

Board of Water Commissioners

May 6, 2020

Remote meeting via telephone conference call

Present:

- Board of Water Commissioners: Ms. Mary Power (Chair), Mr. Joseph Fisher and Mr. Bill Ramsey
- Mr. Tom Mayo, Town Administrator
- Ms. Michelle Monsegur, Assistant Town Administrator
- Mr. Russell Tierney, Superintendent, Weir River Water System

Call to order: 6:30 pm

Ms. Power called the meeting to order and read the following statement:

“This meeting is being held remotely as an alternate means of public access pursuant to an Order issued by the Governor of Massachusetts dated March 12, 2020 Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law. You are hereby advised that this meeting and all communications during this meeting may be recorded by the Town of Hingham in accordance with the Open Meeting Law. If any participant wishes to record this meeting, please notify the chair at the start of the meeting in accordance with M.G.L. c. 30A, § 20(f) so that the chair may inform all other participants of said recording.”

Ms. Power asked if any participants were recording the meeting. There were no responses.

Approval of Minutes

Vote: Mr. Fisher made a motion to approve the minutes dated March 23, 2021. Mr. Ramsey seconded

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes

Mr. Ramsey: yes

Ms. Power: yes

To sign the Agreement with Environmental Partners Group, Inc. for On-Call Engineering Services

Mr. Russell Tierney gave a brief overview of the agreement. He noted that services covered by the agreement could include Capital Planning, assistance with the hydraulic water main design, construction services (if deemed necessary), construction observations, asset management, GIS services, all kinds of planning and design, and environmental engineering. All tasks would be reviewed and approved by the Board. This agreement would set rates for the next three years. These rates could increase by 2-3% on an annual basis. Services under the agreement would not exceed \$400,000. Ms. Power clarified for the Board that having a 3-year contract would allow the Town to take advantage of lower rates than if they were to contract for each task separately. Mr. Tierney added that rates the Town is currently paying for capital improvements are below market.

Mr. Fisher asked if Mr. Tierney felt that the 10-day termination provision as stated in the agreement would be sufficient time for the Town to plan for other arrangements. Mr. Tierney advised that it is a

standard timeframe throughout the industry. He noted that he has other engineering service providers in mind if needed.

Vote: Mr. Ramsey made a motion to authorize the Town Administrator to sign the agreement with Environmental Partners Group, Inc. for on-call engineering supplies and/or services in an amount not to exceed \$400,000 per year for a term ending June 30, 2024. Mr. Fisher seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes

Mr. Ramsey: yes

Ms. Power: yes

Emergency Filter Repairs

Chair Power explained that in August 2019, the then Plant Director, Steve Olson, notified the Board that there was a problem with one of the four under drains, which were all installed at the same time. At that time, the Town authorized approximately \$80,000 in necessary repairs. She said that there was speculation at the time that since one drain failed, that the others may soon. She added that the repair of the other three drains was part of the Capital Plan. Ms. Power also reported that Environmental Partners had been overseeing the project for the Town in 2019 during the “good husbandry” period.

Mr. Tierney further explained that the materials (media) cost for the project would be \$310,000 of the \$430,000 total cost of the project. The media not only helps with the clarity of the water, but it also contains carbon, which eliminates the contaminant PFAS. There was some additional comments regarding the benefits of flushing and how it increases the pumping rate. With the increase in flow, he noticed that the filters were not working well. He added that, under MGL, the emergency work could be done by the Town, using a contractor of the Town’s choice without going out to bid and procurement, as long as the Town has documentation on why the repairs were necessary. This repair would consist of removing the media from filter #3 and adding new media. Also, the media would be removed from filter #4, an inspection conducted, any needed repairs would be made, and the new media put back into the filter. Bidding is scheduled for the fall for the repair of the other two filters.

There was some discussion regarding the term “backwash.” Mr. Tierney advised that backwashing removes water and particles left after the entire filtering process. There was some additional discussion regarding the plant’s average, minimum and maximum gallons of flow per minute. Additionally, he explained that the media (Granular Activated Carbon) that is removed and disposed of is brought to a landfill and is rigorously tested for contaminants. Going forward, Mr. Tierney said that the filters would be subject to a very aggressive and detailed inspection program. Mr. Fisher asked if there were any warranty that would go along with the filter work. Mr. Tierney explained that there would be construction warranties, but he has never heard of a warranty on the media. He stressed the importance of finding a reputable company to do the work. Additionally, Mr. Tierney said that the work would be paid for from both FY21 and FY22 Capital funds.

Vote: Mr. Fisher made a motion to authorize the Town Administrator to execute a contract with a qualified contractor on behalf of the Board of Water Commissioners for the emergency repairs to Filters Number 3 and Filter Number 4 at the Water Treatment Plant in an amount up to \$495,800.00

provided that said contract is procured in accordance with the applicable emergency procurement laws. Mr. Ramsey seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes

Mr. Ramsey: yes

Ms. Power: yes

Water Superintendent Report

Mr. Tierney provided some highlights of his monthly report to the Board including:

- He has been monitoring late payments and reaching out to those accounts. He is investigating as to the reasons for the late payments.
- He confirmed that there is no fee for online bill pay, as long as the customer has set up their account properly and is not paying as a “guest.” He acknowledged that some customers has had some issues with the online bill pay and he is looking into the matter in an attempt to provide better clarity to customers.
- He reported that the Atlantic Avenue design is on track, along with a few other streets.
- He has been working closely with the Hingham and Hull DPW’s on the street paving lists.
- They have recently found several valves and hydrants in Hull that need to be replaced and have already replaced seven fire hydrants in Hull in the past month.
- He also reported that they have identified a valve in need of replacement on Bay Street in Hull. He noted that it would be a very extensive job due to its proximity to a telephone pole and a catch basin. Because of this, the main would have to be moved.
- He has been working closely with Suez on their major hydrant inspections.
- He has been working closely with Boston Golf on a small subdivision that is being planned.
- He reported that the WRWS has approved a new 12” water main to be installed as part of the Amazon project. He said that Amazon plans to pay for that main to be installed at 100 Industrial Park Drive.
- He also noted that they are working closely with another project at 60 Research Drive where another 12” main will be installed. The developer would pay for the project.
- He said that the flushing program has been going well, with the exception of a few broken fire hydrants. He felt that improved communication has led to fewer complaints from customers. He felt that the addition of message boards has been beneficial.

Mr. Ramsey felt that the improved communications has been helpful. He asked about the process of fixing broken hydrants. Mr. Tierney said that hydrants are fixed on the spot, if possible. If not, he coordinates with the fire departments and the hydrant is placed on the “out of service” list. Ms. Power felt that people are starting to feel better about their Water System due to the improved communication and the project follow-through. There was some additional discussion regarding the Water Balance Program, a program by the DEP. Mr. Fisher reported that there is information on the Weir River Water System’s website regarding The Water Balance Program.

Ms. Power had the following announcements:

- The Water Transition and Evaluation Committee is going to start looking into the governance model later this year.

- The Cost of Service Study is moving along and the Water Commissioners will be charged with voting on rates before July 1, 2021, when the new rates take effect. She anticipated a rate increase of 10%. The projected rate increase is typically 10% every three years and the last increase was in 2018. She felt this increase was as expected.
- By the end of the Fiscal Year, all the transition costs that the Town has paid for would need to be reimbursed by the Weir River Water System. She anticipated that a reimbursement of approximately \$400,000 would be taken out of the bond proceeds from the acquisition. Because the Town is still incurring some of those charges, they plan to wait until as close to the end of the fiscal year as possible to do the transfer. She reported that the Town had set aside \$625,000 for transition costs, though she did not expect to need the full amount. Any extra funds could be used for capital.
- Ms. Power also reported some staffing modifications in the near future.
- She said that August 1, 2021 will be the 1-year anniversary of the Town's purchase of the Water System. She hoped that the Town could mark the occasion in a significant way.

Public Comment

There were no comments from the public.

Vote: Mr. Fisher made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Ramsey seconded.

Roll Call Vote:

Mr. Fisher: yes

Mr. Ramsey: yes

Ms. Power: yes

The meeting adjourned at 8:03 pm.

Documents: A complete meeting packet of supporting documentation is on file and available for public review in the Hingham Board of Selectmen's office.