



OFFICE OF THE
WATER POLLUTION
CONTROL DEPARTMENT

TOWN OF VERNON

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MINUTES WATER POLLUTION CONTROL AUTHORITY SPECIAL MEETING

DECEMBER 17, 2009

7:30 P.M.

WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT

Attendees: Chairman E. Mason Thrall III, Melissa Shannon, Carl Schaefer, Gary Leavitt, John Anderson (arrived at 7:58 p.m.). Also present David R. Ignatowicz, Director, Water Pollution Control; Arnie Bevins, Assistant Director, Water Pollution Control; George Rostkowski, Business Manager; Peter Williams, Ellington WPCA Administrator and Mayor Jason McCoy (arrived at 7:35 p.m.)

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:32 p.m.

MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 24, 2009 REGULAR MEETING

Mr. Leavitt, seconded by Mrs. Shannon motioned to accept the minutes of the WPCA regular meeting held on September 24, 2009 as presented. The motion passed unanimously (4-0).

REVIEW AND ACT ON MEETING DATES FOR CALENDAR YEAR 2010

Mr. Schaefer, seconded by Mr. Leavitt, motioned to accept the Town of Vernon Water Pollution Control Authority's 2010 meeting schedule as printed. The motion passed unanimously (4-0).

PLANT OPERATIONS SUMMARY

Mr. Bevins informed the Authority that a photograph of the WWTF three influent screw pumps is on the cover of the Summer 2009 issue of NEWEA Journal. Mayor McCoy asked for a copy of the Journal so that the cover photograph may be published on the Town of Vernon's website.

Mr. Bevins reported that the third influent screw pump was installed by staff for a cost savings of approximately \$5000. The plant is getting to a point where equipment needs to be fixed, Mr. Bevins said. For example, he said a labyrinth oil seal on one of the aeration blowers needed repair and a 400 hp motor on an adjacent blower has to go out for bearing work. Equipment is being repaired on a timely basis and he said that predictive maintenance is best, rather than waiting for a major equipment failure. Due to windy conditions, Mr. Bevins said that a 55 gallon plastic drum got stuck in the 36 inch influent sewer pipe at the facility this afternoon. Mr. Ignatowicz reported that an outside firm was contacted to push the drum forward into the next chamber. Overall, the plant is running fine, Mr. Bevins said.

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Mr. Bevins reported that the Air Diffuser Upgrade is moving along. Additionally, he and Mr. Ignatowicz met with the DEP regarding the plant's permit renewal and effluent metal issues were also addressed at the meeting. Mr. Bevins said that the DEP gave verbal approval of the facilities plan for nitrogen removal. At present, Mr. Bevins reported that there are discrepancies between the DEP and the EPA regarding phosphorous removal. Mr. Ignatowicz addressed the issue of unfunded mandates, one of which is nitrogen reduction. He said that to date, the Town of Vernon has opted to pay for nitrogen credits rather than undergo any plant upgrades. He also said that it makes more sense to upgrade the treatment plant one time, for both nitrogen and phosphorus, once the Town knows what the phosphorus limits will be and that the approximate cost for upgrades is estimated to be between \$15 and \$17 million. Chairman Thrall asked if there is a credit trading program for phosphorus and Mr. Bevins said there is not. Mr. Bevins said that the CT DEP is requesting justification from the EPA for the necessity of such low phosphorus limits and that those discussions have been ongoing.

MAYOR MCCOY ADDRESSES THE WPCA CONCERNING REDUCTION OF STATE AID TO MUNICIPALITIES

Mayor McCoy addressed the reduction in state aid to municipalities. He also said that a new hotel is to be built in town with 120 units, and hopefully this will help with sewer user rates. He also asked the Authority for any cost saving ideas/input and said that everyone has to work together as much as possible to reduce costs. Mayor McCoy said that the professional and supervisor contracts have been settled and changes to the 457 savings plan will also aid in reducing costs. Mayor McCoy thanked Chairman Thrall for all of his hard work.

In relation to cost saving measures, Mr. Bevins said that CONSERV has started the lighting project at the plant that will assist in the reduction of electricity costs. Mr. Ignatowicz added that the plant electrician position will not be filled which will also be a cost savings. Chairman Thrall asked about electrical service for the larger equipment and Mr. Ignatowicz said that an E-1 licensed electrician is needed.

Regarding staffing at the plant, Mr. Ignatowicz reported that by January there will be a total of three operator vacancies as well as a part-time summer laborer position. Chairman Thrall asked if there is a temporary agency that can be used and Mr. Ignatowicz said there is none. Mr. Leavitt suggested that an operator and an operator in training be hired and hopes that Human Resources agrees to hire one of each. Chairman Thrall asked if there is a work co-operative where employees are used from other facilities. Mr. Bevins said that there is a state emergency response network for sharing equipment, however due to union contracts, insurance liability and licensing considerations, the program does not include personnel. Mr. Schaefer expressed concern about the reduced staffing level especially if there is a collection system emergency where two employees may have to be taken from the plant for assistance. Mr. Schaefer also expressed

concern about the reduction in staff when employees are sick and use vacation time. Additionally, if there is a spill at the plant, the state will issue fines he said. Mr. Ignatowicz said that the #1471 Union is reviewing the operator in training job description and he has been in contact with Human Resources on a weekly basis regarding this issue. The Mayor agrees with the hiring of an operator-in-training and the union has asked to get local employees involved in this position Mr. Ignatowicz said. Mr. Leavitt suggested that reclassification of the operator positions, that are now held by retiring staff, to operators in training may be an option.

Mr. Schaefer expressed frustration regarding the delay in hiring staff and asked why this process is being held up and why hasn't the WPCA heard from town administration. The WPCA never had to go through this before, he said, and it is supposed to be considered separate from the Town. He said that the town instituted itself into the budget and now the hiring process. He is concerned about the time it will take to train new employees. Mr. Ignatowicz reported that Town Administrator John Ward said that he will be at the January 28, 2010 WPCA meeting. Mrs. Shannon asked if the work at the plant is getting done and Mr. Ignatowicz said that it is, but that staff is stretched very thin if someone calls out sick or is on vacation. Additionally, more operators will be retiring soon and new employees will need to be trained. Mr. Schaefer again expressed concern about fines from the state if there is an emergency and not enough staff to cover the plant. Mr. Ignatowicz spoke to the Mayor's budget and hiring freeze for general fund accounts and he said that although the budget restrictions do not specifically apply to the treatment plant budget, we should be on board with the Mayor's request to the degree possible. Mr. Leavitt felt that the WPCA has been on board with town government all along. User fees are miniscule compared to taxes he said. Mr. Schaefer agreed with Mr. Leavitt and said that the WPCA has done everything possible to keep costs down. Chairman Thrall asked Mr. Ignatowicz to express, as a board, to town administration, that personnel is needed.

DISCUSSION REGARDING DEPRECIATION, REVENUE AND/OR EXPENSES

Mr. Ignatowicz said that according to the Intermunicipal Agreement between the Town of Vernon, the Vernon WPCA and the Town of Ellington, the Town of Ellington is due a credit for fiscal years 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 for a total of \$54,555.16 and suggested that this credit be paid. Mr. Williams said that interest will be charged by the Town of Ellington if the credit is not issued. Mr. Schaefer said that he has to pay user charges with the additional depreciation expense added to the treatment plant operating budget and the Town of Ellington should be billed for the use of sewers just as he is; the number of homes in Ellington using the Vernon sewer system needs to be determined before this credit is issued. Mr. Leavitt asked how many houses in the past used the Vernon sewer system. Mr. Williams said that originally 200 Ellington homes used the sewers

and last year, 60 houses were removed from the list. Mr. Schaefer suggested waiting for John Ward to attend the next meeting and discuss the credit at that time. Mr. Anderson and Mrs. Shannon agreed with Mr. Ignatowicz. Mr. Anderson said that there is no question that the WPCA owes this credit. Mr. Anderson, seconded by Mrs. Shannon made a motion that Vernon reimburse Ellington \$24,755.27 for fiscal year 2006-07 and \$29,799.89 for fiscal year 2007-08 for a grand total of \$54,555.16. The motion passed 4-1 with Mr. Schaefer opposed. Mr. Schaefer asked what budget line item the credit will come out of and Mr. Ignatowicz said that has not yet been determined.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Mr. Ignatowicz said that since December 1st, 49.9% of the budget has been expended. Overall, the budget is in good shape, except for the water account. There were two water main breaks at the plant which resulted in elevated water bills and \$6000-\$7000 in repairs. The account is approximately \$800 over budget at this time. Mr. Ignatowicz reported that the third influent screw pump, at a cost of \$170,000 was included as an encumbered expense from last year, however, expenses cannot be encumbered from previous years, and therefore it is included in Capital Outlay under Other Equipment in the 2009-10, current year's budget.

Mr. Rostkowski spoke to a news article from The Providence Journal regarding wastewater treatment facilities declining revenues. Mr. Leavitt liked the article and that is why he has suggested, in the past, potential changes to the rate structure. Mr. Rostkowski reported a projected a flow increase of 8,486,390 gallons for an increase of \$48,288 for FY 09-10. Mr. Rostkowski reported that sewer user fees of \$797.67, were received for property at 47 Village Street from the Vernon Housing Authority. Mr. Rostkowski said that it was agreed that no interest or penalties would be collected on this account.

RECOGNITION OF E. MASON THRALL III FOR HIS DEDICATION AND SERVICE TO THE TOWN OF VERNON AS A MEMBER OF THE WATER POLLUTION CONTROL AUTHORITY FROM NOVEMBER 19, 2002 TO DECEMBER 31, 2009

Mr. Ignatowicz noted Chairman Thrall's dates of service to the Authority and thanked him for all of his hard work, professionalism and service. Mr. Anderson also thanked Chairman Thrall and said that he has done a great job.

ADJOURN

Mr. Thrall, seconded by Mrs. Shannon, motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:44 p.m. The motion passed unanimously (5-0).

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa B. Yost
Secretary, WPC