

**BOARD OF PUBLIC WORKS
SEWER COMMISSION
STORMWATER
COMMISSION
Meeting Minutes**

Monday August 15, 2022

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT

Mary Monahan: Commissioner
Libby Hernandez: Commissioner

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT

ALSO PRESENT

Amie Chrzanowski: Acting General Superintendent
Kris Baker: City Engineer
Ryan Allen: Board of Public Works Clerk
Kevin Jourdain: Holyoke City Councilor

1. Opening of the Meeting: Meeting was called to order at 5:39PM

Board of Public Works proceeded out of order to take up agenda item 4:

4. HomeServe Sewer Insurance Presentation: Mike Chambers, representative of HomeServe Insurance was available for the meeting and gave a power-point presentation to the Board. City Councilor Kevin Jourdain was also present to participate in discussion surrounding the potential sewer line insurance program. In his presentation Mr. Chambers stated that a lot of residents do not realize that they are responsible for their section of the sewer lines and noted that there is an educational element to the program and that ServePro provides free education and outreach dealing with customers and other aspects.

Mr. Chambers gave overview of how the insurance program works and how HomeServe implements the insurance program for other municipalities. Mr. Chambers stated that they do sewer line maintenance and repair ranging from small items being lodged in sewer pipes to full replacement of sewer lines. It was noted that there is a 7 days a week 24/7 call center for residents to utilize when they have issues and that this service is covered by HomeServe.

Mr. Chambers noted that HomeServe operates in over 1100 municipalities and has an A- plus rating by the Better Business Bureau and gave a list of industry awards that have been given to the company. Commissioner Monahan asked how many

communities the company served in Massachusetts and Mr. Chambers answered that West Springfield is the first client from the commonwealth.

Mr. Chambers stated that the cost for the sewer line insurance program is 7 dollars and 75 cents per month and that the fee is for any resident seeking to opt in to the insurance program.

It was stated that out of the \$7.75 monthly fee that residents would pay, 50 cents from each payment comes back to the City as a royalty. It was noted that the City could then choose to start a fund with these royalty funds or waive the royalty aspect of the program and in that case HomeServe would simply deduct 50 cents from the monthly fee.

Mr. Chambers stated that there is no minimum number of sewer users for implementation of the program but that after the first notification mailing to residents about 10 percent of residents sign up, and that the participation rate typically increases to around 20 percent in the second year. Mr. Chambers said that the company does a universal mailing to the residents in the City at their expense to help spread awareness of the program and benefits of participation. It was noted that there is no deductible if a resident puts a claim in.

Kevin Jourdain spoke and thanked the Commission for setting up the presentation. Councilor Jourdain referenced the insurance program piloted by the Water Department and stated that this third party insurance system could potentially be better than what was implemented by the Water Department. Councilor Jourdain stated that residents have been blindsided by sewer line damage and that this could help with maintenance but also allow for interested residents to affordably be able to get these things repaired. City Engineer Kris Baker explained that sewer line fixes can be very costly to residents and can run up to \$20,000 dollars depending on how deep the lines are. Mr. Chambers stated that \$8,500 is the max payout to fix sewer line.

Mary Monahan asked how the City should continue the conversation discussion and receive more information on the potential service. Mr. Chambers said that he can get back to the Board with some numbers based on some further research and information gathered from the meeting. Mr. Chambers stated that that if the City went forward with the program fully and universally then the price would be cheaper. It was noted that Mr. Chambers would run some numbers based on the amount of sewer accounts the City of Holyoke has.

It was noted that the City could compel residents to all pay this insurance. Libby Hernandez stated that she thinks that compelling people to buy the insurance would likely not be well received by residents, especially those who have a tough time just paying their sewer bill. Councilor Jourdain noted that the residents who are most likely to struggle paying sewer bills would be most hurt with a repair bill for the sewer line.

Amie Chrzanowski and Kris Baker stated that one of them would speak with reps from West Springfield to learn more about their sewer line insurance program. It was also noted that the Committee would wait to hear back from Mr. Chambers with his cost

estimate. Commissioner Monahan noted that there are public procurement questions that will need to be addressed.

2. Consideration of Minutes of the past meeting: Tabled

3. Superintendents Report: Acting DPW Director Amie Chrzanowski spoke and stated that there is a new HMEO that has started and that another HMEO employee would begin employment on Monday. Chrzanowski stated that there are interviews taking place to fill 4 positions that require a CDL. Chrzanowski noted that there is an interview being set up for a Senior Civil Engineer and that Mary Monahan could be present for the interview if available. Commissioner Monahan stated that she has no concerns with only Kris and Amie doing the interview. It was noted that there could be OML considerations if more than one Board commissioner is present because of laws related to a quorum.

Amie Chrzanowski gave information on potentially moving an employee from a loader position to taking on the Construction Supervisor position that has been vacant for several months. Chrzanowski updated the Board on a custodial change that took place noting that there will be a new full time custodian for the Senior Center. Chrzanowski also gave information on the Refuse and Recycling coordinator noting that he is being placed on unpaid leave.

Commissioner Monahan spoke on potential grant funding for filling some positions and stated that the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission could be a vehicle for these types of grants. Chrzanowski stated that Rory Casey was working with the Department on putting together list of large capital items needed by the DPW. Chrzanowski stated that she spoke with supervisors and others to see what the equipment needs are for the department. It was noted that Mayor Garcia was requiring boards and commissions to approve time off for their respective department heads. That includes the Board of Public Works. The Commission agreed that email notification to the commissioners from the acting superintendent in advance of the time off would be appropriate.

Public Works Commissioner Discussion Topics:

Monahan:

5. Report from Interim Superintendent of Public Works on the problems with trash collections during the week of August 1 including

- **Why enough staff failed to report to work**
- **What were the operational impacts on collections and other DPW functions**
- **What are the additional financial costs**
- **Are there existing policies to prevent this from happening again**
- **How the Board of Public Works can help:**

Acting DPW Director Chrzanowski spoke and gave overview of the various DPW departments and how many employees had pre-approved time-off. Chrzanowski stated

that there was only one employee in the refuse disposal team that had been approved for time off but that there were several call outs including COVID-19 diagnosis and another employee out with a back strain. Chrzanowski gave overview of efforts made to draw personnel from other places within the department to staff the refuse operation. It was noted that the Department had to draw on personnel to man the refuse bay on Tuesday and Thursday which also plays a hand in compounding staffing issues when these kinds of dilemmas take place.

Chrzanowski further stated that that the City utilized a DPW loader to move material from under the bridge on Water St. It was noted that this move had the effect of depriving the DPW of a loader. Chrzanowski gave read out of the various call outs that took place during the week. It was noted that there were 3 DPW workers that were tasked with assisting the “Fiesta De Patronales” festival which also drew workers away from an already scarce personnel crew for the department. This needed assistance for DPW support was the result of last-minute change in fiesta location from private property to public property. Open Square notified the organizers only days before the event that their insurance carrier would not let them host the festivities. The event location was then changed. Chrzanowski stated that the operational impact on DPW operations was delayed trash pick-up in the City. Chrzanowski stated that the DPW had a crew out to help catch up with trash on the weekend both Saturday and Sunday but that on Sunday there was no facility for the City to dump the collected refuse so once the trucks were full they stopped operation.

Chrzanowski stated that there are no written policies in place to prevent these kinds of things from happen but stated that there were several uncommon roadblocks including the festival and utilization of the loader that made things more difficult in the refuse collection operation than usual. It was noted these uncommon things in combination with pre-approved vacations helped to make the matter worse.

Chrzanowski stated that it was almost a perfect storm as far as personnel regarding the DPW despite efforts to pull staff from other jobs to do things like run the bays in order to try to keep the trash pick-up staff on pace. It was noted that the staff volunteered to come in on Sunday for refuse collection on their own. Mary Monahan stated that further work needs to be done in preventing these kinds of service delays but stated that the department seemed to have done the best it could with limited resources in a tough situation.

6. Contract with Hazen and Sawyer: Commissioner Monahan spoke and gave updates regarding the status of the contract signing with Hazen and Sawyer to review of the City’s contract with Veolia. Monahan stated that Hazen and Sawyer contract language has been approved by the Law Dept. and that a kickoff meeting for September 16th has been scheduled.

7. Project Kickoff meeting in mid-September: Mary Monahan noted that the Hazen project team will host the kickoff meeting on September 16. Invitees include the acting superintendent, city engineer, Mayor, and Veolia staff.

8. Proposed meeting of the Board of Public Works with the City Council Finance Committee: Commissioner Monahan spoke and stated that the Board is looking for a date to meet with the Finance Committee to discuss the sewer rate and the breakdown of the sewer enterprise fund.

Hernandez:

BOARD OF PUBLIC WORKS - OLD BUSINESS

BOARD OF PUBLIC WORKS - NEW BUSINESS

SEWER COMMISSION - OLD BUSINESS

SEWER COMMISSION - NEW BUSINESS

STORMWATER AUTHORITY - OLD BUSINESS

STORMWATER AUTHORITY - NEW BUSINESS

PENDING ACTIONS:

10. Sewer Abatement Policy: N/A

11. Sale of Surplus Equipment: N/A

12. Request Council to remove civil service status from laborers: N/A

13. Inquire of Baystate Roads Grant: N/A

CORRESPONDENCE: N/A

ADJOURNMENT: Motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting: Meeting adjourned at 8:10PM by a 2-0 vote. Respectfully Submitted,
Ryan Allen: Principal Acct. Clerk Holyoke DPW