a criminal offense which would imperil effective law enforcement if disclosed” was made by Board Vice President Swierzowski and seconded by Board Member Capparello.
Ayes 5 Nays 0 Absent 0 Abstain 0
- **MOTION** approving Clerk Koehler to remain in Executive Session was made by Board Vice President Swierzowski and seconded by Board Member Capparello.
Ayes 5 Nays 0 Absent 0 Abstain 0
- **MOTION** to exit Executive Session at 7:39 PM was made by Board Vice President Swierzowski and seconded by Board Member Capparello.
Ayes 5 Nays 0 Absent 0 Abstain 0

PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Water Department closed Thursday and Friday, November 28 and 29, 2019 in observance of the Thanksgiving holiday
- Next regular Water Board meeting will be Monday, December 9, 2019, at 6:00 PM.

SPECIAL BOARD MEETING

- A Special Board Meeting for Budget/Financials will be held on Monday, November 25, 2019 at 3:30 PM.

ADJOURNMENT

- **MOTION** to adjourn was made by Board Vice President Swierzowski and seconded by Board Member Capparello at 7:45 PM.
Ayes 5 Nays 0 Absent 0 Abstain 0

Submitted by
Barbara Koehler
Clerk of the Water Board