**UPPER BLACKSTONE CLEAN WATER**

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

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

**February 28, 2024**

**ITEM I - CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Labovites called the meeting to order at 1:03 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 |  |  |
| Thomas Degnan | West Boylston | Member | X |  |  | X |

**Upper Blackstone Staff**

Karla Sangrey Engineer Director/Treasurer

Mike Andrus Deputy Director

Elizabeth Mailhot HR Manager

Diane Shea Finance Manager

**Guests**

Landon Kendricks Black & Veatch

**ITEM II - APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES –** February 14, 2024

**Minutes** – Member Antonelli moved to approve the minutes of the meeting on February 14, 2024. Member Paquin seconded, and approval of minutes was noted as follows: Chairman Labovites, yes; Vice Chairman Guerin, yes; Secretary Woodsmall, yes; Member Traynor, yes; Member Paquin, yes; Member Manseau, yes; Member Antonelli, yes; Member Nelson, yes; Member Fink, yes; and Member Degnan, yes.

**ITEM III - FINANCE**

**Warrants –** Member Traynor moved to approve the following warrants. Member Nelson 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 Manseau, yes; Member Antonelli, yes; Member Nelson, yes; Member Fink, yes; and Member Degnan, yes.

Warrants $ 646,049.95 (02/16/2024)

$ 334,206.65 (02/23/2024)

TOTAL $ 980,256.60

**Breakdown of Cash –** Ms. Sangrey said there is over three million ($3M) dollars in the money market account; there are two million ($2M) dollars in the BAN account which will fund capital purchases; the investment portfolio values are up-to-date, including the trust balance; and the balance that was moved from the BAN to the money market account remains at over five hundred thousand ($500K) dollars. Ms. Sangrey said there are invoices being processed for capital projects that will fully exhaust those funds over the next month or so. She said one million ($1M) dollars borrowed from the investment account which was used to cover cash flow has been reimbursed.

**Aging Report –** The 1-30 days column shows the dental fees still owed. The 31-60 days column includes several industries needing to pay their annual pretreatment fees.

**Outside Revenue Position –** Septage is behind budget for this year, but ahead of last year; sludge is ahead of budget for this year and well over last year. The solar net metering is well ahead for year-to-date with adjustments that will be reflected in the eight-month report. Ms. Sangrey said there is no news regarding the Hampden site. She and Ms. Shea spoke to our energy consultant, Doug Stevenson in February. He said the people that work with Ameresco were not having any luck with utility.

**ITEM IV ADMINISTRATION**

**Integrated Planning Update –** Member Fink said Attorney Cox had a conversation with the counsel regarding the consent decree (CD) negotiations. It was his opinion that the EPA was under the impression progress was not being made to the CD until the IDDE pilot program was completed, which is the opposite of what was originally conveyed. Member Fink said a schedule of the progress has been provided. Adding, during the conversation, a two-year extension was proposed by our attorney and rejected by EPA. He said a meeting is scheduled to take place next week. Chairman Labovites suggested an Executive Session may be needed for further discussion. Ms. Sangrey mentioned the CSO long-term control plan is another topic that may be brought up.

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

**Regional Biosolids Study** – Significant progress is being made and Phase I is nearing completion. The technical memos from the design team have been received and are being reviewed. The memos will become part of the final report which is expected at the end of April.

**Standby Power Design** – Meetings are held regularly with CDM Smith. A meeting will be scheduled with SRF to determine eligibility for pre-purchasing the generators with grant money and the funding aspect and technical design are in progress.

**Fleet Electrification** – A draft report from JK Muir has been received and includes recommendations on electrifying the fleet. Mr. Andrus said if we buy electric vehicles, they should be within two to three thousand ($2K to $3K) dollars of the purchase price, after incentives, of a comparable gas vehicle. He said the plan is to move forward, form a timeline and decide which vehicles to purchase. Chairman Labovites asked Mr. Andrus to share the report with the members. Ms. Sangrey said once the report has been processed, she will present a suggestion, with implementation included. Mr. Andrus said this does not have to be done overnight; the idea is to discern the best way to move forward with the transition. When asked, Mr. Andrus said Upper Blackstone has a total of seventeen (17) vehicles, but not all are scheduled for replacement. He said some of the older vehicles will be traded in.

**Plant Water Electrical Upgrades** – The plant water and architectural upgrades are progressing. The architect and CDM Smith have coordinated efforts with the architectural improvements, building electrical, HVAC and the process electrical.

**Disinfection System Improvements** – The improvements are under final design.

**Other in-house projects**

* Replacement of the belt filter press feed pumps is complete, on time and on budget.
* The asset management risk assessment with Tighe and Bond will be moving forward in

the near future. This is a conditions assessment of assets across the facility and is done to determine which and when the assets will need to be replaced. As this is a Two Hundred Thousand ($200K) Dollar project and Upper Blackstone will be responsible for paying Fifty Thousand ($50K) Dollars of it, Mr. Andrus will be presenting it to the Board as a Board Action Item (BAI) in the coming months.

**Sub-Committee to Review Insurance** – Ms. Sangrey said she would like to confirm participation and consider bringing in guests, such as member communities’ insurance providers. Member Traynor said he would reach out to Peter Sullivan of the Sullivan Group to attend a meeting. Ms. Sangrey said she would primarily like to look at the property and umbrella coverage to see where expenses can be cut and to reinvest the savings. She proposed having the first virtual meeting on Wednesday, March 6th.

**ITEM V – OPERATIONS**

**Flow Summary** – The flows and temperatures have been normal, and a warm trend is beginning.

**ITEM VI– COMMUNICATIONS**

**MCWRS –** Vice Chairman Guerin said the webinar is tomorrow from 10:00 a.m. to noon with a focus on stormwater and MS4 permits. Speakers will include: Liz Clark, MassDEP Stormwater Coordinator, Jaurice Schwartz of Weston & Sampson, who will be talking about the stormwater work that has been done among communities across the state; Registered Engineer Jeffrey Howland will address his work in Shrewsbury, particularly the creation of the stormwater utility, as well as compliance with the current MS4 permit; Jason Mammone will all provide an update for the Town of Dedham; and Attorney Chris Pomeroy with Aqualaw, who helped the Coalition with the appeal in 2017. Vice Chairman Guerin believes the webinar will provide good discussions and updates on compliance. He said there is speculation the draft general permit will be released this summer and will not affect Worcester.

The Vice Chairman said the Coalition is planning to have a booth at the New England Water Works Association (NEWEA) conference at the DCU Center in April, which would be the first time attending and will provide exposure for the Coalition. Also, he said the EPA has issued a draft CSO policy change that is available for public comments, but he is unsure if it is for guidance or an actual policy.

Ms. Sangrey said she heard in an earlier meeting today, the comment period closed last week for the Clean Heat Standard legislation at the state level here and that Greater Lawrence, the Operator’s Association and NEBRA, among others, submitted comments. She and Mr. Andrus will be paying close attention to see what happens when the standard goes forward. Adding, of particular interest is how it will affect renewable natural gas and its influence on Upper Blackstone’s regional biosolids project, as we are looking for the project to be sustainable and financially in the best interest for the District and the communities it serves. On another note, Ms. Sangrey said the annual pretreatment report is due March 1st and is ready to be submitted, complete with a list of the companies that are in significant non-compliance, and the EPA rules are being followed regarding reporting requirements. She provided the company names to the members and said the list will be posted as a public notification in the Telegram and Gazette over the next week or two. She added as of the end of 2023, all compliance issues have been resolved through a correction plan and there is no one that is still in non-compliance or causing problems for the pretreatment plant. Ms. Sangrey will send an email with the names and addresses of the companies listed, in advance of the T&G posting.

**ITEM VII – PERSONNEL**

**Postings, New Hires, Resignations** – Ms. Mailhot said there is a posting for a new summer lab intern and there have been a good number of applicants; the new operator for the midnight shift started Monday; and James Applegate, the new addition to the IT support specialist team started last week. Ms. Sangrey added Upper Blackstone will still rely on external support for the higher network level issues. The current network administrator, George Rodriguez, will retire at the end of March.

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

3/13, 3/27, 4/10, 4/24

**July 24th Meeting Change** – Chairman Labovites requested this agenda item be pushed out to another meeting.

**ITEM IX – 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