

Milford Water/Wastewater Commissioners' Meeting Minutes

September 6, 2022

Present at this meeting: Dale White, Chairman
Robert Courage, Vice-Chairman
Hunter Philbrick, Commissioner
James Pouliot, Director, Water Utilities Dept.
James Soucy, Deputy Director, Water Utilities Dept.
Joseph Ducharme, Hoyle, Tanner & Associates, Inc.
Evelyn Gendron, Recording Secretary

Call to Order & Introductions

Announcing that the Board had exited from non-public session, Chairman White called the public portion of this meeting to order at 12:10 p.m. with introductions. The non-public meeting minutes were sealed at 12:04 p.m. during the non-public session.

Hoyle, Tanner & Associates, Inc., Nutrient Upgrade Project Discussion

Mr. Joe Ducharme, P.E. explained that HTA representatives, in keeping with the goal of making necessary age-related tertiary improvements at the wastewater treatment facility to meet the new, stringent NHDES/EPA discharge permit requirements, prepared and delivered equipment/process improvement recommendations totaling approximately \$27M - \$28M for Mr. Pouliot and Mr. Soucy's review. Following review of HTA's recommendations and prioritization of the facility's highest needs, such as protecting the main pump station from flood risk, improving operational piping and flow measurement systems, approximately \$4M recommended costs were reduced/eliminated from HTA's original project costs after identifying/eliminating tasks that could be performed by Milford's in-house staff, as well as tasks that could be undertaken in the future. The Board received from Mr. Ducharme/HTA a summary table with options for consideration and selection. Chairman White indicated the importance of communicating to the Board of Selectmen and the Capital Improvement Plan Advisory Committee members that the Town and the users of the wastewater system should both share halves of the necessary wastewater equipment upgrade expenses. The merits of preparing one versus two warrant articles to finance anticipated project costs were considered by the Board of Commissioners. Director Pouliot disclosed that the facility's secondary clarifiers are at risk of failing due to the poor, current tank conditions, having been in operation since Milford's 1980 commencement of sewage treatment. In response to Chairman White's inquiry, Mr. Ducharme explained that it has been HTA's experience to have more success in communities presenting one warrant article, adding that failure to meet the new regulatory agency permit requirements would result in regulatory agency fines being imposed, which must be paid. Mr. Pouliot cautioned that if two warrant articles were to be presented to voters, one warrant to see if voters would approve only the tertiary treatment component costs, voters would likely be misled to believe that an "either/or" warrant article approval situation exists, thereby delaying funding necessary improvements until another warrant article is presented for approval.

Vice-Chairman Courage explained that Milford taxpayers had paid the wastewater treatment facility construction costs, since wastewater treatment system “users” didn’t yet exist. He added that the entire Milford community benefits from the sewer system, whether connected to the sewer system or not. Responding to Mr. Courage’s inquiry, Mr. Ducharme explained that HTA has been involved recently with a couple of other communities obtaining tax rate based warrant article approval, however those communities enjoyed a significant amount of grant contributions, more than 50% in grants. Milford was approved for 15% grant contributions. He explained that the DES funding decisions depended upon the timing of applications and the mix of the projects, adding that the DES had received more than 200 grant applications for 107 projects. Commissioner Philbrick indicated this warrant article should be prepared for the total town as a tax increase, similar to the practice of purchasing ambulance and fire department vehicles, purchased to support the entire town, as this is a massive project which had been built with taxpayer dollars, which needs to be re-built with taxpayer dollars, and that he agrees with presenting one larger warrant article instead of two warrant articles. Mr. Pouliot recommended obtaining additional information for other communities, such as Portsmouth, Epping and Exeter, where multiple, major upgrades have been undertaken since the facilities were constructed, whereas Milford has not pursued a major wastewater treatment facility upgrade in 40 years. Mr. Courage agreed with Mr. White’s statement that Milford wastewater system users have supported all repairs to date. Mr. Pouliot added that you won’t find any other facility operating with original, 40 year old wastewater tanks. Mr. White indicated that while Milford upgrades its wastewater facility, mandated by the EPA/DES permit requirements, the commissioners would be remiss to not include additional improvements now, to prepare for Milford’s continued residential and commercial growth, while planning the replacement of worn sewer treatment works equipment that absolutely must be replaced, which should be borne by the tax base. Mr. Pouliot, Mr. Soucy, and Mr. Ducharme discussed several technical, cost and grant funding details of the planned wastewater upgrade with the commissioners. Mr. Ducharme will contact Finance Director Calabria today to obtain details regarding the impact of a 30-year bond upon Milford’s tax rate. A joint meeting will be scheduled with members of the Board of Commissioners and Mr. Pouliot, the Board of Selectmen, the Capital Improvement Plan Advisory Committee, and Hoyle, Tanner and Associates, to include a formal presentation of the planned wastewater treatment facility upgrade elements, with up-to-date, pertinent technical and financial data, and especially to discuss and listen to the BOS and CIP members’ comments regarding town/taxpayer funding, since the commissioners agree that the current system users cannot be expected to afford all the needed upgrade costs per HTA’s “Option 1 upgrade plan”. The commissioners agreed that gaining support from members of these boards and committees will greatly assist with presenting one warrant article that will be well understood by Town voters in March 2023 for a complete wastewater upgrade, built to last, with attention to what’s below ground. The commissioners look forward to meeting again later this month after Mr. Ducharme speaks with Finance Director Calabria.

Upon motion by Vice-Chairman Courage, seconded by Commissioner Philbrick, it was unanimously agreed by the commission to consider Hoyle, Tanner & Associates’ Option 1 in the net amount of \$23,963,247.00 for tertiary treatment and major upgrades at the wastewater treatment facility. Motion passed by the 3/0 roll call vote as follows:

Robert Courage: announced “aye”
Hunter Philbrick: announced “aye”
Dale White: announced “aye”

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Press and Public Comments – none

Decisions and Approvals

Water Users Fee/Tax Collector's Warrant – August 2022 – After Chairman White read the Tax Collector's Water Users Fee Warrant to collect the taxes in the matter of water users fees for the August 2022 Bill Commitment 220831 in the amount of \$200,520.94 and for the August 2022 Final Bills issued in the amount of \$1,122.99 the commissioners signed this warrant as presented.

Sewer Users Fee/Tax Collector's Warrant – August 2022 – After Chairman White read the Tax Collector's Sewer Users Fee Warrant to collect the taxes in the matter of sewer users fees for the August 2022 Bill Commitment 220831 in the amount of \$267,098.92 and for the August 2022 Final Bills issued in the amount of \$1,698.69 the commissioners signed this warrant as presented.

Water Fee Abatement-Credit – 50 Elm Street, Unit C (Ducharme)

Upon motion by Vice-Chairman Courage, seconded by Commissioner Philbrick, it was unanimously decided by the 3/0 “aye” votes to abate/credit the after-hours fee in the amount of \$87.50, due to a clerical error, regarding the 2022 Bill #263652, as recommended by Director Pouliot. Motion passed unanimously as presented by the 3/0 roll call vote as follows:

Robert Courage: announced “aye”
Hunter Philbrick: announced “aye”
Dale White: announced “aye”

BOC Meeting Minutes – 8/15/2022

Upon motion by Vice-Chairman Courage, seconded by Commissioner Philbrick, the 8/15/2022 meeting minutes was unanimously approved as presented by the 3/0 roll call vote as follows:

Robert Courage: announced “aye”
Hunter Philbrick: announced “aye”
Dale White: announced “aye”

Discussion/Informational Items

Hoyle, Tanner & Associates / Landfill Discussion

The Board had received and reviewed the draft corrective action plan prepared by Hoyle, Tanner & Associates regarding the landfill at the wastewater treatment facility, received by Mr. Pouliot approximately a month ago. Chairman White indicated he believes Milford has two options: (1) remove the landfill material off-site, which would require additional engineering input, or (2) treat the run-off landfill wastewater for the remaining time the landfill is on-site, which could prove to be very costly. Director Pouliot recommended removal of the landfill, option (1), due to the likelihood that the DES and EPA may continue to require testing for additional contaminants over time, and because the landfill treatment/maintenance costs would rise over time. The Board agreed to discuss the landfill removal option during a future work session with Mr. Ducharme, HTA, in conjunction with future

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meetings/discussion regarding the Wastewater Treatment Facility Nutrient Upgrade Project. Responding to Commissioner Philbrick's inquiry regarding the wastewater landfill, Vice-Chairman Courage explained the landfill history.

SRF Funding

The Board received and reviewed the chart distributed by Director Pouliot and learned that Milford's position has improved to #12 on the for state's 2022 NHDES Clean Water SRF Priority List for wastewater projects.

Capital Reserve Fund Withdrawals / Budget Account Transfer Update

Mr. Pouliot indicated he looks forward to receiving fund details from Finance Director Calabria. Discussion will continue during a future Board meeting.

Milford Drought Update

Mr. Pouliot indicated that while southern NH continues to be labeled as in a "stage two" water level category, indicating a severe drought, today's rainfall may improve the dry conditions, however, more than the predicted two days of rain would be required to remove Milford's outside watering ban. He explained that the Town of Merrimack has also just reached "stage two". He will continue to apprise the Board of the drought conditions.

Fund Balance Report / Appropriations Report / Revenue Report

The Board reviewed and discussed Mr. Pouliot's hand-outs. He indicated the Sewer Department budget is "below budget", and that both the water and sewer revenue is good. The Water Department's Riverview & Linden Street project is still underway, causing the Water Department budget to be over-budget, however, some project cost purchases are due refunds due to returned stock in good condition, and capital reserve expense reimbursements are forthcoming. Mr. Pouliot awaits additional 2022 revenue and expenditure fund information from the Finance Department.

Curtis Well #2A Rehab Update

The Board learned that a new pump has been installed in Pump #2A. Mr. Pouliot reported that a wellfield hydrant had broken below ground level, which is original to the age of the wellfield, had prevented Maher Corporation from performing a flow test last week. The hydrant has been replaced. Mr. Pouliot indicated that after the flow test occurs on Thursday, all three wells will be fully operational.

Linden & Riverview Streets – Water Main Project Update

Mr. Pouliot apprised the Board of the accomplishments by the Water Department crew. Reconnection of two residential water lines and the necessary clean-up will complete this project by next week.

Leak Detection Results

The Board was very pleased to learn that only two service leaks and two hydrant leaks had been detected by a contractor, which will be repaired as soon as the official report is received.

Mayflower Tank Preventive Maintenance

The Board received Mr. Pouliot’s 2023 maintenance plan for Mayflower Tank, which is Milford’s oldest water tank, at an estimated cost of \$86K, for which water capital reserves will be utilized. Mr. Pouliot recommends the tank be painted before it loses cohesion, and be sandblasted. The overflow pipe is “out of specification” meaning it does not meet DES standards. Without an official vote, Chairman White, Vice-Chairman Courage and Commissioner Philbrick unanimously expressed they are in favor of Mr. Pouliot scheduling the 2023 Mayflower Tank work in accordance with his maintenance plan.

Adjournment

Upon motion by Vice-Chairman Courage, seconded by Commissioner Philbrick, the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 1:37 p.m. by the 3/0 vote as follows:

- Robert Courage: announced “aye”**
- Hunter Philbrick: announced “aye”**
- Dale White: announced “aye”**

Future Meeting: Monday, 9/26/2022 11:00 a.m. at the WUD Meeting Room, 564 Nashua St.

Special Event: Wastewater Treatment Facility Equipment Upgrades Tour:
Saturday, 10/1/2022: 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. at the Water Utilities Department, 564 Nashua St.

_____	_____
Dale White, Chairman	Date
_____	_____
Robert Courage, Vice-Chairman	Date
_____	_____
Hunter Philbrick, Commissioner	Date