**UPPER BLACKSTONE CLEAN WATER**

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

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

**November 15, 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** | **Title** | **Present** | **Absent** | **In- person** | **Virtual** |
| Matthew Labovites | Chairman | X |  | X |  |
| Philip Guerin | Vice Chairman | X |  | X |  |
| John Woodsmall | Secretary  | X |  |  | X |
| Michael Traynor | Member | X |  | X |  |
| Joanna Paquin | Member | X |  | X |  |
| Donald Manseau | Member | X |  | X |  |
| Robert Antonelli | Member | X |  | X |  |
| Gary Nelson | Member | X |  | X |  |
| Jay Fink | Member  | X |  | X |  |
| Austin Cyganiewicz | Member  |  | X |  |  |

**Upper Blackstone Staff**

Karla Sangrey Engineer Director/Treasurer

Mike Andrus Deputy Director

Liz Mailhot HR Manager

Denise Mancini HR Assistant/District Clerk

**ITEM II - APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES –** October 31, 2023

 **Minutes** – Member Antonelli moved to approve the minutes of the meeting on October 31, 2023. Member Nelson seconded, and approval of minutes was noted as follows: Chairman Labovites, yes; Vice Chairman Guerin, yes; Secretary Woodsmall, 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. Vice Chairman Guerin seconded, and approval of the warrants was noted as follows: Chairman Labovites, yes; Vice Chairman Guerin, yes; Secretary Woodsmall, yes; Member Traynor, yes; Member Paquin, yes; Member Antonelli, yes; and Member Nelson, yes.

 Warrants $ 251,908.40 (10/27/2023)

 $ 308,031.68 (11/03/2023)

 $ 298,237.01 (11/09/2023)

 $ 858,177.09

**ITEM IV ADMINISTRATION**

 **Integrated Planning Update –** MemberFinksaid there is nothing new to report. Ms. Sangrey reiterated an official email was received during the last board meeting granting an extension to April 30, 2024.

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

 **Regional Biosolids Study –** A meeting with the project designers and partners was held yesterday, November 14th. Phase I of the project is nearing completion, at which time a comprehensive report will be available which will outline (among other things) a recommended solution, recommended sites, and approximate costs. At the end of Phase I, a decision will need to be made on the next steps for Phase II. Chairman Labovites asked if enough time is being allowed to decide and what is driving the schedule. Mr. Andrus said the timeline is open-ended, that the project partners assign their own time frame. He added the nature of the crisis in the northeast is the driving force for the project itself. Ms. Sangrey confirmed that no draft or cost is available yet; that she anticipates there may be a workshop in January to review the report and a presentation will follow. When asked, Mr. Andrus confirmed the project partners are Upper Blackstone, Springfield Water and Sewer and the Narragansett Bay Commission. He and Ms. Sangrey said there are other stakeholders in New England that are interested in the project and are watching closely to see whether it can be replicated. In answer to Member Fink’s question, Ms. Sangrey said one of the hurdles is siting, and a discussion followed regarding the technical and legal aspects involved. When asked, Mr. Andrus confirmed there are no hurdles with transporting across state lines, that is current/common practice, and it is not considered hazardous waste. Vice Chairman Guerin asked if the PFAS CERCLA designation would change that. Mr. Andrus said he believes limits, rather than bans, on PFAS will be imposed and it appears land application is not off the table.

 **Standby Power Design –** Upper Blackstone is meeting bi-weekly with CDM Smith to finalize the generator design. Once the SRF loan is approved, the project is expected to be bid-ready in early 2024. Ms. Sangrey said the goal is to keep the generators as small as possible and to have two units. Mr. Andrus said one generator should be sufficient on a typical day, as the demand is never for 100% and can function with a great deal less. The solar panels and associated batteries will be a separate project, likely with different funding. A proposal with a non-binding Letter of Intent (LOI) has been submitted by Power Options and Solar Select and will need to be signed by December 1st to lock in the 2023 rate. Chairman Labovites requested more details on the power project (decisions to be made and cost estimates) be provided at one of the upcoming meetings. Ms. Sangrey said there was a push to get the October documents in and no contract would go out to bid without the approval of the Board. Mr. Andrus added the project delivery type is going to be a major consideration.

**ITEM V – OPERATIONS**

 **Flow Summary** – Ms. Sangrey said the temperatures are changing and there has not been much rain. She said the four bioreactors are in service now and adjustments in biology are being made. She added there are microbiology slides and pictures available that depict what is happening underneath the tanks. She commended Ornela Piluri, Senior Laboratory Technician, for the great job she is doing and for the information she provides.

 **October Effluent Summary Report –** Ms. Sangrey said Upper Blackstone was informed at the end of the chronic test in October that it would fail, which, she added, is very unusual. An investigation has been ongoing for approximately two weeks and so far, no potential causes of the failure have been found. She has consulted with counsel, the lab has consulted with the EPA, and retesting is underway. She said If the second test fails, the next step will be to do a toxicity investigation evaluation (TIE). Ms. Sangrey said she has been advised that it is not uncommon to not be able to determine the cause. The EPA recommended using a newer test method going forward, however, our attorneys advise not making that change. Mr. Andrus said if the second test fails, additional steps will have to be taken, perhaps using a different organism, which will be useful since part of the failure was in the reproductive cycles as opposed to the death of organisms. Ms. Sangrey said the toxicity test was done the week of October 9th and the effluent data, biology and numbers came back great; there is nothing to pinpoint why the test failed. Chairman Labovites asked what the frequency of testing is and if there are antecedent dry/rain conditions. Ms. Sangrey said three (3) different samples are taken over the course of one week and no, the schedule is set in the permit. When asked, Mr. Andrus said he was not aware of any red flags in the lab concerning either quality assurance or quality control.

 **Root Control** – Ms. Sangrey said she added this item to bring awareness to the member communities of the importance of communication regarding this program. She said Upper Blackstone is coordinating with Dave Harris of the city of Worcester regarding their contract with Dukes on the root control program. The issue being poison is used in the process of the root work and if too much is used, it can kill bacteria, which causes damage to performance at a treatment plant. She said good communication and coordination with the treatment plant is key during the process. Chairman Labovites asked Member Woodsmall if the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) does any root control in Rutland or Holden. Member Woodsmall said he was not aware of any. Chairman Labovites suggested a staff member at Upper Blackstone make a call to Paula Davidson or Kelley Freda at the DCR to inquire if they are doing anything. Ms. Sangrey said a technical meeting is going to be held with representatives of Dukes on November 29th and she welcomed the Board to attend.

**ITEM VI– COMMUNICATIONS**

 **MCWRS –** Vice Chairman Guerin said a Board meeting was held on November 8th. The meeting involved: securing a booth at the Massachusetts Municipal Conference in January; the planning of a stormwater webinar for this winter; and working with Cheri Cousens of the Greater Lawrence Sanitary District (GLSD) to invite Bonnie Heiple, the new DEP Commissioner, for a tour of the GLSD as well as an opportunity so sit down and discuss biosolids, adaptation planning and the biogas issues.

 Vice Chairman Guerin said a member chat was held on November 9th to discuss the adaptation planning requirements and the NPDES permits, which was moderated by Ms. Sangrey. The two (2) Suffolk University students that are working with Attorney Bob Cox were invited and gave a nice presentation of their legal analysis of the adaptation plan requirements. Ms. Sangrey said the chat was well attended and the law students’ share was interesting. She added, some of their arguments had been raised in the past but did not get any leverage. She viewed the chat as an opportunity for the Coalition to point out the value of advocacy on the finalized permits that have now been modified to include less onerous storm planning requirements.

 Vice Chairman Guerin said the Coalition is, with the help of the Suffolk law students, preparing comments for the Deer Island permits. He said the permit contains the major storm event planning requirements in the draft with the understanding that the Adaptation Plan will be in the final permit. The Vice Chairman said there is still the question of what it is doing in the NPDES permit at all and why it is not a nationwide program with funding. He said he believes that it is only Massachusetts communities that are required to do this.

 Another topic of discussion included the grumblings from DC regarding the sixty to seventy-five (60 to 75) percent cuts to the SRF program that may be discussed at some level congressionally or elsewhere. The Government is cutting the money that is available and where it can be used before it gets to the states. The Coalition will be investigating this further as many communities and districts have depended on the SRF funding over the years.

Chairman Labovites referred to an article in today’s Globe regarding sewer overflows in Massachusetts, specifically in the Merrimac. He said there is some good information and some horrendous information in the article, and he recommends reading it.

**ITEM VII – PERSONNEL**

**Postings, New Hires, Resignations** – Ms. Mailhot said the new SCADA specialist started on Monday; we will be posting for a HVAC technician soon as our current tech recently resigned (due to relocation); and an offer letter for the accounting clerk position will be going out by the end of this week.

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

 12/6, 12/20

 A draft 2024 meeting calendar was distributed. The Board members were asked to submit any comments so the schedule can be finalized at the next meeting.

**ITEM X – ADJOURNMENT**

 At 2:12 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