

# Board of Water Commissioners

July 22, 2022

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Present:

- Board of Water Commissioners: Mr. Bill Ramsey (Chair) and Mr. Joe Fisher (Ms. Liz Klein was not present.)
- Mr. Tom Mayo, Town Administrator
- Ms. Michelle Monsegur, Assistant Town Administrator for Finance
- Mr. Art Robert, Assistant Town Administrator for Operations

## **8:45 AM: Call to order**

Mr. Ramsey 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. “

Mr. Ramsey asked if any participants were recording the meeting. No one indicated they were recording.

Select Board members participating in the meeting were himself and Mr. Joe Fisher. Ms. Liz Klein was not present.

## **Approval of Minutes**

**Vote: Mr. Fisher made a motion to approve the minutes dated March 22, 2022. Mr. Ramsey seconded.**

## **Roll Call Vote:**

**Mr. Fisher: yes**

**Mr. Ramsey: yes**

## **Discussion and potential vote to approve a contract with Water Service Professionals of PA, Inc. for emergency filter repair work at the Weir River Water System Water Treatment Plant.**

Water Superintendent Mr. Russell Tierney explained that, in late June, there was a failure of the tile floors of one of the water filters. That filter was immediately taken offline. The repair contractor, WSP, removed the meteor and found that the back left corner of the filter had collapsed. As they began to remove tiles, it was evident that more tiles had failed. During the process, they decided to remove all the tiles and to replace the entire under-drain system. Mr. Tierney reported that the failure was due, in part, to some rotten rebar in the under-drain system. The rot could have been caused by some type of thermal expansion. To mitigate the same issue going forward, Mr. Tierney said that they are looking to add some type of air relief into the filter backwash system. He noted that this is an issue that could not have been seen in advance since it took place under the floor tiles. Mr. Tierney reported that Environmental Partners has been on-site during the entire process. After meeting with each of the

vendors individually and as a group, it was decided that they would replace the entire under-drain system with a new stainless steel under-drain system and also add a new air wash system that would function independently.

Mr. Ramsey asked what caused the failure. Mr. Tierney said that it was caused by a combination of heat and pressure under the tiles. Pressure under the tiles caused the thin rebar to snap and push the tiles up. He met with each of the vendors separately and Veolia also sent their filter expert to look at it and all came to the same conclusion for the cause. Mr. Tierney said that, after researching, he found that this same failure has happened in two other towns that use the same type of filter.

Mr. Fisher asked if the failure was due to a lack of maintenance. Mr. Tierney advised that this was definitely an inherited issue and not due to any lack of maintenance by Weir River Water System. He also noted that the rebar that snapped was original to the building, which was built in 1996. Mr. Tierney said that he and Environmental Partners have both checked the pricing of the agreement and are comfortable with the amount. A competitive bid was not required because they applied for emergency approval. Mr. Mayo added that Ms. Kathy Reilly, Procurement and Contracts Manager, has been working with Mr. Tierney to make sure all correct approvals have been obtained. The work is scheduled to be complete no later than December 22, 2022, however he anticipated that it could be complete as soon as October.

**Vote: Mr. Fisher made a motion to authorize the Town Administrator to sign the agreement with Water Service Professionals of PA, Inc. for emergency filter repair work at the Weir River Water System Water Treatment Plant in an amount not to exceed \$297,750.00. Mr. Ramsey seconded.**

**Roll Call Vote:**

**Mr. Fisher: yes**

**Mr. Ramsey: yes**

**Water Superintendent Report**

Mr. Tierney reported that the Town is currently in a mandatory level 1 water ban. This was put into place because the Commonwealth has declared that the state is in a stage 2 drought. During a level 1 water ban, irrigation systems can only be run on Tuesdays and Wednesdays during certain hours and on an even-odd schedule. Hand watering would still be allowed. The goal of a level 1 water ban is to cut way down on automatic irrigation systems. Mr. Tierney advised that lawns will turn brown and go dormant, but can rebound if there is ample rain.

He also noted that the plant work and distribution work are going well. They are being mindful of the heat and have backed off on some outside work to keep employees safe, however they are performing maintenance work throughout the system.

Mr. Tierney also commented that collections are going very well.

Mr. Fisher noted that there had recently been a community notification system which told residents that the Town was experiencing low water reserves due to a communications failure. Mr. Tierney clarified that the water system receives communication from their wells. Due to the high heat, the radio

communication was cut off. WRWS employees went out and manually turned on those notifications as a result. Due to the additional time it took to manually turn on communications, water reserves went down. They were, however, able to get them back up within an hour. Mr. Tierney explained that losing some elevation in the tanks could be a hazard for the town and the fire department so he chose to go into emergency status for 48 hours to ensure that the water levels in the tanks came back to normal. The emergency state ceased all non-essential water uses for 48 hours and has since been lifted. Mr. Tierney said he was looking into adding a second repeater to ensure that this does not happen again.

Mr. Fisher also asked if there is anything that the Towns serviced by the WRWS can do to make sure that conservation efforts are being followed. Mr. Tierney said that their website has added a button where residents can report non-conforming water usage. Mr. Tierney also reported that their website has additional information and tips for reducing water usage in homes and yards. The Town has also cut down on their watering schedule for the fields.

Chair Ramsey said that the drought is a State-wide issue and encouraged everyone to do their part to help.

Mr. Tony George, 15 Blaisdell Road, said that he is one of a group of citizens who are very concerned with the water. He said that the Weir River is dry below Triphammer Pond and he is concerned with the drought. Mr. George asked what the result would be for reporting non-conforming water usage. Mr. Tierney said that a first report would result in a first level notification in which the resident's door would be tagged. If WRWS sees it happening again they would then institute their fine policies.

Mr. Peter Swanson, 87 Kimball Beach Road, encouraged the Town to go into the schools and talk to children about water conservation methods.

### **Public Comment**

"The Hingham Select Board encourages community engagement and welcomes questions and comments as agenda items are discussed at the meeting. In addition, we have set aside up to fifteen minutes for public comment for items that fall under the purview of the Select Board and are not already on tonight's agenda. If any guests wish to speak, please seek to be recognized. Once recognized, state your name and address and address your comments to the Chair. Comments will be limited to three minutes per speaker and must relate to topics within the scope of the responsibilities of the Select Board. Speakers are encouraged to present their remarks in a respectful manner and not to indulge in personalities. The Public Comment period is not a time for debate by members of the Select Board. The Select Board is not adopting or endorsing any of the comments made during the Public Comment period."

Mr. Tony George, 15 Blaisdell Road, commented that he has recently joined the Cleaner Greener Committee and he continues to be a part of the Weir River Watershed Association because he is very concerned with water and feels that Hingham's natural resources should be incorporated into its water policy. Mr. Ramsey thanked Mr. George for his comments and told him that, during this upcoming year, the governance structure of the Weir River Water System will be studied in more detail, as will its future of governance by the Board of Water Commissioners. Mr. George noted that he has been in touch with the Transition Committee.

Mr. Ramsey asked residents to pitch in and help conserve water during this significant drought.

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

**Roll Call Vote:**

**Mr. Fisher: yes**

**Mr. Ramsey: yes**

The meeting adjourned at 9:13 AM.