

# **DENNIS WATER DISTRICT**

## *Board of Water Commissioners*

Minutes of Meeting held

November 16, 2017

A meeting, having been duly posted, was held this date at the Dennis Town Hall, 685 Rte. 134, South Dennis and called to order by Paul F. Prue, Chairman at 6:00 PM. Water Commissioners Peter L. McDowell and Alan Tuttle were present. Also in attendance was David Larkowski, Superintendent and Sheryl A McMahon, Treasurer.

### **Public Information –**

Chairman Prue noted that he had been able to watch the tank being raised earlier in the week and recalled being a boy of eleven watching the first tank being built East Dennis in 1946 and noted that another tank was being built simultaneously on the south side of town. He shared some statistics about the District's storage capacity back then and that it is just over 11 million gallons today. He also shared pumping capacity of yesteryear and today noting the tremendous growth the District experienced over its seventy-plus years. Chairman Prue shared a humorous story about his father's interactions with one of the first Water Commissioners, Mr. Nathan Crowell. The on-going debate was to see which would be completed first, his father's hand dug well or the new water tank on Route 134.

### **Consider options for re-development of Employee Guidelines Manual and Employee Benefits Book and Status of Mass Interlocal Insurance Association Grant Application**

Ms. McMahon advised that, in accordance with the Board's vote, a grant application had been submitted to Massachusetts Interlocal Insurance (a.k.a. MIIA) which provides insurance coverages to the District. It is a self-insured municipal pool. They annually award grants to participating municipalities in order to help reduce risk. They are often awarded for safety equipment, person protection equipment, etc. The development of a personnel guidelines book and benefits book helps reduce risk. She noted on the Public Officials' Liability renewal form she checks that the District does have a personnel guidelines. The Board has been interested in making sure they are up-to-date.

A) Ms. McMahon stated that she had obtained (at no cost) a copy of the Town of Dennis' Employee Personnel Guidelines as basis for District's Employee Guidelines and Benefits Book. She noted that the Town and District have the same insurance program although the Town's sick and vacation benefits are a bit more generous. She saw this as an option for the Board's consideration as the Town's guidelines were current and have already been reviewed by town counsel. She noted that the maximum grant award for personnel guidelines by MIIA is \$7,500. Ms. McMahon further noted that she had asked for verbal quotes from two firms that do this work, being Human Resources Management [*Sic*] and the Collins Center at UMass Boston. They both quoted the same price at \$7,500. Ms. McMahon did not tell them of the grant application but, because they have done this work many times for municipalities, she believed that they already 'know' the maximum award.

B) Ms. McMahon conducted an on-line search and get an annual subscription for the purchase of guidebooks on-line which includes federal employment regulations and for all fifty states for an annual cost of about \$350. The subscription includes notifications of changes in either federal law or state law.

C) Ms. McMahon further advised that she developed a draft Invitation For Bid (IFB) for the Board's consideration to have a formal request for proposal process for the development of Employee Personnel Guidelines and Benefits Book. To use the Town's as a model (Ms. McMahon had previously provided

a partial draft) would cost the District nothing and she noted that it has already been reviewed by KP law. To use the IFB would be essentially starting the process from scratch. The IFB includes a scope of work. As previously mentioned, she noted that preliminary estimates are \$7,500 for the two documents.

Ms. McMahon advised that it was her understanding that developing personnel guideline manuals was not high on MIIA's risk management goals at this time. There was no guarantee that the grant would even be awarded to the District. Mr. Tuttle asked if the grant award was less than the contract where would the difference come from. Ms. McMahon advised that there is no appropriation for this work and that it would require a Reserve Fund transfer. She estimated the Reserve Fund balance to be about \$70,000.

Ms. McMahon noted that the discussion of the previous meeting was the concept of outsourcing both the personnel guidelines, benefits book and job descriptions simultaneously to obtain favorable pricing.

### **Consider options for re-development of Job Descriptions:**

C) Ms. McMahon advised that there was the option of issuing an Invitation for Bids for re-development of the job descriptions. Preliminary estimates ranged from \$2,000 to \$5,000. She said that the consultants hand out questionnaires which the employee fills out then they are reviewed with the consultant and then with management with the final drafts being presented to the Board.

A) Ms. McMahon had provided two job descriptions from the Department of Public Works to the Board to consider utilizing the Town of Dennis' job descriptions as template(s). The two positions provided are similar in scope to positions at the District. These are similar in format to the District's existing descriptions. The descriptions included; primary functions, supervision, essential responsibilities, secondary responsibilities, job environment, minimum qualifications, working knowledge and ability and physical requirements. Ms. McMahon noted that since there has been some staff turn-over in office administration she had recently spent time reviewing and updating the job descriptions.

B) Ms. McMahon also noted that the Board could consider purchasing job description templates on-line. One site provided a library of 3,700 job descriptions for an annual subscription price of about \$129. She advised that MIIA will not cover the cost of job descriptions.

Mr. Tuttle asked how Chapter 30B applied. Ms. McMahon said that because of the estimated cost of the job descriptions was less than \$5,000 quotes could be solicited. She did note that if the personnel guideline manual and the job descriptions were combined the estimate would be greater than \$10,000 and would require written proposals.

Mr. McDowell stated that he would rather hold on the personnel guideline manual until MIIA announces the grant award results. He said that he has read the District's job descriptions and has made his concerns known. He would like to proceed with this for whatever it might cost (\$4,000 - \$5,000+) to outline what their impression is and just to listen to them. But, there are enough things in the one we have that he has questions and concerns. As a matter of policy he would like to proceed. Chairman Prue did not see the point in spending money on this. Mr. McDowell said that the Town does more than the District does. He further stated that the role of the Clerk and the role of the Treasurer there is a sharp difference between the District and the Town and wanted another set of eyes looking at this. however defined as a municipal clerk.

Mr. Tuttle asked about the ranking of the bidders in the IFB for the employee handbook and the determination of the successful bidder. Ms. McMahon explained that an invitation for bid establishes minimum criteria. The lowest bidder is awarded the bid so long as they meet the minimum criteria. If the Board wanted to interview the bidders they would have to issue a Request for Proposals and rank them separately. Meaning the proposals are ranked based on what is highly advantageous and the most advantageous proposal would be selected. Then the prices are opened. It is possible to negotiate downward from the price quoted. There was a lengthy discussion regarding the requirements of issuing a Request for Proposals. Ms. McMahon advised that it would be more efficient and likely more cost effective to do both the personnel guidelines and the job descriptions at the same time. Mr. Tuttle said the only thing he saw was to make sure that management was [reviewed]. He also expressed that Ms. McMahon being involved 100% in everything, it might put the idea of conflict in somebody's mind. Mr. Tuttle suggested having an outside firm do just the three positions (Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent and Clerk/Treasurer). Mr. McDowell said he wanted to see an individual who has had some experience that is familiar with municipalities take a look at the job descriptions and deal with the sharp edges he thought exists.

On a motion made by Alan Tuttle and duly seconded, the Board UNANIMOUSLY VOTED: to table discussion under Item 3 of the agenda **“re-development of Employee Guidelines Manual and Employee Benefits Book”** until we hear back from MIIA.

Mr. McDowell wanted to proceed with hiring a consultant to evaluate the District's job descriptions. Because of the dollar threshold simple verbal quotations are allowed. Ms. McMahon said most responders would submit a scope of work and price quotation. Chairman Prue suggested getting the scope of work from other water suppliers and compare them. Mr. Tuttle suggested reviewing a scope of work for the job descriptions at a workshop session for obtaining verbal quotes. The Board agreed to meet on December 5, 2017 at 10:00 AM at the District office to review the scope of work and decide on who to solicit price quotations from.

### **Presentation and discussion by Superintendent on water distribution system infrastructure maintenance identified needs, costs and program implementation.**

Mr. Larkowski said that now that the water tank project is winding down and will be complete next spring he wants to refocus on doing maintenance on the distribution system rather than building the system. He wanted to share statistics about the system and focus work on gates and hydrants. There are 1,676 hydrants. They cost about \$2,000 each at a total new value at \$3,352,000. The oldest hydrants in 1985 were only about 40 years. Now they are approaching 70 years and the valves and hydrants are getting old and inoperable. He shared examples of working on a water main in East Dennis in the middle of the night and not being able to close valves. Dennis has ductile iron cement lined and the cast iron is also cement lined. The cement keeps the water from the iron so it doesn't corrode. The valves and hydrants are unlined and they have accumulated iron and are getting smaller in diameter. Ultimately fire flows will be affected due to the restricted flow. With the age marching on the system, without replacements it will not be sustainable. Mr. McDowell asked if it would be worth just finding out where the valves and hydrants that are operable or not. Mr. Larkowski said they don't have the time to operate the valves and hydrants. Mr. McDowell asked in the last five years how many hydrants failed. He said dozens. There are hydrants that aren't 70 years old that also failed. The old hydrants are a style that has packing which dries out. This past year there was a break on Lower County Road multiple valves failed. They had to go out ½ mile just to shut down enough gates to do the work. Mr. Larkowski explained that the District has to do line stops in order not to have to shut down the entire area. A line stop comes by and takes a coupon and drops a balloon upstream and downstream so that

the work can be performed in isolation. The line stops are about \$8,000. There are also gate valves that need replacement. To replace will be 10 in a year to have funded would be about \$140,000 to replace. There was a lengthy discussion concerning testing the valves for operability and replacing them due to their age. Mr. Larkowski wanted to share with the Board the costs of doing some of this work. He proceeded with explaining would like to attempt these numbers. The outline of the cost presentation is attached to these minutes. In discussion with the Assistant Superintendent, Mr. Larkowski is proposing for the Board's consideration funding of approximately \$270,000 for replacing approximately 50 hydrants. He also suggested funding 10 gate valve replacements, as they happen, would be \$141,000 of materials. The total for one year would be approximately \$410,000. He said that he would like to try and accomplish this much but, to do more would require hiring a contractor.

## **Superintendent's Report**

New Water Tank – Mr. Larkowski announced that the water storage part of the water tank had been painted and then raised on Tuesday, November 14th by crane to the top of the pedestal. Commissioners Prue and McDowell were present for the lifting. The tank shell was built on the ground and painted and then raised. The final pour that locked the tank on the pedestal was poured. All the welding will be completed by Thanksgiving. The painters will return and continue as long as the weather provides. Temperature and humidity are factors during the painting process.

## **Treasurer's Report**

OPEB Trust Agreement and Investment Policy – Ms. McMahon advised that she had misspoke at the last meeting. The Town of Dennis OPEB Trustees have not yet selected a money manager for the investment of the Town's OPEB funds. She has requested copies of the request for proposal and the materials the responders had provided. Ms. McMahon encouraged the Board to review the documents and subsequently vote to adopt the Trust agreement but, first the Board needs to decide on the Board of Trustees. Chairman Prue suggested the Board of Water Commissioners, Treasurer and Superintendent as the Trustees. There is approximately \$67,000 plus appropriated in the Trust. The funds are still commingled with District Funds because the Trust has not been voted by the Board.

Meter Reading – The Treasurer advised that the District will once again be reading meters for the February 2018 billing. She stated that this reading cycle covers the period of July through December. She also stated that the seasonal meter removal season has gotten longer and that currently only approximately 1,200 of the 1,800 (approx.) seasonal meters have been ordered out for the winter.

Water Liens – Ms. McMahon advised that she is in the process of preparing the Water Lien Commitment to the assessing department for collection of unpaid water charges on the next real estate tax bills due February 1. Currently there are 28 accounts on the list with an outstanding total of 12,706.69 for an average of \$453.81. Last year's commitment was 41 accounts at \$13,106.88 for an average of \$319.68. Letters were sent to all customers on the original list in October advising them that the accounts would be going to the Town as a water lien. This did generate some payments but, those on remaining will be committed.

Ms. McMahon advised that she estimated that the uncertified Free Cash to be \$1.55 million. On average, \$350,000 to \$500,000 is used annually for capital expenditures. Chairman Prue said he would like to see some funds be appropriated to the Stabilization Fund, the balance being a little more than \$100,000.

## Minutes

On a motion made by Peter L. McDowell and duly seconded the Board ***UNANIMOUSLY VOTED: to accept the minutes of September 20, 2017.***

Minutes of September 28, 2017 were deferred to the next meeting.

## Adjournment

On a motion made by Alan Tuttle Peter L. McDowell and duly seconded the Board ***UNANIMOUSLY VOTED: to adjourn the meeting at approximately 7:28 PM***

Respectfully submitted,

Sheryl A McMahon, Clerk