**UPPER BLACKSTONE CLEAN WATER**

**50 ROUTE 20, MILLBURY, MA 01527-2199**

**BOARD MEETING MINUTES - BOARD ROOM/HYBRID MEETING**

**December 20, 2023**

**ITEM I - CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Labovites called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

Ms. Mancini, through a roll call, recorded those in attendance and all are noted below:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Board Members** | **Representing** | **Title** | **Present** | **Absent** | **In- person** | **Virtual** |
| Matthew Labovites | Worcester | Chairman | X |  | X |  |
| Philip Guerin | Worcester | Vice Chairman | X |  |  | X |
| John Woodsmall | Holden | Secretary | X |  | X |  |
| Michael Traynor | Worcester | Member | X |  | X |  |
| Joanna Paquin | Auburn | Member | X |  | X |  |
| Donald Manseau | CVSD | Member | X |  | X |  |
| Robert Antonelli | Worcester | Member | X |  | X |  |
| Gary Nelson | Millbury | Member | X |  |  | X |
| Jay Fink | Worcester | Member | X |  | X |  |
| Austin Cyganiewicz | Rutland | Member |  | X |  |  |

**Upper Blackstone Staff**

Karla Sangrey Engineer Director/Treasurer

Mike Andrus Deputy Director

Elizabeth Mailhot HR Manager

Denise Mancini HR Assistant/District Clerk

Diane Shea Finance Manager

**ITEM II - APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES –** December 6, 2023

**Minutes** – Member Antonelli moved to approve the minutes of the meeting on December 6, 2023. Member Fink seconded, and approval of minutes was noted as follows: Chairman Labovites, yes; Vice Chairman Guerin, yes; Member Traynor, yes; Member Paquin, yes; Member Manseau, yes; Member Antonelli, yes; Member Nelson, yes; and Member Fink, yes.

**ITEM III - FINANCE**

**Warrants –** Member Traynor moved to approve the following warrants. Member Antonelli seconded, and approval of the warrants was noted as follows: Chairman Labovites, yes; Vice Chairman Guerin, yes; Member Woodsmall, yes: Member Traynor, yes; Member Paquin, yes; Member Manseau, yes; Member Antonelli, yes; Member Nelson, yes; and Member Fink, yes.

Warrants $ 326,792.51 (12/02/2023)

$ 222,372.72 (12/09/2023)

$ 549,165.23

**Breakdown of Cash –** Ms. Sangrey said there have not been many changes since the last meeting. There has been some spending from the operations accounts; and the report reflects the balance of the BAN account as well as the investments and trust accounts.

**Aging Report** – Ms. Sangrey said the report includes the current assessments. Ms. Shea confirmed the J.L. Darling Septic Pumping account in the 60–90 day column is being addressed and added vendors are being contacted after 30 days of non-payment. Chairman Labovites inquired of the Marshfield balance and Ms. Sangrey said she thinks it may be an annual permit fee and Ms. Shea said she will follow-up on it.

**Outside Revenue Position – October -** Ms. Sangrey said the revenue numbers are behind what was budgeted for septage, and ahead on sludge and in both cases have brought in more revenues than this time last year and this will be taken into consideration in the on-going budgeting process. She referred to and explained the revenue, expense, and net revenue portion of the Net Metering Credits portion of the report. Ms. Sangrey said we are getting credits from National Grid, are paying Luminace and netting out Four Hundred Thirty-Two ($432,000) Dollars so far, this fiscal year. She and Ms. Shea continue to work on, (with suggestions welcomed from the Board), how best to reflect the numbers in the Other Revenues report.

**FY2025 Budget Progress –** Ms.Sangrey said she will be sending out the budget package prior to January 10th for discussion and will provide options for board consideration prior to voting at the January 31st meeting. She said she, Ms. Shea, Mr. Andrus, and Ms. Mailhot are part of the budget committee and are working on the process. We are still waiting for the state to finalize the free cash certification. Ms. Sangrey said there is no certified number yet, but she hopes to have one by the January 10th meeting. She said the submission for certification is just under $1.1 million in free cash, which is a substantial decrease from previous years and is going to hamper budget efforts. Adding, the chemical area is looking better as the prices went down and operations are also optimizing usage. She explained there is more of a team approach for the budget process this year to engage the managers so they have an awareness and can catch problems sooner throughout the year.

**Updated Community Metering Map** – Ms. Sangrey said the map is slightly different from the one discussed at the last meeting as Shrewsbury has two meters, not one. She said our Regulatory Compliance Engineer, Dennis Lowe, has been collecting updated information and has been in touch with approximately fifty (50) percent of the metering folks gathering information regarding their calibration reports. Ms. Sangrey will report back to the Board once the process is complete and said there were no comments submitted on the budget flow data.

**ITEM IV ADMINISTRATION**

**Integrated Planning Update –** Member Fink said there is nothing new to report.

**Capital Projects Updates, Mike Andrus, Deputy Director**

**Budget –** Currently planning the capital projects and expenditures for FY2025.

**Regional Biosolids Study –** Mr. Andrus said theproject team is meeting more frequently as Phase I is nearing completion. He expects to have cost estimates and feasibility of technical solutions soon and anticipates reports in early 2024.

**Standby Power Design –** The SRF loan for the generators is anticipated to be approved in January and the project will go to bid once it is. Regarding solar panels and associated batteries, work continues with Power Options, and Solect (in conjunction with CDM Smith) to locate, design, and fund design (grants and incentives) and tie in with generators. A walk-through with their electricians took place to look at ground-mounted areas.

**Fleet Electrification** – A meeting is scheduled for Thursday, December 21st with J.K. Muir to discuss chargers and electric vehicles. Mr. Andrus expects a report from them in early 2024. JKM is also assisting with various incentive programs to reduce capital costs.

**Plant Water Electrical Upgrades** - Mr. Andrus said plant water upgrades are being planned and he is engaging with CDM Smith to replace the outdated electrical equipment on the plant water pumps, which are crucial to running the incinerator. Ms. Sangrey said the plant watering building is the only place in the plant that has not had an electrical update since 1976.

Mr. Andrus noted that Upper Blackstone is currently working with NEIWPCC, NEBRA and other organizations on a project called the Biohub, which was envisioned as a single location in Maine, to study PFAS destruction in biosolids. He said the project has morphed into a match-making service between vendors and innovators who want to test new technologies and be a host facility for testing. Upper Blackstone is working with them to develop the program and how to get vendors in touch with host locations and be a host location themselves.

**HVAC Improvements** – Upper Blackstone has engaged Tighe & Bond to do a wholistic look at the HVAC system in the solids processing complex. The heat exchanger sprang a leak and solutions for the short, medium, and long-term are being considered to resolve the problem. Tighe & Bond is trying to design a fast-track replacement for the heat exchanger but is experiencing problems with supply issues.Ms. Sangrey added it is a big heat exchanger and without it, the heating bill will spike. Mr. Andrus said in the interim, Upper Blackstone is doing everything that can be done to conserve.

**ITEM V – OPERATIONS**

**Flow Summary** – Ms. Sangrey said the wet weather discharge was opened Monday mid-day due to the rain. It remained open from noon on Monday to 1:30 a.m. on Tuesday when the blend was completed. She added neighboring communities were also doing their CSO blending and other notifications. Mr. Andrus commended the operations staff for their quick reaction and for preventing major violations. Member Fink said the gates over the bypass were blown over on Monday in Worcester, which resulted in a true CSO for a portion of the flow. Ms. Sangrey confirmed there was no public comment received following the blending event.

**November Effluent Summary Report** – **Repeat test passed** –Ms. Sangrey said there were no exceedances.

**Whole Effluent Toxicity Report Update –** Ms. Sangrey pointed out that the Lab Manager, Mark Chaplin, included the repeat toxicity test result in the effluent summary report. The full version of the New England Bioassay toxicity report was included in the electronic handouts. Ms. Sangrey added that an acute toxicity sampling was conducted on the wet weather discharge and the lab should report on the results soon.

**ITEM VI– COMMUNICATIONS**

**MCWRS –** Vice Chairman Guerin said a webinar is being planned for February 29th on MS4 permits, compliance and challenges, with stormwater utilities as the focus. He said he was just made aware of a draft NPDES permit issued to Fitchburg for their plant and CSOs. The Vice Chairman said one of the components in the permit is a twin invert manhole monitoring requirement wherein all twin inverts must be monitored at least once per year after a rainfall exceeding two inches. If any twin invert is found to have been activated from the sanitary into the surface sewer, it needs to be separated and or mitigated within two years. He added there is a comment period that ends January 29th, and he would like to speak with Fitchburg to get a sense of where they stand on the twin invert item. Ms. Sangrey asked Vice Chairman Guerin if he has ever seen that kind of language in a permit. The Vice Chairman said he has not seen any in the past, at least not in Worcester. Mr. Andrus said Taunton once had one as part of their consent decree, but not in a permit, and has since eliminated all twin inverts. Vice Chairman Guerin said Fitchburg had eliminated some in the past. He was not sure about Boston Water and Sewer.

**NEWEA 2024 Conference Boston** – Ms. Sangrey said the conference starts on Sunday, January 21st and runs to Wednesday the 24th. She said Upper Blackstone will be happy to sponsor any Board members who would like to attend and if anyone is interested, contact Ms. Mailhot before January 5th to get the discounted rate. Ms. Sangrey said Upper Blackstone will be featured in at least two presentations on Tuesday.

**ITEM VII – PERSONNEL**

**Postings, New Hires, Resignations** – Ms. Mailhot said the new operator is scheduled to start on December 28th, (previously scheduled to start December 18th) and we are also in the process of hiring an IT Support Specialist to replace George Rodriguez when he retires. Ms. Sangrey said the Back to Work Center that Upper Blackstone was using for new employees and ones returning to work after an injury has closed and we are currently searching for a new facility. Member Woodsmall recommended the Occupational Health Center at Heywood Hospital in Gardener and Ms. Mancini will contact them.

**ITEM VIII - DATE(s) NEXT MEETING(s) AGENDA TOPICS**

1/10, 1/31, 2/14, 2/28

**ITEM X – ADJOURNMENT**

At 1:53 p.m. Member Manseau motioned to adjourn the meeting. Member Traynor seconded, and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

**Denise Mancini**  Denise Mancini,

District Clerk