

WATER RESOURCES DEPARTMENT

The Board of Water Commissioners met on Tuesday February 2, 2021 via telephone conference. The meeting convened at 7:00 PM via teleconference

Pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §20, and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitation on the number of people that may gather in one place, this meeting of the City of Westfield Water Commission & Board of Public Works will be conducted via remote participation. Specific information and the general guidelines for remote participation by members of the public and/or parties with a right and/or requirement to attend this meeting can be found on the City of Westfield website at www.cityofwestfield.org. For this meeting, members of the public who wish to listen to the meeting may do so by tuning into Channel 15 or online at westfieldtv.org. No in-person attendance of members of the public will be permitted, but every effort will be made to ensure that the public can adequately access the proceedings in real time, via technological means. In the event that we are unable to do so, despite best efforts, we will post on the City's website an audio recording, transcript, or other comprehensive record of proceedings as soon as possible after the meeting.

The meeting was broadcasted on local channel 12 and the Westfield Community Youtube channel.

AGENDA ITEMS:

Utility Abatement- 48 Jefferson St

Office Manager Hannah Larkham presented a letter to the Board from the City Treasurer/Collector Matt Barnes requesting a lien abatement at 48 Jefferson St. The Collector's Office identified uncollectible liens on the property due to legal proceedings.

Motion was made by Commissioner Niedzielski to approve the Utility Lien Abatement for 48 Jefferson St in the amount of \$3,661.89. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Cole. Motion approved.

Roll call vote:

Commissioner Cole- YES

Commissioner Popielarczyk- YES

Commissioner Niedzielski- YES

Funding for Western Ave Project

City Engineer Mark Cressotti was present at the meeting to discuss the options for funding for the water service upgrade on the phase 2 Western Ave Project. The Department has submitted a letter to the Mayor's office requesting \$700,000 from City Council in the form of free cash. If the City Council does not approve the free cash request, than the money will need to be bonded. Mark has requested the board to make a motion in agreeance with the department on the request for the free cash, and if the request is denied than an agreeance the funding can be bonded. Acting Director Fran Cain stated that asking for free cash is the only viable option at this point, and if we have to ask for bonding that will take more time. Mark needs the funds in place or agreed on by the end of March, early April.

Motion was made by Commissioner Cole to approve the request from the Department to appropriate funds from City Council through free cash. If the request does not materialize, the Department can seek the funding through a bond. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Niedzielski. Motion approved.

Roll call vote:

Commissioner Cole- YES

Commissioner Popielarczyk- YES

Commissioner Niedzielski- YES

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MAR 15 2021

WESTFIELD CITY CLERK

Discussion on water rate increase beginning FY22

Budget Analysts Joanna Williams and Fran Cain discussed with the Board the necessity of a water rate increase in the future. With the Department needing to ask Council for money and an unhealthy undesignated account this year, there will be a need for an increase for this coming fiscal year. The construction account was also cut by \$400,000 this past December. Commissioner Popielarczyk asked when the last rate increase took place. Joanna replied it was April of 2019. She also stated that this is something that we are looking to keep increasing every year. Fran mentioned that the Department should not be supplementing their operational spending with undesignated funds. That money should be used for infrastructure costs. Commissioner Popielarczyk asked if the Department has a capital infrastructure plan in place. Water Systems Engineer Heather Stayton stated yes, there is a plan but it is not a funded plan. The Board agreed that with more research and information, to continue to look at a rate increase at a future meeting. Fran wanted to thank Joanna for all the hard work she has put into the budget during this time. She has been very helpful in this whole process.

Discussion of Abatement/Refund Policy

Office Manager Hannah Larkham presented to the Board the proposed changes the Department has worked on. She also presented a check list that would assist in deciding if an abatement application received in the office was deemed acceptable. The Board reviewed the changes and check list and were agreeable with the changes. Commissioner Popielarczyk asked if the Department had heard from the Law Department in regards to refunds. Hannah replied that the City Auditor stated as long as the money has been collected, it can be refunded. This item has been added to the proposed changes. Commissioner Cole asked if a resident did not meet the new requirements and was denied but felt strongly they should be granted the abatement, is there a mechanism in place for them to appeal. Hannah stated that at that point a resident may participate in public participation. They may speak to the Board then, and if the Board feels they would wish to hear more than can request the item to be added to the next agenda. Hannah will get clarification on this with the Law Department, but believes it can be handled that way.

Motion was made by Commissioner Niedzielski to approve the proposed changes to the Water Abatement Application policy. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Cole. Motion approved.

Roll call vote:

Commissioner Cole- YES

Commissioner Popielarczyk- YES

Commissioner Niedzielski- YES

Approval of Minutes:

Motion was made by Commissioner Cole to approve the minutes dated January 4, 2021. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Niedzielski. Motion approved.

Roll call vote:

Commissioner Cole- YES

Commissioner Popielarczyk- YES

Commissioner Niedzielski- YES

Project Updates

Water Systems Engineer Heather Stayton discussed the department updates. Wells 7 & 8 were given their final approval to operate Owen District Water Treatment Plant from the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) on August 4th. An active (punch list) construction work is ongoing. Approximately 75 million gallons of treated water has gone through the treatment plant. The results from the required testing are meeting the DEPs requirements.

The temporary treatment vessel at Well 2 has run approximately 320 million gallons of treated water. The results from the required testing are meeting the DEPs requirements.

Conditional approval for the Dry Bridge Treatment Plant has been received from DEP. The Department will proceed with permitting, neighborhood outreach, etc. The Department has submitted for State Revolving Funds (SRF) for this project and has been approved for the funding. The Department will now need to incorporate any of their conditions into the design and proceed to bidding document preparation.

The new tank at East Mountain Rd has been installed and is online. The old tank has been completely demoed.

The Reservoir is currently full due to the inclement weather we experienced this past month.

The next meeting will be scheduled for March 2, 2021.

Adjourn

Motion made by Commissioner Cole to adjourn; Motion seconded by Commissioner Niedzielski, Motion approved.

Roll call vote:

Commissioner Cole- YES

Commissioner Popielarczyk- YES

Commissioner Niedzielski- YES

ADJOURN: 7:58 P.M.

Chairman

Secretary

Member 

