Water Supply District of Acton

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Vote June 8th to Finalize Water Treatment in Acton Center

At the upcoming Special District Meeting on Monday, June 8th, District voters will have to decide whether it is worthwhile to finance an additional $3.1 million to commission the Central Acton Water Treatment Plant (CAWTP) project. This project will filter the supplies from the existing Conant I & II wells located off Main Street and Post Office Square, respectively. These two sources have historically high, and rising, levels of the naturally occurring elements iron & manganese. Although no strangers to groundwater in New England, these elements are notorious for causing discoloration in water systems, to which long-time Acton residents are no strangers. The District has taken steps over the last 11-years to mitigate these impacts in other sources with the construction of two Membrane filtration plants in North (2009) and South (2015) Acton, filtering 65% of our total supply. The CAWTP project will bring that percentage to 85.

Back in 2015, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection the District's primacy agency for regulation, issued a request for a Written Corrective Action Plan (WCAP) for the Conant I well due to the increasing levels of manganese. The District, assisted by its consultant, Wright-Pierce Engineers, examined multiple options to satisfy the requirements, including connection of the source to the existing plants via miles of transmission main pipe. During the process, it was also determined that the Conant II well was exhibiting similar water quality to that of Conant I, and thus, due to geographic proximity, would be worthwhile including it in the overall scope of the project. Thus, the decision was made to examine both sources in the WCAP.

The three options were, connect the sources to the North Acton Water Treatment Plant, an Ultrafiltration membrane plant commissioned in 2009, , connection to the South Acton Water Treatment Plant, a Microfiltration membrane plant commissioned in 2015, and construction of an additional plant in Acton Center to filter the combined supply of the Conant I & II wells. Installation of over three miles of transmission pipes (in both cases) and needed upgrades to equipment in the existing facilities due to their fixed capacity were deemed cost prohibitive, and, thus, the decision was made to construct a facility at the existing Conant II site at 8 Post Office Square near the main Post Office. Due to historically high break history, back in 2008, the District had retired-in-place a 6" & 8" pipe that covered the distance on Main St. from the Conant I well to Post Office Square. Using the Aquapipe structural re-lining technology recently implemented in the Indian Village neighborhood, it was decided that this pipe would be re-lined, and re-purposed for raw water transmission from Conant I to the Conant II site, this eliminated the need for major excavation of about ¾ of a mile of Route 27/Main Street and eliciting a cost savings.

Years of planning, permitting and engineering, and many hundreds of thousands of dollars of investment, culminated in bids received on March 5, 2020, for Contract #1 (Treatment Plant) and Contract #2 (Pipe Work). Meanwhile, in 2019, the District had filed an application to the Massachusetts State Revolving Fund (SRF) for a low-interest loan through the Massachusetts Clean Water Trust for a projected $9.25 million, which was approved by District vote at the 2019 Annual Meeting. Bid opening revealed an unpredicted construction market, and apparent low-bidders' offerings were $3.1-million over the approved amount. This has necessitated a Special District Meeting to request the additional amount from the voters to press forward with this extremely important project. Continued investment in our infrastructure is vital to maintain a sustainable and reliable water supply for our community. If you are able, please attend this meeting and vote on this important article.