

Board of Public Works Commission
Meeting Minutes

Date: June 5, 2023

Time: 5:30pm

Location: 63 North Canal St. in the DPW Conference Room in the Pellissier Building.

Present:

1. Mary Monahan, Chair
2. Joe Kietner, Member
3. Libby Hernandez, Member
4. Carl Rossi, Director
5. Kris Baker, City Engineer
6. Michael Bissonette, Assistant City Solicitor

****Call to Order:**** The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Mary Monahan at 5:35pm.

****Public Comments:**** There were no public comments.

****Orders of Business:****

1. ****Consent Agenda:**** The consent agenda was discussed and approved.

****Motion to amend the agenda by moving to Item 7, the executive session.****

Kietner: I motion for the amendment.

Libby: I second the motion.

2. Consideration of Minutes of the Past Meeting - no minutes to consider

3. DPW Director Report:

- Two new hires are pending completion of physical and background screenings.
 - 1 HMEO, 1 Motor Equipment Repairman
- Proposal to increase parking permit fee from \$40 to \$50.
- Letter to be sent to the Parking Committee regarding the consideration of increasing fees, referencing a letter from Carl addressing the Board.
- Proposal to increase St. Patrick's Day Parade parking fee from \$5 to \$10 on the parking deck.
- Order for an engineer to evaluate Whiting's Farm Road.
- Discussion on extending office hours and leaving early on Fridays.

4. City Engineer Report:

- Bids for Apermont came in lower than anticipated.

- Roberts Field turf field has been completed.
- The track has been milled out and needs patching, on schedule for the football season.
- Streets in West Holyoke to be fixed next week; updating engineering website with paving schedule.
- Met MS4 deadline on May 31st.
- Submitted a CT River Clean Up Fund request for \$210,000.

5. Commissioner's Liaison Reports (see attached):

- Mary commends Libby for her excellent work on the luncheon and video.
- Libby shares plans for lifting morale, removing stigma, and promoting the amazing work done by DPW.
- Discussion on planning for next year and other events.
- Mary suggests organizing a Touch-a-Truck event.
- Carl mentions National Night Out.

7. Division Supervisor Update (first meeting of the month): None

8. Abatements (second meeting of the month)

****Motion to take on agenda item 3 is made by Kietner, and Libby seconds it. All in favor.****

9. Review Board of Public Works role as Stormwater Commissioners:

- James Fitzgerald expresses dissatisfaction with not being notified or included in discussions or votes.
- Mary states that the notice was posted outside the clerk's office but not on the website.
- Mary confirms that everything presented was within the Board's jurisdiction.
- Motion to send correspondence to other permitting boards, stating that approved plans or changes related to the Stormwater Commission must come back to the Board for review.
- Kietner makes the motion, and Libby seconds it. All in favor.

7:50 PM - Going through CC Agenda Finance Ordinance Committee meeting agenda for 6/7:

- Mary asks who will be attending, and Carl and Kris confirm their attendance.
- Mary will present slides and answer questions.
- Libby makes a motion to accept the report on the finances from Mark A. Sewer Study Report and accept the approach for Wednesday night's finance meeting.
- Kietner seconds the motion. All in favor.

****Kietner makes a motion to take out of order item agenda number 4, and Libby seconds it. All in favor.****

Update on EPA issuance of draft POTW NPDES discharge permit:

- Discussion on the draft permit.

Review financials regarding sewer enterprise and DPW operation:

- Mark Abrahams, the auditor, presents the sewer enterprise account financials.
- Mark explains the operating revenue and operating costs.
- Mike Bissonette mentions the 1986 interest fund and the underfunding of sewer breaks historically.
- Rate projections for FY24 are discussed.
- Options for addressing a \$777K shortfall are presented.
- Mary asks if there are any questions. None are raised.
- Mary shares and breaks down a slideshow presentation on sewer enterprise fund costs.
- Mary emphasizes that the Veolia fee covers more than just wastewater operations and that even residents without sewer benefit from various services.
- Mark is asked to provide additional information and walk the City Council through the outline after the slideshow presentation.
- Mark appreciates the presentation and suggests creating a simplified list to identify all costs.
- Mary agrees to add bullets and maintain contract language.

****Libby motion to move to Item 6, the dumpster permit. All in favor.****

Allegrone dumpster permit extension:

- Ben explains the need for an extension due to ongoing construction.
 - Discussion on the duration and number of dumpster swap-outs.
 - Concerns raised regarding the exposure of the neighborhood to the dumpster and the condition of the sidewalk.
 - Ben discusses alternative locations and the challenges they present.
 - Construction schedule and phases are outlined.
 - The benefit of the project for residents is emphasized.
 - Concerns raised about the accessibility of the sidewalk and curb cuts for people in wheelchairs.
 - Ben assures that any damage to the sidewalk will be fixed or replaced.
 - Discussion on the long-term benefits for the community.
 - Mary expresses concerns about setting a precedent and the length of obstruction in the public way for a private project.
 - Ben explains the complexities and challenges of the renovations.
 - Mary challenges the inability to find a new location and requests a plan within 30 days.
 - Motion to permit extension until October with a \$50 monthly fee is made by Libby, and Kietner seconds it.
- Vote: Two in favor (Hernandez and Kietner), one opposed (Mary Monahan).

****Kietner makes a motion to take agenda item 5 out of order, and Libby seconds it. All in favor.****

6:30 PM - Executive Session:

- The meeting enters an executive session to discuss strategy with respect to litigation, as it may have a detrimental effect on the litigating position of the public body. (Chapter 30a, sec. 21(a)(3))

Next Meeting: 6/26

****New Business****

- Libby will inquire about the availability of the Holyoke Media Room for future meetings.

The meeting adjourned at 8:32 PM.

MLM Liaison Update
June 5, 2023

New/Continued Items for Review

Schedule meeting with Water Commission – Fall 2023

- Billing data
- Abatements
- Shut-off program

Service agreement advisory board

- Appointed by Mayor
- 5 – 7 working members
- Not subject to open meeting law
- Member candidates to date: MLM, Mike Sullivan, Brian Beauregard, Andy Fisk
- Open to new candidates for consideration

Draft Permit and Comments

Hazen BioWin model does not indicate that removal of Sonoco flows will trigger violation of nitrogen limits in new permit. But new growth and increase in total flows would. This could be the result of economic development or changes in existing dischargers. It's understood that next permit would likely include nitrogen limits that would require major capital improvements. This next permit would likely be issued during the next long term service agreement term. Tighe & Bond estimated \$135M for plant upgrades. Also for consideration: re-assessment of local limits for nitrogen

DPW Facility Improvements

Note the need to accommodate female staff

Senator Velis facility tour, May 19, 10AM. Senator Velis and aide Mark Messer. Senator Velis noted that Holyoke's DPW was the first in his district to reach out to his office. He noted that the bond bills are opportunities to target funding and added that bond bill projects needed continuous lobbying to the Governor from local officials to actually realize funding. His office will monitor and inform DPW of opportunities for additional funding.

March 6 tour with Representative Pat Duffy and Aide/Councilor Juan Anderson-Burgos, Director Rossi, Commissioner Monahan
Tour conducted by Sean Sheedy

Next steps for consideration
Rep Duffy will sponsor funding in next bond bill

For what? Needs analysis, study of existing facility, alternative sites for new/rehab facility, other
Consider inviting Weston & Sampson to discuss

Public Works Week May 2024

Develop a public awareness activity
Recognize employees
Promote funding and support of DPW
Champion?

Status of Projects/Initiatives

Kleinfelder and MS4
Hazen and Service Agreement/Asset Review
Abrahams and Service Agreement look-back
Hazen and IMP
Others

Enterprise Fund and FY23/24 Rate

Board meeting with FinCom and Ordinance Committee June 7, 2023

Conversation with McGivern: wants to review the entirety of the sewer enterprise fund

Past items:

Council Order re: Recycling Practices and Contracts

Director Rossi and Chair Monahan met with FinCom March 13, 2023

Board became aware of ARPA opportunity on Friday, March 3

ARPA funding application

For consideration:

Education and training

Projects: do the Commissioners have any proposed?

Projects: from Director and City Engineer

DPW Grant Writer

In the meantime, Mayor Garcia wants staff to aggressively pursue existing and new grant opportunities; use consultants

Director and Engineer to update Commissioners on April 3, 2023

Board became aware of Open Meeting Law update Monday, March 6, 2023

Open Meeting Law
Remote participation

Mary Monahan notes from meeting with Joe Manzi from Holyoke Water Department
May 11, 2023

Discussion items included:

Board of Public Works and Water Commission joint meeting

Probably later in September. There are no critical issues and the Water Commissioners will be going on summer schedule with monthly meetings.

Shutoff program

Working well. Only began in 2019/2020 for sewer, thus the initial large collection sums.

Missed revenue potential

Board of Public Works is seeking opportunities to address non-payers and underpayers.

HWW maintains that all service lines have an associated meter – thus usage is being captured and billed.

There doesn't appear to be any requirement that residential units (4 or less apartments) have individual meters for each unit. Some do, some don't. (Note: MLM has a two family with separate meters) This scenario limits revenue associated with any minimum quarterly billing. This also make looking at EDU (equivalent dwelling units) more appealing.

“Insurance Program”

HWW does not have a “real” insurance program that pays for residents’ service line breaks and other related repairs. Instead, HWW charges a \$4 quarterly service fee that applied to these repairs. HWW also uses these funds to pay for meter replacement program. Replacement meters are \$500. The funds are not segregated in a separate account. But because it's an enterprise account, surplus is rolled over into next years stabilization. Joe estimates that annual collections from the service fee are \$250,000 and average annual repair costs to HWW is \$50,000.

This “insurance program” applies to residential property only. And if the need for a repair is the fault of the homeowner, HWW will not support. Commercial/business properties are not eligible.

He said Holyoke Law Department reviewed and approved. Joe will forward copy of program description.

Water Rates

Holyoke Water Department annually secures the services of an outside auditor. Rates are set and presented to City Council for multi-year term based on these audits. (MLM note: get a copy of the RFQ the Water Department uses)

DPW Audit Abrahams

Joe has been working with Matt Abrahams on the billing data. Mark Abrahams and Joe both shared with me that our auditors are getting the data in the format that should allow for Abrahams to manipulate and project rates and revenues through multiple billing options. This finally happened just this week.

Abatements

The Water Commission reviewed the Board of Public Works sewer abatement policy. They choose not to develop their own policy and make their decisions on a case-by-case basis. Water Department staff will refer customers to our policy and abatement request form.

Prepared by Mary L. Monahan
May 11, 2023