

Board of Water Commissioners  
Meeting Minutes  
Acton Water District  
693 Massachusetts Avenue, Acton, MA  
Tuesday, May 23, 2023

**AGENDA**

**A. Comments from the public**

**B. Approve minutes from the meeting of 5/8**

**C. Appoint one Commissioner to sign warrants while conducting meetings virtually**

**D. OLD BUSINESS:**

1. Knox Trail Solar Project
  - Project Update
2. Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS)
  - Current sample data, if available
  - Discussion of Additional PFAS Upgrades
3. May 11<sup>th</sup> Drinking Water Awards and Legislative Briefing
4. Discussion of Outdoor Water Use Restrictions for 2023

**E. NEW BUSINESS:**

1. Middlesex County Retirement System COLA Increase

*Any agenda item(s) which did not come to the attention of the Water Commissioners 48 hours prior to this meeting and were not reasonably anticipated.*

Due to the Covid-19 stay-at-home order by Governor Charles Baker, the Board of Water Commissioners meeting was not held at the Acton Water District Office; instead, the meeting was held via Zoom Webinar and was recorded. The meeting was called to order at 7:01 PM on Tuesday, May 23, 2023, by Mr. Barry Rosen.

**Present at Tonight's Meeting:**

Commissioners: Erika Amir-Lin (Chair) and Barry Rosen

District Manager: Matthew Mostoller

District Treasurer: Christine McCarthy

District Counsel: Mary Bassett

Finance Committee: John Petersen

Commissioners Secretary: Lynn Protasowicki

**Public Present:**

Ron Parenti

### **Comments from the Public.**

No comments this evening.

### **Approve Minutes from the meeting of 5/8.**

Mr. Rosen moved to approve the meeting minutes of 5/8/2023. Ms. Amir-Lin seconded, and it was unanimously approved by a roll call vote: Mr. Rosen and Ms. Amir-Lin.

### **Appoint One Commissioner to Sign Warrants While Conducting Meetings Virtually.**

Ms. Amir-Lin moved to appoint Barry Rosen as the Commissioner to approve warrants while conducting meetings virtually until the next meeting of the Commissioners. Mr. Rosen seconded, and it was unanimously approved by a roll call vote: Mr. Rosen and Ms. Amir-Lin.

### **OLD BUSINESS:**

#### 1. Knox Trail Solar Project.

- Project Update

Matt provided an update. On May 11<sup>th</sup> Standard Solar and EDF did test out the array and it went well. At this point they are still waiting for the battery test which is the interconnection between the plant and the system. Eversource needs to process some paperwork. We are not 100% functional but are getting close.

Additionally, we have begun to receive the on-bill credits associated with the Lawsbrook array, so we are seeing a direct benefit on the electric bills. That is in addition to the ground lease payments.

#### 2. Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS).

- Current sample data, if available
- Discussion of Additional PFAS Upgrades

- Current sample data, if available:

Matt: we have the April results for North Acton which came in at 20.1 PPT which is still considered in compliance. We do not have any May results at this time. We sampled Center and South Acton last week and are conducting North Acton tomorrow. We did send out notice of a web update with the updated data which was circulated last week.

John Petersen: how much do you expect to spend on PFAS testing this year? Matt: knows what has been budgeted but what we will spend is probably about \$20K. John: the place to go to find all the water quality standards to meet is located where? Matt: go to MassDEP website under Office of Research and Standards they have a document that lays out all the requirements for Massachusetts and Matt will send him the document. John: are there any federal standards that we have to meet on top of state standards? Matt: it's the opposite. We comply with Federal regulations and have additional requirements placed on us by Massachusetts. John: is there something local that is required? Matt: via the Board of Health we do have a requirement to add sodium fluoride and that is a local vote and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health has requirements to meet. The District has a volatile organic compound standard that was adopted in

the wake of the WR Grace discovery and that is something that we have imposed on ourselves to reassure customers that something similar to Grace wouldn't happen again related to VOCs.

- Discussion of Additional PFAS Upgrades:

Matt: we have the two authorizations from annual meeting for SRF funds towards Center and South Acton PFAS plants. As of today, we have the draft pilot report for Central Acton plant. We received the draft report for South Acton plant a couple weeks ago. In Central Acton the engineer is recommending a straight GAC plant based on the performance during the pilot testing period. In South Acton they are recommending the best treatment which would be GAC followed by an ion exchange resin. We do not have to make those decisions quite yet on whether or not we want those treatment recommendations to happen, but we need to reaffirm that we want to move forward on both of those projects. At the last meeting we touched upon the engineers' ability to do the work and if there is enough time to get all the work done. Whether Wright Pierce can do it or another engineer. He reached out to another engineering firm who believes they can help with one of the projects in the allotted time frame. He will follow up with Jim Cray tomorrow morning about their availability.

Erika: she is inclined to split the work. What she heard at the last meeting was that all three Commissioners were interested in exploring other engineers to help with the workload.

Barry: North Acton is already a work in progress. Not sure that there is any value in making any changes. But South Acton is looking to be a more expensive undertaking if we use the recommendation of GAC with ion exchange resin. We would be inclined to seek out the best firm that could do the work in a certain time frame.

Matt: North Acton is not under discussion as that contract is underway. In terms of a formal RFQ, if we want to stay on track to access the SRF funds this year and not time, we will need to go on availability and pare down that vetting process. Jim Cray, of Wright-Pierce, we could decline the SRF funds for the 2023 IUP and reapply for the 2024 IUP. At a minimum we need to push forward with Center Acton since we have already violated the Massachusetts PFAS standards. South Acton we could push out another year because we are still in compliance. He would not like to see us miss out on principal forgiveness opportunities so there is value to being at the front of the line. His recommendation is that if we can push forward with both projects, he would prefer that.

Barry Rosen: keep Wright Pierce for Central Acton. Matt: yes, if they can meet the timelines. It will come down to when we can commit design funds to them. Christine, Mary, and Matt have started discussing that. If Wright-Pierce can't meet the October deadline, then we may have to look at another engineer.

Erika Amir-Lin: she could see Wright-Pierce doing the work for Central Acton.

Barry Rosen: based on the pilot are they recommending just GAC? Matt: in Center Acton just straight GAC and South Acton they did recommend the combo of GAC and ion exchange resin.

Matt: we could look at building 20-year buildings and not 50+ year ones which the main treatment plants have been.

John Petersen: what drives costs is the need to weatherize buildings. Another factor that drives costs is the number of independent sources you need to have. Where is the document that talks about capacity of the different sources? Is there a document that talks about the ability to manage the mixing of sources? Matt: the first document would be our master plan that was updated in 2018. That would be pre-PFAS and a good document to look at. The secondary document being talked about is comprised of institutional knowledge and we don't have a document. We purposely put a hold on updating the master plan because we are trying to gain more knowledge about PFAS. During that time, discussions to join the MWRA were revisited. There will be a report coming out in June on the feasibility of connecting. John: what would you like the Finance Committee to do when you are talking about 20- and 50-year buildings? Erika: a lot of this discussion stays in discussion for a while. It makes sense to have Finance Committee involved when a plan is starting to come together. Matt: when we previously discussed North Acton we did not know as much as we do today, and we formed a PFAS working group. We vetted a lot of financial questions. What we learned is that the decisions around the durability of the solutions is the financial piece.

### 3. May 11<sup>th</sup> Drinking Water Awards and Legislative Briefing

Matt, Alex, Christine and Stephen Stuntz visited the State House to receive a Conservation award for the great work that our customers did in 2022 and the District's programs that we manage and create that are effective. They met with Senator Eldridge and Representative Sena. In the morning we met with various elected officials. Matt met with Eldridge's aide, and he got to sit next to Senator Eldridge at lunch. The Senator appreciates the work that the District is doing. He believes that SRF is meeting the District's needs. Matt is not sure that the financial message is being heard, however. Christine met with Rep Cataldo and discussions about PFAS and regional solutions, such as the MWRA were touched on. Alex met with her officials and discussed water operator retirement age.

### 4. Discussion of Outdoor Water Use Restrictions for 2023

Matt: during the March meeting the Board formally voted to extend the water restriction from 2022 which was never lifted. It is limited to one day of lawn watering per week per address. We have now utilized that for two full years, and we will continue into 2023. We have seen some high rates of water use over the past couple of weeks with no rain. We sent an email reminder to all customers and a paper reminder to the 100 highest users who we don't have an email for. It generated a lot of phone calls. Hopefully that reminds folks that this restriction is in place, and it helps us to manage PFAS in the interim and we continue to have favorable conditions during the season.

### Additional Old Business:

Kelley's Corner – we experienced a big outage on Monday, May 22. The contractor working on the Kelley's Corner project ruptured an active water main. The contractor took care of repairing that. As they were restoring the service, they found an additional leak which was then repaired. It impacted from the gas station to the Route 2 ramp on Massachusetts Avenue. The outage was about 10 hours total and included businesses, residences, and a school.

Christine is getting ready to borrow to pay the bills that are coming due for the project. Existing funds on hand are quickly being used.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

*1. Middlesex County Retirement System COLA Increase*

Documentation attached to Commissioner's packet.

Barry: we don't seem to have a vote in this. Christine: no we don't. As Treasurer she is an advisory council member for the retirement system board. Normally we would vote but they put it to the Selectboards this time. Districts weren't included. Only member towns and cities that have participants. Barry: didn't think it was very clever on their part since we do pay into it. They are going from 3%-5%. How does that impact our contribution? Christine: the actuary firm hasn't determined on an individual unit basis what the impact is going to be. For the system, it will increase the unfunded liability by 1% but they plan to start implementing the increase in 2026. Once they do their 2024 valuation of system, we'll know what the impact will be. They still plan to be fully funded by 2036.

*Mr. Rosen moved to adjourn the open meeting at 8:02 PM. Ms. Amir-Lin seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved by a roll call vote: Mr. Rosen and Ms. Amir-Lin.*

**Next Meeting: Monday, June 5, 2023**